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GENERAL Knowledge

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24-B, Next to Bikaner Sweets, S. K. Puri, Boring Road, Patna



82943945 19 | 7903086545

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ACADEMIC FREEDOM INDEX (AFI) 2020

India has scored considerably low in the International Academic Freedom Index (AFI) with a score of 0.352. Academic freedom, in general, refers to a scholar's freedom to express ideas without risk of official interference or professional disadvantage. It has been published by **Global Public Policy Institute** as a part of a global time-series dataset (1900-2019) in close cooperation with **Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Scholars at Risk and the V-Dem Institute**.



It compares levels of academic freedom worldwide and enhances the understanding of its curtailments. The AFI used **eight components to evaluate the scores:** freedom to research and teach, freedom of academic exchange and dissemination, institutional autonomy, campus integrity, freedom of academic and cultural expression, constitutional protection of academic freedom, international legal commitment to academic freedom under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and existence of universities. **The scores are scaled 0-1.** The index did not report data for **35 countries - including the United States and Australia.**

RESULTS OF THE AFI 2020

- ❖ **Top Performers: Uruguay and Portugal** top the AFI, with scores of **0.971 each**, followed closely by **Latvia (0.964) and Germany (0.960)**. **India** with a score of **0.352** is closely followed by **Saudi Arabia (0.278) and Libya (0.238)**. In the last five years, the AFI of India has dipped by 0.1 points. Countries like **Malaysia (0.582), Pakistan (0.554), Brazil (0.466), Somalia (0.436) and Ukraine (0.422)** have scored better than India. India has not fared well in components like institutional autonomy, campus integrity, freedom of academic and cultural expression and constitutional protection of academic freedom.
- ❖ The AFI has cited the **‘Free to Think: Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project’**, to suggest that the political tensions in India may have

something to do with declining ‘**academic freedom**’. According to the Report, political tensions in India have led to violent altercations between students, security forces, and off-campus groups, and have driven legal actions and disciplinary measures against scholars critical of those in power.

CHALLENGES BEFORE INDIA IN ACADEMICS

- ❖ India fails to provide **desired freedom to scholars** to discuss politically and culturally controversial topics, without fearing for their life, studies or profession. Most universities in the country are **subjected to unsolicited interference** from governments in both academic and non-academic issues. It is common knowledge by now that a majority of appointments, especially to top-ranking posts like that of **vice-chancellors, pro vice-chancellors and registrars**, have been **highly politicized**. Political appointments not only choke academic and creative freedom, but also **lead to corrupt practices**, including those in licensing and accreditation.
- ❖ At present, many **educational institutions and regulatory bodies**, both at the Central and State levels, are **headed by bureaucrats**. **Favoritism and nepotism** in staff appointments and student admissions. This reflects a ‘**rent-seeking culture**’ within the academic community. **Rent-seeking** is an economic concept that occurs when an entity seeks to gain added wealth without any reciprocal contribution of productivity. Typically, it revolves around **government-funded social services and social service programs**.

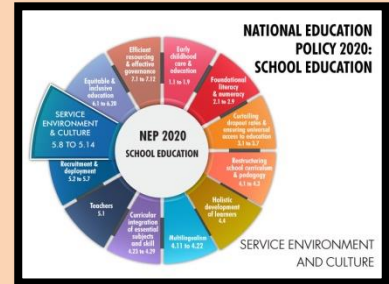


GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TOWARDS THE PROBLEM

- ❖ **Regulatory and Governance Reforms:** Restructure or merge different higher education regulators (**UGC, AICTE, NCTE etc.**) to ensure effective coordination. Amend UGC Act, 1956 to give legislative backing to regulatory structure. Select **Vice-Chancellors of**

universities through a transparent & objective process. Link University grants to performance.

❖ **Implementation of the claims made by NEP:** The NEP 2020 claims that it is based on principles of **creativity and critical thinking** and envisions an education system that is free from political or external interference. The aim of the new policy is the **universalization of education** from pre-school to secondary level with 100% **Gross Enrolment**



Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030. For instance, the policy states that faculty will be given the “freedom to design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches within the approved framework, including textbook and reading material selections, assignments and assessments”. NEP 2020 will also emphasize in setting up of the **Gender Inclusion Fund, Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions,** and groups. It suggests creating a **National Research Foundation (NRF)**, a merit-based and peer-reviewed research funding, which will be governed, independently of the government, by a rotating **Board of Governors** consisting of the very best researchers and innovators across fields. The new education policy aims at repairing the educational system in the country and making “India a global knowledge superpower”, with a new system that is aligned with the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG 4)**. It also emphasises universal access to schools for all children, raising the **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)**, and ending the rise of dropout rate in India.

CONCLUSION

Every government laments the absence of world-class universities, without realizing that it is attributable in part to their interventions and the growing intrusion of political processes. Where politics is largely kept out—as in **IIT, IIM or the IISc**—institutions thrive. Higher education policy-makers must respond to declining Afi scores. This will also help in making “**India a global knowledge superpower**”, aligned with the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG 4 -Quality Education)**. Academic freedom is primary because universities are

places for raising doubts and asking questions about everything. Exploring ideas, debating issues and thinking independently are essential in the quest for excellence.

QUESTIONS (1-2)

Q.1 What is the maximum value of the Academics Freedom index in which India has scored considerably low with a score of 0.352?

- A. 0.5
- B. 0.8
- C. 1.0: **ANSWER**
- D. 2.0

Q.2 Which of the following institutes have globally published the Academics Freedom Index (AFI) 2020?

- A. Global Public Policy Institute
- B. Friedrich-Alexander University
- C. V-Dem Institute
- D. All of the above: **ANSWER**

Q.3 Which of the following countries have topped the Academics Freedom Index (AFI) 2020?

- A. Uruguay
- B. Portugal
- C. Latvia
- D. Both A & B: **ANSWER**

Q.4 The UGC India is a statutory body set up by the Government of India in accordance to which of the following acts under the Ministry of Education?

- A. UGC Act, 1956: **ANSWER**
- B. UGC Act, 1957
- C. UGC Act, 1960
- D. UGC Act, 1962

Q.5 NEP 2020 is approved by the cabinet and presented by which of the following Union Ministers?

- A. Kiren Rijju
- B. Prakash Javadekar: **ANSWER**
- C. Nirmala Sitharaman
- D. None of the above

ASSAM-MIZORAM BORDER DISPUTE

Assam-Mizoram Border Dispute recently came into the limelight following a **violent clash between the residents of these two states** in the border area. The recent clash occurred on October 17, 2020 when the **residents of Lailapur village in Cachar district of Assam collided with the locals of Kolasib district of Mizoram**. Earlier on October 9, a similar kind of



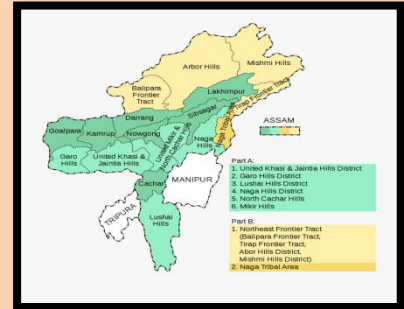
clash took place at the **border area between 'Karamp-imganj' district of Assam and Mamit district of Mizoram**. The Assam-Mizoram Border conflict is not a new one but the dispute has persisted for long. Both the states share a 164.6 km inter-state border. Three Assam districts, namely, **Cachar, Hailakandi and Karamp-imganj** share their border with three Mizoram districts including **Kolasib, Mamit and Aizawl**.

RECENT CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO STATES

As per Mizoram's civil society groups, the **locals of Lailapur village, Cachar district, Assam** have pelted stones on the on-duty personnel of **Mizoram Reserve Battalion**. On the other hand, these charges have been refuted by the Police Officers of Assam. They state that a group of unidentified miscreants from Vairengte, **Kolasib district of Mizoram** burnt shops and hutments along the **National Highway-306 (earlier NH-54) in Lailapur**. Many believe that the incident is the outcome of the demolition of the makeshift hut which was used by the local volunteers near **Saihapui V**. The village is located near to **Vairengte (Mizoram) and adjacent to Karamp-imganj (Assam)**. Amid the pandemic, these local volunteers were keeping a check on the movement of the people. The incident as described by the Mizoram civil society groups is a fight between illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. They have not described it as Assam vs Mizoram heat up. {**Importance of NH-306**: The highway is considered to be the **lifeline of Mizoram**, connecting it with the **rest of India through Silchar, Assam**}.

BACKGROUND OF ASSAM-MIZORAM BORDER DISPUTE

- ❖ The **boundary issue** between present-day **Assam** and **Mizoram** dates back to the colonial era when inner lines were demarcated according to the **administrative needs of British Raj**. The issue could not be settled once and for all when the state was created in **independent India**. The result is both states continue to have a differing perception of the border.



- ❖ **Mizoram was granted statehood in 1987 by the State of Mizoram Act, 1986**. Assam became a **constituent state of India in 1950** and lost much of its territory to new states that emerged from within its borders between the early 1960s and the early 1970s. The **Assam-Mizoram dispute** stems from a **notification of 1875** that differentiated **Lushai Hills from the plains of Cachar**, and another of **1933** that demarcates a **boundary between Lushai Hills and Manipur**. During colonial times, **Mizoram was known as Lushai Hills**, a district of Assam. Mizoram believes the boundary should be demarcated on the basis of the 1875 notification, which is derived from the **Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) Act, 1873**. Mizo leaders have argued in the past against the demarcation notified in 1933 because Mizo society was not consulted.
- ❖ The **Assam government follows the 1933 demarcation**, and that is the point of conflict. According to an agreement between the governments of Assam and Mizoram, the **status quo should be maintained in no man's land in the border area**. In the Northeast's complex boundary equations, clashes between Assam and Mizoram residents are less frequent than they are between other neighboring states of Assam, like with Nagaland.
- ❖ The border between **Mizoram and Assam** is an imaginary line that changes with the naturally **occurring obstacles of rivers, hills, valleys and forests**. People of **Assam and Mizoram** have attributed the border conflicts to the differences over this not-so-clear

boundary. People living in the border areas often cross over to the other side as they are not fully aware of the border demarcation.

OTHER BOUNDARY ISSUES IN NORTH-EAST

During British rule, Assam included present-day Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya besides Mizoram, which became separate states one by one. Currently, Assam has boundary problems with each of them.

ASSAM-NAGALAND

Nagaland shares a 500-km boundary with Assam. It achieved statehood in December 1963 and was formed out of the Naga Hills district of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh (then North-East Frontier Agency). Violent clashes and armed conflicts, marked by killings, have occurred on the Assam-Nagaland border since 1965. The boundary dispute is in the Supreme Court.

ASSAM-ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Both states have a boundary of over 800 km. Arunachal Pradesh was granted statehood by the State of Arunachal Pradesh Act, 1986 in 1987. Clashes were first reported in 1992 and since then, there have been several accusations of illegal encroachment from both sides, and intermittent clashes. This boundary issue is also being heard by the Supreme Court.

ASSAM-MEGHALAYA

The 884-km boundary between the two states also witnesses flare-ups. Meghalaya came into existence as an autonomous state within the state of Assam in April 1970 comprising the United Khasi & Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills districts. In 1972, it got statehood. As per Meghalaya government statements, today there are 12 areas of dispute between the two states.

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Which of the two North-Eastern states recently indulged themselves into a long dated conflict when there is a violent clash between locals of 'Lailapur village ' with the locals of Kolasib district of another state?

- A. Assam-Arunachal Pradesh
- B. Mizoram-Meghalaya
- C. Nagaland-Manipur
- D. Assam-Mizoram: ANSWER**

Q.2 Currently, Which of the following persons are the Chief Ministers of Assam & Mizoram respectively?

- A. Pema Khandu & Sarbananda Sonowal
- B. Sarbananda Sonowal & Pu Zoramthanga: ANSWER**
- C. Sarbananda Sonowal & Shri Neiphiu Rio
- D. N. Biren Singh & Conrad K Sangma

Q.3 Earlier before the year of Independence Mizoram was a part of Assam and it was known by which of the following names?

- A. Lushai Hills: ANSWER**
- B. Phawngpui Hills
- C. Kolasib Hills
- D. None of the above

Q.4 Assam was granted statehood in the year of 1950 itself but in which of the following years does the Mizoram got the status of state under the Union of India?

- A. 1963
- B. 1967

C. 1987: **ANSWER**

D. 1991

Q.5 The Dispute over the boundary of Assam and Mizoram is about the clash between the two demarcation notification issued. Which of the following are these two?

A. Demarcation notification of 1950 v. Demarcation notification of 1987.

B. Demarcation notification of 1875 v. Demarcation notification of 1933: **ANSWER**

C. Demarcation notification of 1881 v. Demarcation notification of 1935.

D. None of the above

INDIA & IRAN RELATIONSHIP (CHABAHAR PORT)

Recently, **Iran's Port and Maritime Organization (PMO)** has conveyed to India a request for locomotives and signaling equipment for the **Chabahar-Zahedan railway line**. Iran has been facing difficulty in procuring them directly due to the **sanctions imposed by the USA**. In November 2018 the **United States imposed the toughest ever sanctions on Iran** aimed at altering the **Iranian regime's "behaviour"**. The sanctions cover



Iran's banking and energy sectors and reinstate penalties for countries and companies in Europe, Asia and elsewhere that do not halt Iranian oil imports. However, 8 countries – **India, China, Italy, Greece, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Turkey** — were temporarily allowed to continue buying **Iranian oil** as they showed “significant reduction” in oil purchase from the **Persian Gulf country**. The United States has exempted India from imposition of certain sanctions for the development of the strategically-located **Chabahar Port in Iran**, along with the construction of the railway line connecting it with **Afghanistan**. Iran has also asked India to activate the **USD 150 million credit line** which was offered to it by India during the Iranian President's visit in 2018.

CHABAHAR PORT OF IRAN

It is located on the **Gulf of Oman** and is only 72 km away from the **Gwadar port in Pakistan** which has been **developed by China**. The port serves as the only oceanic port of Iran and consists of two separate ports named **Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari**. This port is very important for Iran as well as for India. If this route is opened then India will no longer need to seek help of the Pakistan to **reach Afghanistan via road and sea route**. This agreement was signed by Transportation Minister of India Mr. **Nitin Gadkari** and Iranian Minister **Abbas Ahamad**.



- **Trade:** It is being considered a **gateway to golden opportunities for trade** by the three countries with other **Central Asian countries** in the wake of Pakistan denying transit access to India.
- **Security:** China is aggressively pursuing its own **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** under the **One Belt One Road (OBOR) project**. The port can also act as a counter to **Pakistan's Gwadar Port**, which is being developed with Chinese investment.
- **Connectivity:** In future, the **Chabahar project** and the **International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** will complement each other by optimizing Indian connectivity with Russia and Eurasia.

BACKGROUND OF THE CHABAHAR PORT

India started interacting with **Iran on Chabahar Port** around the **year 2003**. However the major push was received in the **second half of 2014**, leading to the signing of an **MoU between Iran and India for the development of Chabahar Port** in May 2015. This MoU translated into a formal 10-year **Contract for Equipping and Operating the Chabahar Port**. A trilateral transit agreement was also signed in May 2016 **between India, Iran and Afghanistan** on Establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor. India in October 2017 sent its first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan through **Iran's Chabahar port**. Since there were challenges in activation of the 10-year contract, the foundation of an interim period contract was laid during the visit of **President of Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Rouhani** to New Delhi in February 2018. Resultantly, a formal short term Contract was signed in May 2018.

CHABAHAR RAIL PROJECT

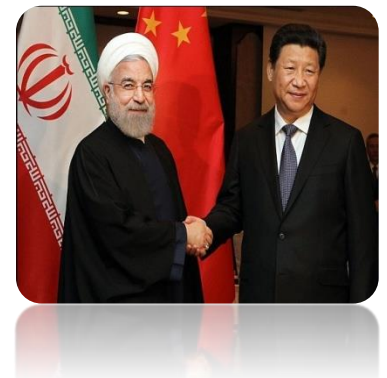
- ❖ In the year 2016, **Prime Minister Modi visited Iran** for a bilateral summit between **India and Iran**. It was for the **first time since 15 years** that an Indian Prime Minister visited Iran. The Governments of Iran and India signed a series of agreements. The

agreement gave rights to India to develop and operate 2 terminals and 5 berths with the multipurpose cargo handling capacities for a period of 10 years to construct and **alternative trade route between Central Asia and Afghanistan.**

- ❖ A **trilateral agreement** was signed between **India, Iran and Afghanistan.** Prime Minister **Modi**, Iranian President **Dr Hassan Rouhani** and the **President of Afghanistan** inked an agreement for Trilateral Transport and Transit Corridor. Under this agreement, **India's state-owned IRCON (Indian Railways Construction Ltd)** agreed to provide assistance to the railway line project and promised to finance the project worth \$1.6 billion.

REASON FOR EXCLUDING INDIA

- ❖ **Iran's Stand:** In July 2020, Iran decided to **proceed with the rail line construction** on its **own**, citing **delays from the Indian side** in beginning and funding the project. However the reason seems to be that the **Iran and China** are close to **finalizing a 25-year strategic partnership.** As per a document on '**Comprehensive Plan for Cooperation between Iran and China**', both the countries will invest in infrastructure; manufacturing and upgrading energy and transport facilities; refurbishing ports, refineries and other installations; and will commit Iranian oil and gas supplies to China during that period. Also, Iran has proposed a tie-up between the **Chinese-run Pakistani port at Gwadar and Chabahar.** It has also offered interests to China in the **Bandar-e-Jask port** which is 350 km away from **Chabahar and its duty-free zone.**



- ❖ **India's Stand:** **IRCON completed** the site inspection and feasibility report, and had been waiting for the Iranian side to appoint a nodal authority. Although the project has secured a **special waiver from the USA**, India is hesitant to deal with the construction company which has links with the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)** and is under the sanctions. The IRGC is a hard-line force which operates its own military

infrastructure in parallel to Iran's regular armed forces. In April 2020, it launched **Iran's first military satellite Noor**. Fear of **sanctions by the USA** has also impacted Indian interest in the **Farzad-B gas field project of Iran**.

Farzad-B Gas Field: It is located in Persian Gulf (Iran) and the contract for exploration of the field was signed in 2002 by Indian consortium comprising Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) Videsh, Indian Oil Corporation and Oil India. The major dispute between India and Iran was over setting up of two pipelines, and also over money to be quoted on the development plan.

CHANGING SCENARIOS IN IRAN-INDIA RELATIONSHIP

With the **results of the USA elections**, both **India and Iran look for the possible ease of sanctions** allowing for increased engagements. India is also keeping an eye on the negotiations on a **25-year strategic cooperation agreement between China and Iran** (worth USD 400 billion) which could fund other parts of the **Chabahar development**, including a free trade zone along the **Makran coast**, and oil infrastructure projects, impinging on India's strategic ties with Iran.

QUESTION (1-5)

Q.1 Which of the following ports is a seaport located in Gulf of Oman, Iran & strategically important for India as well?

- A. Gwadar Port
- B. Hambantota Port
- C. Chabahar Port: **ANSWER**
- D. Trincomalee Port

Q.2 Gwadar Port which is the deepest sea port in the world, situated on the Arabian Sea in Balochistan province of Pakistan is developed by which of the following nations?

- A. China: **ANSWER**
- B. United States of America
- C. Afghanistan
- D. India

Q.3 Which of the following statements is/are incorrect about the advantages of the Chabahar Port?

- A. Port plays an important role for Iran as well as for India.
- B. India will be able to reach Afghanistan directly
- C. It will act as a counter to Pakistan's Gwadar Port.
- D. None of the above: **ANSWER**

Q.4 From the following options, Which of these are not correctly matched?

- A. Chabahar Port: Iran
- B. Gwadar Port: Pakistan
- C. Hambantota Port: China: **ANSWER**
- D. Sittwe Port: Myanmar

Q.5 In Recent times, which of the following countries has imposed toughest sanctions ever on Iran which can hamper the effort of India in Chabahar Port?

- A. United Arab Emirates
- B. Israel
- C. China
- D. United States of America: **ANSWER**

POLITICAL CRISIS IN KYRGYZSTAN

Over the past few days, **Kyrgyzstan, the land-locked country that lies in Central Asia bordering China**, has seen **violent protests**. Thousands of participants clashed with police forces in the **country's capital, Bishkek** last week. Often referred to as the only democracy in the region, the country is witnessing one of its **worst political crises in decades**. On 9th October



Kyrgyzstan president, Sooronbai Jeenbekov, who came to power in 2017 after winning a vote share of over 54 per cent, declared a state of emergency in the capital till October 21, giving **permission to the military to step in** after a fresh set of clashes broke out between supporters of rival politicians. **Protesters in Kyrgyzstan** have captured key **government buildings, including the Parliament house and the presidential office** and the **situation is like a coup**.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROTEST

Kyrgyzstan had faced two revolutions during the early 21st century, including the **Tulip Revolution in 2005** and the **Kyrgyz Revolution of 2010**. In August 2020, **Kyrgyz President Sooronbai Jeenbekov** indicated that the parliamentary elections would not be postponed despite the **coronavirus pandemic**. During the elections, several parties were accused of buying votes. Several journalists also reported that they had been harassed or attacked. Out of the parties that made it into parliament, only **United Kyrgyzstan** consistently **opposes the incumbent government led by Jeenbekov**. Political analysts have tied the 2020 protests to a socio-economic divide between **Kyrgyzstan's agrarian south and more-developed north**. Of the initial election results, 100 of the 120 seats were filled by southerners who supported **Jeenbekov**. The current protests began after early results of the parliamentary election were announced. **Political parties in Kyrgyzstan** should win at least 7% of the popular vote to enter Parliament. The results showed that only four parties managed to cross the threshold and of which, three were pro-government parties. The only one opposition party could cross the threshold.

CAUSES OF THE PROTEST

Even before the election, political fault lines were sharpening in Kyrgyzstan. The country's main political party, the **Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK)**, stayed out of the election due to intra-party rift and split. Several political leaders were detained and elections were perceived as rigged. Consequently, after elections, protestors formed a Coordination Council to lead the "revolution". The country's **Election Commission** annulled the results, but the protestors continued.

- **Official View:** Opposition's intention is to instigate a political coup.
- **The Opposition's View:** The elections were rigged which made people protest against the establishment.

INDIA & KYRGYZSTAN BILATERAL TIES

❖ India has enjoyed **strong bilateral ties with Kyrgyzstan** since **1991**. India was one of the first countries to **establish diplomatic ties with Kyrgyzstan in 1992**. Since 1992, the two countries have many agreements, including on **Culture, Trade and Economic Cooperation, Civil Aviation, Investment Promotion and Protection, Avoidance of Double Taxation, Consular Convention** etc. In 2011, the **joint 'Khanjar' series of exercises** was started.



❖ **Indian Diaspora in Kyrgyzstan-** about 9,000 Indian students are studying medicine in various medical institutions in the country. **Strategic:** The **Kyrgyz leaderships** have been **largely supportive of India's stand on Kashmir**. They also **support India's bid** for a **permanent seat at the UNSC**. Departure from a Democratic Regime may bring uncertainty for India's interests

KYRGYZSTAN'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR OTHER COUNTRIES

- ❖ Kyrgyzstan has been **key to the strategic plans of both Russia and China**. Russia considers the region as its backyard and plays hard politics to retain its influence. **Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)**. CSTO is a Russia-led military **alliance of six former Soviet states** that was created in 2002. Its aim is to ensure the **collective defence** of any member **that faces external aggression**.
- ❖ **Members of CSTO: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation and Tajikistan**. While Russia has cultivated strong ties with all political factions in **Kyrgyzstan**, radical political changes could throw up opportunities for its rivals. Belarus, another country in Russia's backyard with a pro-Russia President, is already witnessing political turmoil after **August's Presidential election**. In the South Caucasus, the conflict between **Armenia and Azerbaijan, both former Soviet Republics, over Nagorno-Karabakh**, risks dragging Russia into a conflict that Russia doesn't want. All three combined, Russia's attempts to build stronger political and economic integration with the former Soviet region are suddenly facing critical challenges.
- ❖ **CHINA**: This **landlocked Central Asian country** that shares a **long border with China**. It is located at the centre of Eurasia, is a **vital link in its Belt and Road Initiative**. In 2019, Chinese President visited Bishkek (capital) - shows close link with the current establishment. **China has built road and rail networks** with Kyrgyzstan and **Uzbekistan**.
- ❖ **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**: During the early stages of the **Afghan war**, the USA had used **Kyrgyzstan for refuelling** and other logistical purposes. The USA base was shut down in 2014 by Parliament. A regime change can **be favourable for the USA**.

RECENT SCENARIO IN KYRGYZSTAN

❖ **State of Emergency:** Jeenbekov had introduced a **state of emergency** in the **capital, Bishkek**, which was endorsed by the parliament on October 13. The authorities had **deployed troops to Bishkek** over the weekend and introduced the curfew. The move eased tensions in the city, where residents feared looting that had accompanied the previous uprisings and began forming vigilante groups to protect property. **Jeenbekov had also supported the appointment of Sadyr Zhaparov**, a former lawmaker who was freed from jail by demonstrators last week, **as the country's new prime minister**. He endorsed **Zhaparov's new Cabinet**.



❖ **Resignation of President Sooronbay Jeenbekov:** **Kyrgyzstan President Sooronbay Jeenbekov stepped down** from his position on October 15, 2020 to bring an end to the turmoil that has gripped the nation after the disputed parliamentary elections. In an official statement, **Jeenbekov stated that holding on to power wasn't worth the integrity of the country** and agreement in society. The decision came after intense calls from protestors and political opposition, demanding for **Sooronbai Jeenbekov's resignation & the Kyrgyzstan was plunged into crisis** after October 4 General Elections, which were swept by pro-government parties. The opposition criticized the elections, accusing the government of vote-buying and other irregularities. Following the election results, protestors took over government buildings and looted some offices. The **Central Election Commission** then nullified the election, following which the **opposition planned to oust Jeenbekov** and form a new government. Hundreds of protestors came together in **Kyrgyzstan's capital city, Bishkek** to demand for **Jeenbekov's resignation**.

QUESTION (1-5)

Q.1 Which of the following is the former President of Kyrgyzstan who resigned in October this year amidst the political Crisis in the country?

- A. Almazbek Atambayev
- B. Sooronbay Jeenbekov: **ANSWER**
- C. Sadyr Zhaparov
- D. Sapar Isakov

Q.2 Recently, Kyrgyzstan is facing a political turmoil in the capital city of which in result imposed the Emergency in the capital. Which of the following is the capital city of Kyrgyzstan?

- A. Bishkek: **ANSWER**
- B. Tashkent
- C. Karakol
- D. Astana

Q.3 Which of the following persons who had been recently freed from the jail and has been appointed as the Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan?

- A. Sooronbay Jeenbekov
- B. Askar Akayev
- C. Sadyr Zhaparov: **ANSWER**
- D. Sapar Isakov

Q.4 Kyrgyzstan, a landlocked country in Central Asia is also one of the members of CSTO, which is headquartered in _____?

- A. Moscow, Russia: **ANSWER**
- B. Saint Petersburg, Russia

C. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

D. Astana, Kazakhstan

Q.5 India has shared strong bilateral & diplomatic ties with Kyrgyzstan. Which of the following joint exercises is conducted by these two countries?

A. Exercise Yudh Abhyas

B. Exercise Ajeya Warrior

C. Exercise Varuna

D. Exercise Khanjar: **ANSWER**

POLITICAL SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

The politics of Pakistan takes place within the **framework established by the constitution**. The country is a **federal parliamentary republic** in which provincial governments enjoy a high degree of **autonomy and residuary powers**. Executive power is vested with the national cabinet which is headed by the **Prime Minister {currently Imran Khan}** who works coherently along with the bicameral parliament and the judicature. Stipulations set by the constitution provide a delicate check and balance of sharing powers between **executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government**. Whereas, the **head of the state is the President** who is elected by the electoral college for a five-year term. **Arif Alvi** is currently the **President of Pakistan**.



PAKISTAN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT 2020

❖ Formed in September 2020, **Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)** is a **coalition of 11 political parties** against the **Imran Khan administration**. It is interesting to note that the movement has brought two major but rival political parties of Pakistan together-- **PPP and PML**. The **Pakistan People's Party (PPP)** is led by **Bilawal Bhutto** and the **Pakistan Muslim League (PML)** is led by the exiled **Nawaz Sharif** but is currently headed by **his daughter Maryam**.



❖ The **Pakistan Democratic Movement or PDM** is led by **Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman**. The coalition was formed from 11 political parties which are as follows: **Awami National Party, Awami National Party- Wali, Balochistan National Party (Mengal), Jamiat Ahe Hadith, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, National Party-Bizenjo, Pakistan Muslim League (N), Pakistan Peoples Party, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party,**

Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, Qaumi Watan Party. These political parties represent Pakistan's entire political spectrum virtually. '**Vote ko izzat do**' in Urdu which means '**respect the sanctity of the vote**' is the **slogan** of the PDM.

- ❖ The PDM claims that the **2018 General Election of Pakistan** was rigged by the **Pakistani military**. The **2018 Pakistani General Election** was won by Pakistan **Tehreek-e-Insaf party**. Former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, in his broadcast speech from London, alleged that the **Army Chief Javed Bajwa** and the **ISI Chief Faiz Hameed** installed **Imran Khan on the Prime Ministerial post** by rigging the 2018 General Elections.
- ❖ The movement has provided a national platform to the **regional parties of Pakistan**. The provincial leaders from **Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** who were previously targeted by the Pakistani Army as they demanded **regional autonomy** and an end to repression, now have a national platform. As per the Government of Pakistan, the leaders of the political parties who had previously governed Pakistan (**the PML-N and PPP**) have corruption cases against them. Thus, they have **unified together to oust Prime Minister Imran Khan**.

REASON OF THE FORMATION OF COALITION OF 11 PARTIES

It is known that **Prime Minister Imran Khan** is politically isolated and to oust his government, the **Pakistani Military must be targeted**. PDM has **so far managed three rallies** in October 2020 (Pakistani Punjab's Gujranwala on October 18, two days later in Karachi, and in Quetta on October 25), opposing the present Government of Pakistan. Many times in the past, the **Pakistani military has manipulated the political parties** and their leaders in playing off one against the other. However, with the unification of all the political parties, this manipulation may not work. In October 2020, the PDM organised the protests drawing over 50,000 people. A '**long march**' is **planned in January next year to oust the present government**. The movement has generated **political momentum** and may trigger significant changes in the **administration of Pakistan**.

GILGIT-BALTISTAN TO BE THE FIFTH PROVINCE

❖ Recently, **Pakistan** has decided to elevate **Gilgit-Baltistan's** status to that of a full-fledged province. **Gilgit-Baltistan** is one of the **disputed territories of India**. It is an **autonomous region** now and with this elevation, it will become the **5th province of the country**. Currently, Pakistan has four provinces namely **Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh**.



- ❖ In 1999, **Pakistan's Supreme Court** ruled that the **people of Gilgit-Baltistan are Pakistani citizens** and directed the federal government to start appropriate administrative and legislative measures. In 2009, The **Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order** were introduced, whereby the Northern Areas were renamed as **Gilgit-Baltistan** and the region was **given province-like status** but **without representation in Parliament**. In 2015, a committee constituted by the federal government proposed giving **Gilgit-Baltistan the status of a province**. And recently a new order was introduced which transferred all powers of the **Gilgit-Baltistan council to its assembly**.
- ❖ This elevation will lead to adequate representation from the province on all constitutional bodies, including the National Assembly and the Senate. The Government will also start working on the **Moqpondass Special Economic Zone (SEZ)** under the **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**. SEZs work as an **engine for economic growth** supported by quality infrastructure complemented by an attractive fiscal package, both at the Centre and the State level, with the minimum possible regulations.
- ❖ But **in response India** has held that the **Government of Pakistan** or its **judiciary has no locus standi** on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it. **India completely rejects such actions** and continued attempts to bring material changes in Pakistan occupied areas of the **Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir**. While protesting Islamabad's efforts to

bring material change in Pakistan occupied territories, India held that Pakistan should immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation.

PAKISTAN IN FATF'S GREY LIST

- ❖ The **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** has decided to keep **Pakistan on the “Grey- list”** till the next review of its compliance to the recommendations in February 2021. The decision was taken after a three-day virtual plenary session. The FATF had issued the 27-point action plan after **placing Pakistan on the ‘Grey List’** in June 2018. The action plan pertains to curbing money laundering and terror financing.



- Recently, the task force’s **International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG)** noted that **Pakistan had complied with 21 points**. Since 2007, the ICRG has analysed high-risk jurisdictions and recommended specific action to address the money laundering/terror financing risks emanating from them. At the **recent plenary session, the FATF observed that Pakistan has made progress across all action plan items** and has largely addressed 21 of 27 action items.
- ❖ Keeping Pakistan on the ‘Grey List’, the **FATF strongly urged Pakistan to swiftly complete its full action plan** by February 2021. The points on which Pakistan failed to deliver included its lack of action against the non-profit organisations linked to the terror groups banned by the **UN Security Council (UNSC)**; and delays in the prosecution of banned individuals and entities like **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed and LeT operations chief, Zaki Ur Rahman Lakhvi, as well as Jaish-e- Mohammad chief Masood Azhar**.
 - ❖ While Saeed was sentenced in February 2020 to 11 years in prison for terror financing, the Pakistan government claims that others are “untraceable”. **Further, Pakistan was found non-compliant** in cracking down on terror financing through narcotics and smuggling of mining products including precious stones. The FATF process also showed

concern about the 4,000 names that were on Pakistan's Schedule-IV list under the **Anti-Terrorism Act** up to January, but went missing in September 2020. The FATF listing makes it **extremely difficult** for Pakistan to get **financial aid** from the **International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Union**.

QUESTION (1-5)

Q.1 Which of the following forms of Government is prevalent in Pakistan within the framework established by the constitution?

- A. Parliamentary form of Government
- B. Federal Republic
- C. Presidential form of Government
- D. Both A & B: ANSWER**

Q.2 Recently Pakistan is going through a political crisis where a Coalition of 11 parties was formed to oust the current Prime minister Imran Khan. What is the name of the coalition of different parties?

- A. National People's Movement
- B. Pakistan People's Movement
- C. Pakistan Democratic Movement: ANSWER**
- D. Pakistan Democratic Alliance

Q.3 Which of the following parties is not a part of Coalition of 11 parties formed against Imran Khan?

- A. Awami National Party
- B. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI): ANSWER**
- C. Pakistan Muslim League (N)

D. Pakistan People's Party

Q.4 Recently, Pakistan has decided to give a full fledged province status to which of the following disputed regions?

A. Gilgit-Baltistan: **ANSWER**

B. Balochistan

C. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

D. Sindh

Q.5 In which of the following places does the FATF headquartered which has kept Pakistan in its "Grey List"?

A. Geneva, Switzerland

B. New York, USA

C. Paris, France: **ANSWER**

D. Lyon, France

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA & ITS JURISDICTION

The Supreme Court of India is the **highest judicial court** and the final court of appeal under the Constitution of India, the **highest constitutional court**, with the power of judicial review. India is a federal State and has a single and unified judicial system with three tier structure, i.e. **Supreme Court, High Courts and Subordinate Courts.**

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SC OF INDIA

The **promulgation of the Regulating Act of 1773** established the **Supreme Court of Judicature at Calcutta as a Court of Record**, with full power & authority. It was established to hear and determine all complaints for any crimes and also to entertain, hear and determine any suits or actions in **Bengal, Bihar and Orissa**. The **Supreme Courts at Madras and Bombay** was established by **King George – III** in 1800 and 1823 respectively. **The India High Courts Act 1861** created High Courts for various provinces and abolished Supreme Courts at **Calcutta, Madras and Bombay**. These High Courts had the distinction of being the highest Courts for all cases till the creation of **Federal Court of India under the Government of India Act 1935**. After India attained independence in 1947, the Constitution of India came into being on **26 January 1950** and replaced **Federal Court of India** and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council which were then at the apex of the Indian court system. In place the Supreme Court of India came into existence and its first sitting was held on **28 January 1950**. The law declared by the **Supreme Court** is binding on all Courts **within the territory of India**.



CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO SC IN INDIA

The **Indian constitution** provides for a provision of the Supreme Court under Part V (**The Union**) and Chapter 6 (**The Union Judiciary**). Articles from **124 to 147** in Part V of the Constitution deal with the organization, independence, jurisdiction, powers and procedures of the Supreme Court.

Article 124 says that There shall be a Supreme Court of India which currently consists of a **Chief Justice of India and 30**

other judges of SC & Every Judge of the Supreme Court shall be **appointed by the President** by warrant under his hand and seal after consultation with such of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose.

A **Judge of the Supreme Court** shall be removed from his office by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of **not less than two - thirds of the members of that House present and voting** has been presented to the President in the same session for such removal on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity. A person shall not be qualified for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court unless he is a **citizen of India** and —



- Has been for at least **five years a Judge of a High Court** or of two or more such Courts in succession.
- Has been for at **least ten years an advocate of a High Court** or of two or more such Courts in succession
- Is, in the opinion of the President, **a distinguished jurist.**

JURISDICTIONS OF THE SUPREME COURT

ORIGINAL JURISDICTION (ARTICLE 131)

As a Federal court, the **Supreme Court decides disputes between** different units of the Indian Federation. More elaborately, **any dispute between:**

- Centre and one or more states; or
- Centre and any state or states on one side and one or more states on the other; or
- Between two or more states.

In the above federal disputes, the **Supreme Court has exclusive original jurisdiction.**

WRIT JURISDICTION (ARTICLE 32)

The Supreme Court is empowered to issue writs, including **habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo-warranto and certiorari** for the enforcement of the **fundamental rights** of an aggrieved citizen. In this regard, the Supreme Court has original jurisdiction in the sense that an aggrieved citizen can go directly to the Supreme Court, not necessarily by way of appeal. However, the **writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is not exclusive.** The **High Courts are also empowered to issue writs** for the enforcement of the **Fundamental Rights.**

APPELLATE JURISDICTION (ARTICLE 132, 133, 134)

The Supreme Court is primarily a **court of appeal** and hears **appeals against the judgments of the lower courts.** It enjoys a **wide appellate jurisdiction** which can be classified under four heads:

- Appeals in **constitutional matters**
- Appeals in **civil matters**

- Appeals in **criminal matters**
- Appeals by **special leave**

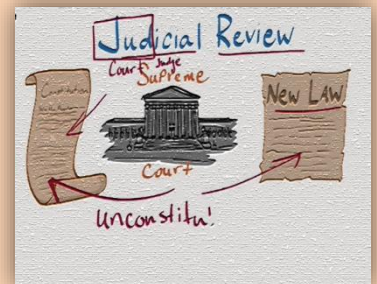
ADVISORY JURISDICTION

The **Constitution** under **Article 143** authorizes the President to seek the opinion of the **Supreme Court** in the two categories of matters:

- On any **question of law or fact of public importance** which has arisen or which is likely to arise.
- On any dispute **arising out of any pre-constitution treaty, agreement, covenant, engagement and** other similar instruments.

OTHER POWERS OF SUPREME COURT

- ❖ **Power to punish for contempt (civil or criminal)** of court with simple imprisonment for 6 months or fine up to 2000. **Civil contempt** means **willful disobedience** to any judgment. **Criminal contempt** means **doing any act which lowers the authority** of the court or causing interference in judicial proceedings. Judicial review is also one of the powers of the SC to examine the constitutionality of legislative enactments and executive orders. The grounds of review is limited by- Parliamentary legislation or rules made by the Supreme Court.
- ❖ **Appointment of ad hoc judges-Art 127** states that if at any time there is lack of quorum of Judges of Supreme Court, the **CJI** may with the previous **consent of the President and Chief Justice of High Court** concerned request in writing the attendance of **Judge of High Court** duly qualified to be appointed as **Judge of SC**.



- ❖ **Appointment of retired judges of Supreme Court or High court - Art 128-** The CJI at any time with the previous consent of the **President and the person to be so appointed** can appoint any person **who had previously held the office of a Judge of SC.**

- ❖ **Appointment of acting Chief Justice- Art 126-** when the **office of CJI is vacant** or when the Chief Justice is by reason of absence or otherwise unable to perform duties of the office, the President in such case can appoint the Judge of the court to discharge the duties of the office.

- ❖ **Revisory Jurisdiction:** The **Supreme Court under Art. 137** is empowered to review any **judgment or order** made by it with a view to **removing any mistake or error** that might have crept in the judgement or order.

QUESTION (1-10)

Q.1 From which source India got the concept of Single order of court?

- A. Government of India Act, 1935: **ANSWER**
- B. Government of India Act, 1919
- C. Pitts India Act, 1773
- D. None of the following

Q.2 Which of the following Articles talks about the establishment of the Supreme Court?

- A. Article 176
- B. Article 153
- C. Article 124: **ANSWER**
- D. Article 324

Q.3 Which of the following statements is/are not true about India's Supreme Court?

- A. Article 124 to 147 and Part V of the Indian Constitution informs about the composition and powers of the Supreme Court?
- B. The Supreme Court was inaugurated on January 28, 1950
- C. At present, there are 35 judges in the Supreme Court: **ANSWER**
- D. Judges of Supreme Court are appointed by the President of India

Q.4 Which qualification is wrong for being a judge in the Supreme Court?

- A. It is compulsory to be a citizen of India.
- B. He should be a respected jurist in the eyes of Parliament: **ANSWER**
- C. Must be a judge in the High Court for at least 5 years
- D. He should be a lawyer in the High Court for at least 10 years

Q.5 Which statement regarding the tenure of judges of the Supreme Court is not correct?

- A. Judge of the Supreme Court can remain in office till the age of 65 years.
- B. Judge of the Supreme Court gives his resignation letter to the Chief Justice: **ANSWER**
- C. On the recommendation of Parliament, he can be removed by the President.
- D. Supreme Court judge can be removed only in the condition of misconduct

Q.6 Who can remove the Judge of the Supreme Court?

- A. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
- B. Only President
- C. Only Parliament
- D. Both Parliament and President: **ANSWER**

Q.7 Which of the following statements is/are true?

- A. Article 143 deals with Presidential reference to the Supreme Court.

- B. Advice given by the Supreme Court under article 143 is not binding on the President.
- C. The Supreme Court cannot punish for contempt of tribunals.
- D. Both 1 & 2: ANSWER**

Q.8 Who among the following has the right to establish the bench of Supreme Court elsewhere in the country?

- A. The Chief Justice of India
- B. The President of India
- C. The Parliament
- D. CJI with prior approval of the President: ANSWER**

Q.9 Which of the following Article talks about the Original Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of India?

- A. Article 143
- B. Article 136
- C. Article 131: ANSWER**
- D. Article 130

Q.10 The Supreme Court of India has a wide appellate jurisdiction which defines supreme court as a court of appeal. Which of the following is the matter in which appellate jurisdiction is not available?

- A. Appeals in constitutional matters
- B. Appeals in civil matters
- C. Appeals in criminal matters
- D. None of the above: ANSWER**

TENSIONS ESCALATING BETWEEN FRANCE & TURKEY

❖ **Tensions between Turkey and France** are rising, as **Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan** calls for a **boycott on French good** and slams **French President Emmanuel Macron's** call for a "**French Islam.**" The increased friction follows the beheading of a teacher in France after he showed his class caricatures of the **Prophet Mohammad** published by the **satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.**



❖ **Schoolteacher Samuel Paty** was killed after a lesson on freedom of speech to his civics class involving the cartoons. In Macron's eulogy at **Paty's funeral**, he said France would never give up its liberties, or its cartoons. "We will continue, professor. We will defend the freedom that you taught so well and **we will promote secularism**, we will not renounce caricatures, drawings, even if others retreat," Macron said earlier this month. "We will continue the fight for freedom and the freedom of which you are now the face." In response, **Turkey and Pakistan** accused **French President** of running an **anti-Islamic agenda** and provoking Muslims.

SCENARIO BETWEEN TURKEY AND FRANCE

❖ Other **Muslim-majority countries** have weighed in. **Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi** called for respect for the views of others, and opposed the use of violence to defend religious beliefs. **Pakistan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Iran** all condemned Macron. Turkey has long seen himself as Islam's most prominent defender, especially against perceived slights from Europe. Also in 2017, **Turkey expelled the Dutch ambassador** amid a row over Holland's refusal to allow **pro-Erdogan political**



rallies on its soil. But Erdogan's favorite target seems to be France, a country with which Turkey has some sharp foreign policy differences.

- ❖ France had accused **Turkey of escalating the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia** over the disputed **Nagorno-Karabakh region**. **Paris and Ankara** support opposing sides in the conflict in **Libya**, with **France backing Benghazi-based General Khalifa Hifter** and **Turkey supporting the U.N.-recognized government in Tripoli**, which beat back Hifter's attempted attack on the Libyan capital this spring after months of fighting.
- ❖ **Tensions spiked in the Mediterranean** earlier this year, when Turkish military vessels prevented a French frigate from searching a cargo ship suspected of violating a U.N. arms embargo by **carrying weapons to Libya**. France is also leading the international criticism of Turkish moves to explore for natural gas in the **Eastern Mediterranean** in areas **claimed by Cyprus**. Elsewhere, the two countries have foreign policy differences in Syria, with France being more supportive of Kurdish fighters that Turkey views as terrorists. As the feud over the **Charlie Hebdo cartoons** continued, Paris recalled its ambassador from Turkey in protest. Other European countries, meanwhile, have come to France's defense.

FRANCE TO FIGHT "ISLAMIC SEPARATISM"

French President Emmanuel Macron has announced plans for tougher laws to tackle what he called "**Islamic separatism**" and defend secular values. In a keenly awaited speech, **Mr. Macron** said a minority of France's estimated six million Muslims were in danger of forming a "counter-society". His proposals include stricter oversight of schooling and control over foreign funding of mosques. But some accused Mr Macron of trying to repress Islam in France. Under **France's strict principles of secularism**, the **government is separated by law from religious institutions**. The idea is that people of different religions and beliefs are equal before the law. Groups that practice radical forms of Islam were trying to create a parallel society governed by different rules and values than those espoused by the Republic. **“What we need to take on is**

Islamic separatism,” France’s working-class suburbs that surround its major cities—have become fertile recruiting grounds for Islamist groups. France was one of the West’s biggest sources of Islamic State militants. Many have mounted **terrorist attacks in France that have killed more than 250 people over the past five years.**

INDIA'S SUPPORT TO FRANCE

- ❖ **India condemned the criticism of Turkey and Pakistan** on French President, by calling the criticism in violation of the most basic standards of international discourse. **India also condemned the murder of schoolteacher** as brutal terrorist attack. While France has seen repeated violent incidents around caricatures and cartoons that are deemed offensive, it is unusual for India to wade into a controversy over religion in another country.



- ❖ In 2015, after the **attack on Charlie Hebdo** journalists and cartoonists, India condemned the incident by calling that **India was on the side of those who condemn this barbaric incident.** India’s support for French President could have been influenced by the fact that **the charge against the French President has been led by Turkey and Pakistan,** two countries that have repeatedly attacked India over **Jammu and Kashmir** and alleged **human rights violations.**

INDIA-FRANCE PARTNERSHIP

- ❖ India has **close strategic ties with France,** especially on issues of mutual interest from **counter-terrorism to defence, and nuclear to space.** France had also backed the India’s proposal for a global conference on terrorism. Both the countries also support organising a new **“No Money for Terror” - an International Conference on Fighting Terrorist Financing.**

- ❖ Two countries agreed to enhance their operational cooperation and launch fresh efforts to **fight radicalisation, especially Online Radicalisation**. Both countries have a defence dialogue at the Ministerial level. The three services have **regular defence exercises: Exercise Shakti (Army), Exercise Varuna (Navy), Exercise Garuda (Air Force) &** Recently, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has received its first batch (5 out of 36) of **French Rafale aviation combat aircraft at Ambala Air base (Haryana)**.
- ❖ In the field of Space both have decided to deepen space cooperation to meet new challenges together, whether it concerns planetary exploration or human spaceflight. France has agreed to be part of **India's Venus mission, scheduled for 2025**. ISRO's **Venus instrument, VIRAL (Venus Infrared Atmospheric Gases Linker)** has been co-developed by Russian and French agencies.
- ❖ France has been extremely supportive of India at the **UN Security Council on Kashmir and Pakistan-sponsored terrorism**, among other issues. The Prime Minister of India was a special invitee at **the 45th G-7 Summit in Biarritz, France** where India was one of the "**Goodwill**" partners. The two countries also have a close cooperation on climate change, and have formed & considered as the founding members of International Solar Alliance.
- ❖ India's relations with France are built on a **foundation of shared democratic values** and are informed by a commonality of interest in issues such as sustainable development and climate change. France also opens the pathway for **deeper engagement with Europe** on global issues, especially after uncertainty in the region due to **Brexit**. The new partnerships with France, Germany and other like-minded countries like Japan would hopefully turn out to be far more consequential for India's influence on the global stage.

QUESTION (1-5)

Q.1 The caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad which increased the friction between France & Turkey was published by which of the following magazines?

- A. The London charivari
- B. Toons Mag
- C. Charlie Hebdo: **ANSWER**
- D. None of the above

Q.2 Who is the current President of Turkey who calls for boycott of french goods & made personal attacks on French President?

- A. Abdullah Gul
- B. Recep Tayyip Erdogan: **ANSWER**
- C. Bashar al-Assad
- D. Hassan Rouhani

Q.3 Which of the following statements is/are correct about the stand of India over the tensions escalating between France and Turkey?

- A. India is supporting France: **ANSWER**
- B. India is supporting Turkey
- C. India doesn't have a definite stand over the issue
- D. None of the above

Q.4 Recently, India was a special invitee at the 45th G-7 Summit which was held at which of the following places?

- A. Berlin, Germany
- B. Milan, Italy

C. Paris, France

D. Biarritz, France: **ANSWER**

Q.5 Which of the following statements is/are wrong about the relationship between India and France?

A. India has received Rafale Aviation aircraft from France

B. India & France are partners in Venus Mission scheduled for 2025

C. India and France conduct Army Exercise every year named 'Ajeya Warrior': **ANSWER**

D. None of the above

THAILAND PROTESTS 2020

In Thailand, protests have been ongoing against the government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, which have included demands for reform of the Thai monarchy, unprecedented in the contemporary era. The protests were initially triggered by the dissolution of the Future Forward Party (FFP) in late February 2020. The party was critical of Prayut and the country's political landscape designed by the current 2017 constitution. The protesters are mostly students and young people without an overall leader.



BACKGROUND OF THE PROTEST

Initially, the government allowed peaceful and lawful protests but now stringent control, due to anarchy in protests. The roots of the current **discontentment go back to the 2014 coup which brought the junta** (military dictatorship) in power which tightened its grip on power and introduced more and more restrictions on the public. **In 2017, the military introduced a new Constitution**, which allowed the military to **appoint a 250-member Senate** that would play a role in **selecting the Prime Minister**. The country held the delayed **Parliamentary election in 2019**, which was seen as a mere exercise to transfer power from the junta to an elected government. **Thailand's royal family** has considerable influence over the country's political system and is revered by citizens. Many, particularly young Thais, have increasingly started questioning the monarchy's role, its privileges, and the power it has exerted in the country for years.

WAVES OF PROTEST AND THE PROTESTERS

- ❖ **The first wave protests** were triggered by **the Constitution Court** decision to disband the **FFP** on 23 February 2020. Demonstrations since erupted in various high schools, colleges, and universities nationwide. These **student-organized protests** also came with

various hash tags unique to their institutions. The protests, however, were limited to individual institutions. A Thai historian scholar noted that street protests have never created political changes if the military sided with the government. The protests, which were organized **exclusively on the academia grounds**, were halted in late February due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

- ❖ On 18 July, **Thailand saw the largest street demonstration since the 2014 Thai coup d'état** at the Democracy Monument in Bangkok with around 2,500 protesters. The protesters, organised under the name **Free Youth announced** the three core demands, which include: **dissolution of the House, ending intimidation of the people and drafting a new constitution**. A Free Youth leader stated that they do not aim to overthrow the monarchy. The gathering was planned to last overnight, but it was cancelled by midnight for security reasons. After 18 July, the protests soon spread across the country. The first were in **Chiang Mai province and Ubon Ratchathani Province** on 19 July. By 23 July, demonstrations had been organized in more than 20 provinces. Most of the **protestors are students and young people** in their 20s.

DEMANDS OF THE PROTESTERS

- ❖ Protesters also seek the **scrapping of “Lese Majeste laws”**. The monarchy is protected by **Section 112 of the Penal Code**, which says whoever defames, insults or threatens the king, queen, heir-apparent or regent shall be **jailed for three to 15 years**. This law has remained virtually unchanged since the creation of the country's first criminal code in 1908, although the penalty was toughened in 1976.



- ❖ **Students submitted 10 demands to the government**, asking for a separation of the King's assets and the Crown Property Bureau (quasi-government institution to manage the monarch's property in Thailand). They also wanted to **cut the Palace's share in the**

national budget, a ban on the **King from expressing his political views**, and safeguards to prevent him from endorsing future coups. Some protesters want to reverse a 2017 increase in the **king's constitutional powers**, made the year after he succeeded his widely revered late **father King Bhumibol Adulyadej**.

- ❖ **Pro-democracy activists** say that Thailand is backtracking on the constitutional monarchy established when absolute royal rule ended in 1932. Also, the monarchy is too close to the army and argues that this has undermined democracy.
- ❖ **Other Demands:** The students have also called for the **Prime Minister's resignation**; a new Constitution; **fresh, free and fair elections**; and an **end to attacks on dissidents and opposition parties such as the Future Forward Party**.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROTESTS

- ❖ The state has attempted to **severely restrict online freedom of speech**. On 24 August, in response to a Thai government order, **Facebook blocked access in Thailand** to the million-member main Facebook page critical of the monarchy, Royalist Marketplace. Facebook is challenging the order in the courts. A Thai media provider was reported to be censoring a foreign news network reporting the protests.



- ❖ **A severe state of emergency was declared in Bangkok** during 15–22 October, during which the police **moved to ban or block anti-government or independent media**, together with the Free Youth Facebook page, and **seized books criticizing the monarchy**. Ministry of Digital Economy and Society stated it intended to **prosecute internet service providers and online platforms** which allows prohibited content, and reported about 320,000 illegal messages. In response, several Thai press associations issued a joint statement **opposing suppression of the media**. The authorities also required foreign diplomats to obtain advance permission to observe protests.

- ❖ The King and the palace initially did not express any public opinion about the protests. In August, a government official stated that the **King was not bothered by the 'children's' protests**, but an article reported that the **Thai monarchy** has asked **Thai media** to censor mention of the ten demands.

QUESTION (1-5)

Q.1 In Thailand, the protests have been ongoing against the government of which of the following Prime Ministers?

- A. Prawit Wongsuwan
- B. Prayut Chan-o-cha: ANSWER**
- C. Thaksin Shinawatra
- D. None of the above

Q.2 Which of the following political parties of Thailand was banned which has triggered the protesters?

- A. Move Forward Party
- B. Pheu Thai Party
- C. Future Forward Party: ANSWER**
- D. Thai Liberal Party

Q.3 The Siamese Revolution which had turned the Absolute monarchy to the Constitutional Monarchy happened in which of the following years?

- A. 1932: ANSWER**
- B. 1936
- C. 1955
- D. 1972

Q.4 Which of the following is/are true about the demands of the protesters who are protesting in Thailand?

- A. They seek scrapping of lese majeste laws.
- B. Protesters called for PM Prayut Chan-o-cha's resignation
- C. Protesters wanted to cut the palace's share in the National budget
- D. All of the above: ANSWER**

Q.5 India & Thailand shares good relationship on strategic level & they both are the members of which of the following organizations?

- A. ASEAN
- B. BIMSTEC
- C. SAARC
- D. Both A & B: ANSWER**

US EXITS PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

On June 1, 2017, **United States President Donald Trump** announced that the U.S. would cease all participation in the 2015 **Paris Agreement on climate change** mitigation, and begin negotiations to re-enter the agreement "on terms that are fair to the United States, its businesses, its workers, its people, its taxpayers," or form a new agreement. In withdrawing from the agreement, Trump stated that "The **Paris accord** will undermine **(the U.S.) economy,**" and "**puts (the U.S.) at a permanent disadvantage.**"



In accordance with **Article 28 of the Paris Agreement**, a country cannot give notice of withdrawal from the agreement before three years of its start date in the relevant country, which was on November 4, 2016 in the **case of the United States**. The **White House** later clarified that the U.S. will abide by the four-year exit process. On November 4, 2019, the administration gave a formal notice of intention to withdraw, which takes **12 months to take effect**. Until the withdrawal took effect, the United States was obligated to maintain its commitments under the Agreement, such as the requirement to continue reporting its emissions to the United Nations. **The withdrawal took effect on November 4, 2020**, one day after the **2020 U.S. presidential election**. After it leaves, the US will be the only country left out of the global protocol. Syria and Nicaragua, the last remaining countries who were earlier holding out, also became signatories in 2017.

PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The **Paris Agreement of 2016** is an **international accord** that brings almost **200 countries together** in setting a common **target to reduce global greenhouse emissions** in an effort to fight climate change. **Parties to UNFCCC** agreed to strive to limit the rise in **global warming to well less than 2 degrees Celsius** and to try and limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius, over pre-industrial levels by 2100, under the **Paris Agreement**.

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) were conceived at **Paris summit** which require each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** that it intends to achieve. Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions. **Paris Agreement** replaced earlier agreement to deal with climate change, **Kyoto Protocol**.

PROCEDURE & REASON OF EXITING THE AGREEMENT

- **Article 28 of the Paris Agreement allows countries to leave the Paris Agreement** and lays down the process for leaving. A country can only give a notice for leaving at least three years after the Paris Agreement came into force. This happened on **November 4, 2016**. Therefore, the US was eligible to move a notice for leaving on November 4 this year, which it did. The withdrawal is not immediate, however. It takes effect one year after the submission of the notice. It means the **United States** will be out of the **Paris Agreement** only on November 4 next year.
- During his 2016 presidential campaign, **Donald Trump** had said the Paris Agreement was “**unfair**” to US interests. He had promised to pull out of the Agreement if he was elected. The **United States is the world’s second largest emitter of greenhouse gases**. If it does not reduce its emissions befitting its status as the second largest emitter, it could seriously **jeopardise the world’s objective of keeping the global temperature rise to within 2 degrees Celsius** from pre-industrial times.
- As part of its commitment to the Paris Agreement, the United States had promised to reduce its emissions by 26 per cent to 28 per cent by the year 2025 from 2005 levels. The United States plays a **prominent role in mobilising financial resources globally**, and its absence from the scene could seriously hamper that effort. Under the **Paris Agreement**,



developed countries are under obligation to **mobilise at least \$100 billion** every year from the year 2020 in climate finance meant for the developing world. This amount has to be revised upwards after five years. As it is, countries are struggling to reach this amount by next year. **The US was opposed to this move.**

IMPLICATIONS OF THE US EXIT FROM THE AGREEMENT

- ❖ The **biggest impact of the exit of the United States** from the Agreement might be on the **financial flows to enable climate actions**. The United States is the **world's second largest emitter of greenhouse gases**. If it does not reduce its emissions befitting its status as the second largest emitter, it could seriously jeopardize the world's objective of keeping the global temperature rise to **within 2 degrees Celsius** from pre-industrial times.
- ❖ Under the Paris Agreement, developed countries are under obligation to **mobilise at least \$100 billion** every year **from the year 2020** in climate finance meant for the developing world. The exit of USA might hamper these efforts too. While exiting the Paris Agreement does not automatically mean the abandonment of this target or of any future action by the United States on climate change, it would no longer be committed to the targets recommended by the Paris Agreement.
- ❖ **However US can re-join the agreement** whenever it wishes to do so. There is **no bar on a country re-joining the Paris Agreement**. It is also possible that the United States does a rethink and actually never leaves the Paris Agreement. It has one full year to reconsider its decision.

OTHER RELATED INITIATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

- ❖ **UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty** adopted on 9 May **1992** and opened for signature at the **Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro** from 3 to 14 June 1992, entered into force on 21 March 1994. The **UNFCCC objective is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations** in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.



Currently, **there are 197 Parties (196 States and European Union)** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

- **Kyoto Protocol:** The **Kyoto Protocol** is an **international agreement** linked to the **UNFCCC**, which commits its parties by setting internationally binding emission reduction targets. The **Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan in 1997** and entered into force in 2005. It recognized that developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of **GHG emissions** in the atmosphere as a result of more than 150 years of industrial activity. The detailed rules for the implementation of the Protocol were **adopted at COP-7 in Marrakesh, in 2001** and are referred to as the Marrakesh Accords. **Kyoto Protocol Phase-1 (2005-12)** gave the target of cutting down emissions by 5%. **Phase- 2 (2013-20)** gave the target of reducing emissions by at least 18% by the industrialized countries.
- **COP24:** The 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference was the **24th Conference of the Parties** to the **UNFCCC (COP24)**, also known as the Katowice Climate Change Conference. It was held in December 2018 in **Katowice, Poland**. The Conference of the Parties (**COP**) is the **supreme body of the UNFCCC**, consisting of the representatives of the Parties to the Convention. COP holds its sessions every year and takes decisions which are necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention and regularly reviews the implementation of these provisions. The aim of the conference was to **finalize a rulebook for Paris agreement 2015**

- The **International Carbon Action Partnership (ICAP)** was **founded in 2007** by more than 15 government representatives as an international cooperative forum, bringing together states and sub-national jurisdictions that have implemented or are planning to implement **emissions trading systems (ETS)**. ICAP was launched in order to join carbon markets all over the world and by that be more successful in combating climate change. ICAP includes members from the **European Union Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS)**, **Western Climate Initiative (WCI)**, **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)**, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Japan and Ukraine are observers.

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Which of the following countries recently withdrawn themselves from the Paris Agreement on climate change?

- A. Israel
- B. United Arab Emirates
- C. United States of America: **ANSWER**
- D. India

Q.2 Which of the following Article of Paris Agreement says that a country cannot give notice of withdrawal from the agreement before three years of its start date in the relevant country?

- A. Article 25
- B. Article 28: **ANSWER**
- C. Article 32
- D. Article 36

Q.3 UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty of which the Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme body of it. UNFCCC is headquartered at which of the following places?

- A. Geneva, Switzerland
- B. Paris, France
- C. Katowice, Poland
- D. Bonn, Germany: **ANSWER**

Q.4 Which of the following statements is/are incorrect about the implications of the US exit from the Paris Agreement?

- A. US plays a prominent role in mobilising financial resources.
- B. Being a world's second largest emitter of greenhouse gases its exit can hamper the effort.
- C. US provide 200 billion dollars which is 90% of the total mobilised resources: **ANSWER**
- D. None of the above

Q.5 Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the UNFCCC, which commits its parties by setting internationally binding emission reduction targets & was adopted in _____ in 1997?

- A. Japan: **ANSWER**
- B. China
- C. South Korea
- D. Malaysia

QUESTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL BREAKDOWN (ART. 356)

Recently, the **Supreme Court** stayed the **Andhra Pradesh High Court order** that sought to convene a **suo moto judicial inquiry** into whether there is a “**constitutional breakdown**” in the Andhra Pradesh Government. This was clearly a case of judicial overreach by the **A.P. High Court**. The question of a “**constitutional breakdown**” or the failure of constitutional machinery is dealt



with under **Article 356 of the Constitution**, whose invoking comes under the prerogative of the executive and not the judiciary. Though the Supreme Court has rightfully intervened in a tussle between the judiciary and the **elected government in Andhra Pradesh**, the A.P High court’s order opens up the possibility of use or **even misuse of Article 356** by the judiciary. Hence, there is a need for making essential changes to the constitution, so as to stop the misuse of Article 356 and **strengthen Indian Federalism in true spirit**.

ARGUMENTS OF THE STATE

- **Unprecedented:** The **order of the High Court**, on October 1, came while deciding habeas corpus petitions filed by relatives of **persons remanded in judicial custody or on bail**. The **High Court had suo motu** summoned the State counsel to assist it in deciding “**whether in circumstances prevailing in the State of AP, the court can record a finding that there is constitutional breakdown in the State or not**”.



- **Lacks Basis:** The state government then asked for that order to be recalled, saying none of the original applications had asked the **question of “Constitutional Breakdown”**.

- *Against Article 356*: Judiciary has no role in deciding whether there is Constitutional breakdown in the state, **necessitating President's rule**. This power is vested in the executive **under Article 356 of the Constitution**.
- *Against Doctrine of Separation of Powers*: The HC Order is a “**serious encroachment**” on the powers of the executive as enumerated under the Constitution and is thus **violative of doctrine of Separation of powers**.
- *Appealed to Supreme Court*: The order was clearly seen as a case of judicial over-reach by the A.P. High Court and was thus appealed to Supreme Court

SAY OF SUPREME COURT OVER THE ISSUE

- The **Supreme Court** stayed the order issued by the **AP High Court asking the Andhra Pradesh government** whether there was breakdown of constitutional machinery in the state. Supreme Court observed that they had not seen any order issued like this by the **AP High Court** in any case and the **apex court found it to be disturbing**. The Court **directed issue of notice and stay** and ordered the registry to list the case after the Supreme Court vacation.
- The HC was shocking as it opens up the **possibility of use or even misuse of Article 356 by the judiciary**. The Supreme Court's order comes in the wake of incidents pointing to a tussle between the judiciary and the **elected government in Andhra Pradesh**. **CM Jagan Mohan Reddy** had, in an unprecedented letter to the CJI, complained about the alleged hostile attitude of the High Court against him and his government besides making controversial allegations against a senior Supreme Court judge. The onus is now on the Supreme Court to put an end to the **unseemly tussle between the judiciary and government in the State**. Ordering an internal inquiry into the Chief Minister's letter would be a good beginning. **A clear nullification of the High Court order** will also ensure that such legal adventures impinging upon the **separation of powers in the State are not repeated**.

BACKGROUND OF ARTICLE 356

No liberal democratic Constitution in the world has a provision such as an **Article 356** that gives the central government the power to **dismiss a democratically-elected State government** except the **Constitution of Pakistan**. Both India and Pakistan borrowed this provision from the **Government of India Act, 1935**. The leaders of



the Indian freedom struggle were so very opposed to this provision that they forced the British government to suspend it. **Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935** was never brought into effect. However, the provision which we had opposed during our freedom struggle was incorporated in the Constitution for the **preservation of democracy, federalism and stability** in the post-independent era.

ARTICLE 356 AND MISUSE OF POWER

Even though **B.R. Ambedkar had assured** that it would remain a dead letter, **Article 356 has been used/misused** more than **125 times**. In almost all cases it was used for political considerations rather than any genuine breakdown of constitutional machinery in the States. **Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi used Article 356 as many as 27 times**, and in most cases to remove majority governments on the ground of political stability, absence of clear mandate or withdrawal of support, etc. In retaliation, the **Janata government** removed nine state Congress governments, when for the first time they **formed the government in 1977**. Indira Gandhi on her **return to power in 1980** removed nine Opposition majority governments at one go. Subsequent governments too acted in a similar fashion.

SAFEGUARDS RELATED TO ARTICLE 356

The **1994 Supreme Court (S.R. Bommai case)** majority decision, in essence, overturned a long tradition that the use of **Article 356** was not really subject to review by courts, a doctrine articulated in a **landmark 1977 case, State of Rajasthan vs Union of India**. The **Bommai case**

verdict laid down the conditions under which State governments may be dismissed, and mechanisms for that process. In the **S.R. Bommai case**, a **nine-member bench of the Supreme Court** construed the **scope of Article 356**, which also allows the **imposition of President's Rule in the States**, with stringent conditions. These included ascertaining whether objective conditions exist which render it impossible to carry out governance in the State where the proclamation has been made and the process has to be approved **by both Houses of Parliament before consideration for judicial review**.

CONCLUSION

- **Judiciary Restraining Itself:** Judiciary should realise that **Judicial activism** may be good as a rare exception but an activist judiciary is neither good for the country nor for the judiciary itself.
- **Fine-tuning Role of Governor:** In order for the smooth functioning of democratic government and strengthening the spirit of federalism, it is important that the governor must act judiciously, impartially and efficiently while exercising his discretion and personal judgment. In this context, the recommendations of the **Sarkaria Commission and Punchhi Commission** should be followed in true spirit. For example, the **'procedure for appointment of governors should be clearly laid down'** and conditions of appointment must also be laid down and must assure a fixed tenure for the governor.
- **Need for President's Activism:** President under the Indian constitution is bound by the aid and advice of the Indian Constitution. However, the President can use its suspensive veto in case of malicious application of Article 356. For example, **former president K.R. Narayanan twice returned the cabinet's recommendation** on October 22, 1997, in respect of the **Kalyan Singh government in Uttar Pradesh** which had just won the controversial confidence vote and stating that **imposition of President's Rule** would be constitutional impropriety.

- The **nullification of the A. P High Court** order by the Supreme Court will ensure that such legal adventures impinging upon the separation of powers in the State are curtailed. However, in order to prevent repeated misuse of **Article 356 major constitutional amendments and strong political will is required.**

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Recently, the Supreme Court stayed the order of which of the following state's High Court that sought to convene a suo moto judicial inquiry into whether there is a “constitutional breakdown” in that state?

- A. Andhra Pradesh High Court: **ANSWER**
- B. Telangana High Court
- C. Karnataka High Court
- D. Kerala High Court

Q.2 Which of the following terms relates to an action taken by a court of its own accord, without any request by the parties involved?

- A. Ab initio
- B. Actus reus
- C. Ad idem
- D. Suo Moto: **ANSWER**

Q.3 Which of the following Articles states that the central government has the power to dismiss a democratically-elected State government or to impose President's rule in that state?

- A. Article 352
- B. Article 32
- C. Article 256

D. Article 356: ANSWER

Q.4 The provision of Imposing Emergency at state or central Level which is envisaged in the Indian Constitution is borrowed from which of the following nations?

- A. Constitution of USA
- B. Government of India Act, 1935: ANSWER**
- C. Constitution of UK
- D. Regulating Act, 1773

Q.5 The power to impose State Emergency during the breakdown of Constitutional machinery is first imposed in which of the following states?

- A. Uttar Pradesh
- B. Punjab
- C. Jammu and Kashmir
- D. Tamil Nadu

ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT & TIGRAY CRISIS 2020

The **Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed** has vowed to continue the **military operation in the Tigray region** amid concerns it could descend into civil conflict. Nearly 30 years after the end of its 17-year civil war, Ethiopia is on the brink of **another disastrous conflict**. The heightening military encounter between the **Government of Ethiopia and the State Government of Tigray** region may destabilize 110 million population of the country. Ethiopian Prime Minister has **ordered Tigray forces to 'surrender peacefully'** within 72 hours as the Government troops advance on the **capital, Mekelle**. However, TPLF has vowed to keep fighting against the Federal Government. **Abiy** has declared war on the country's Tigray region, which is ruled by the powerful **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)**, in response to its attack on a federal military base in **Tigray**.



BACKGROUND OF THE ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT

After becoming **Ethiopia's Prime Minister** in April 2018, **Abiy Ahmed** reached out to the political opposition, ushered democratic reforms, lifted curbs on the media and made peace with Eritrea - moves that won him the **Nobel Peace Prize in 2019**. **Eritrea is a sworn enemy of the TPLF**, which shares a long border with the **Tigray region**.

He also removed **TPLF** from senior government positions. His push to concentrate more power in the hands of the government alienated the TPLF further. **Abiy has formed a new political coalition**, the Prosperity Party, all constituents of the **Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)**, except the TPLF, joined the new platform. When the federal government postponed the general elections in August to 2021 citing the coronavirus pandemic, **Tigray politicians** accused him of a power grab and held elections, in September, in the region, in defiance of the government. Rising tensions led to an attack on the military base.

TIGRAY PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT

- It is a **militia-turned-party**, which was part of the coalition that brought an end to the military dictatorship in 1991. **TPLF leader Meles Zenawi** took over as the interim President in 1991 and became the **first elected Prime Minister in 1995**. He is largely seen as the architect of the country's **ethno-federal system** and remained in power till 2012. It had played a dominant role in the country's ruling coalition, the **Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF - put together by Zenawi)**.
- Though the **EPRDF contains regional political parties** such as the **Amhara Democratic Party**, the **Oromo Democratic Party** and the **Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement**, the TPLF remained the dominant political force. The Tigray people make up roughly **6% of the population**, while the **Oromos have a 34% share** and the **Amharas 27%**. The Oromos have alleged marginalisation and called for better representation. Over the years, the government led by the EPRDF, was accused of being increasingly authoritarian and there were frequent mass protests in the regions. In 2018, the EPRDF chose Abiy, a former military intelligence officer, to lead the government amid growing protests and a political deadlock.
- **Abiy's Stand:** Abiy, the country's **first Oromo leader**, claimed that his actions are not driven by ethnic calculations but rather aimed at addressing the historic power imbalance in the country and making peace with the neighbours.

MAJOR IMPACTS OF THE CONFLICT

- **TPLF** has fired rockets into **Eritrea from Tigray**, threatening a wider regional war in the **Horn of Africa**. Horn of Africa houses the countries of **Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia**. Rebels also fired rockets into the neighbouring **Amhara region**. Even if

Abiy is serious about keeping the operation short, it could spill out of control given the underlying complexities of the conflict. The TPLF has **thousands of fighters** under their command. Also, the **Tigray region shares a border with Sudan**. The TPLF enjoyed good relations with Sudan's **ousted dictator Omar Bashir**. Sudan has an unresolved border dispute with Ethiopia. If Sudan's new rulers keep the old links with the TPLF active and the border open for the rebels, the conflict could go on. Earlier this year, in the midst of **Ethiopia's long-standing conflict with Egypt** over the construction of the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam** over the Blue Nile, Sudan had already found itself forcefully involved in the spat. There have also been reports of atrocities targeting civilians by both sides. Many have even fled to Sudan.

- The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** reported that thousands of refugees had been crossing the border and arriving in Sudan after the military conflict and anticipated many more to arrive as the conflict escalates. There have been **humanitarian concerns in Ethiopia** as phone and internet connections have been down since the beginning of the conflict. The **Ethiopia-Eritrea war** already **displaced thousands of civilians** and the latest conflict adds on in the number of displaced people and may lead to a humanitarian crisis in the country. The **Ethiopian government** is ready to receive and reintegrate our fellow Ethiopians fleeing to neighboring countries. We vow to our innocent civilians that have fled, to protect their property, enable humanitarian support by the **ENDF** and guarantee their peace upon return.

- Amid the **military conflict in Ethiopia**, people are moving to Sudan in large numbers and the country may witness a civil war. Many experts are of the view that if this internal conflict spills outside Ethiopian borders, it has the potential to **destabilise the Horn of Africa region**. The **Horn of Africa has 4 countries**, namely, **Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti**. Also, the **United States and China** have their strategic military bases in the region, the closest being Djibouti. Any impact on these military bases and facilities may result in the involvement of the respective countries in the **internal military conflict of Ethiopia**.

INDIA-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONSHIP

- **Ethiopia is one of the largest recipients** of long term concessional credit from India in Africa.
- Lines of Credit worth more than **USD1 billion** have been sanctioned to Ethiopia for sectors such as **rural electrification, sugar industry and railways.**



- **Tele-Education and Tele-Medicine** services under the **Pan African e-network Project** was launched in **Addis Ababa** in July 2007.
- The **Tele-Education project** has been replicated by the Ethiopian side and linkages established between the **Addis Ababa University** and the Indian Institutes of Technology at Delhi and Kanpur.
- **Bilateral trade between Ethiopia and India** stood at USD 1.28 billion in 2018-19, out of which Indian exports to Ethiopia were USD 1.23 billion and imports were USD 55.01 million.
- There are more than **586 Indian companies in Ethiopia** employing more than 55,000 people with licensed investment of over **USD 4 billion.** About **58.7% of Indian investments** are in the manufacturing sector, followed by **agriculture (15.6%).**

CONCLUSION

Abiy can reach out to regional political leaderships, especially the TPLF, find common ground, and run the country peacefully by restoring the balance between ethnicities and regions and **decentralising the federal government.** The protection of civilian safety and security is essential. The African Union can play a role in this. **Nobel laureate Abiy Ahmed Ali** is the youngest **Head of Government in Africa.** On 2 April 2018, he became **the youngest Prime**

Minister of Ethiopia at the age of 41. Born of a Muslim **father and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Christian mother**, he is seen as an inspirational leader **who would usher changes in Ethiopia.**

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Which is of following is the Prime Minister of Ethiopia who is also awarded with Nobel Peace Prize for maintaining peace in the nation?

- A. Abiy Ahmed: **ANSWER**
- B. Jawar Mohammed
- C. Meles Zenawi
- D. Mikael Imru

Q.2 Which of the following statement is/are incorrect in the context of the Ethiopian Tigray Crisis or the Ethiopian conflict?

- A. There is encounter between the Government of Ethiopia and the State Government of Tigray region.
- B. Eritrea, which is an African country is in conflict with Tigray.
- C. Abiy Ahmed is the leader of Tigray People's liberation front: **ANSWER**
- D. None of the above

Q.3 Which of the following leaders of TPLF became the first elected Prime Minister in 1995?

- A. Abiy Ahmed
- B. Jawar Mohammed
- C. Meles Zenawi: **ANSWER**
- D. Mikael Imru

Q.4 Which of the following countries is not a part of Horn of Africa?

- A. Djibouti
- B. Eritrea
- C. Ethiopia
- D. Egypt: ANSWER**

Q.5 The African Union which is a continental union consisting of 55 member states is headquartered at which of the following places?

- A. Mogadishu, Somalia
- B. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: ANSWER**
- C. Djibouti City, Djibouti
- D. None of the above

GOOD GOVERNANCE DAY (ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE)

Good governance day is celebrated annually on **25th December** to mark the **birth anniversary of the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee**. The aim is to create awareness of accountability in government among the citizens of India. It is the **process of decision-making** and the process by which **decisions are implemented** (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as **corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance**.

ABOUT THE FORMER PM ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born on **25th December, 1924** in the erstwhile princely state of **Gwalior** (now a part of Madhya Pradesh). He entered in national politics during the **Quit India Movement of 1942** which hastened the end of British colonial rule. In 1947, **Vajpayee** started working as a journalist for newspapers of **Deendayal Upadhyaya — Rashtradharma** (a Hindi monthly), **Panchjanya** (a Hindi weekly) and the dailies **Swadesh and Veer Arjun**. Later, influenced by **Syama Prasad Mookerjee**, Vajpayee joined the **Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951**. He was the former **Prime Minister of India** and was elected to the position twice in 1996 and 1999. As a parliamentarian, Vajpayee was awarded with the **Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant Award for Best Parliamentarian** in 1994, which defines him as "a role model par excellence for all legislators." He was conferred with the **country's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna in 2015** and second-highest civilian honour, the **Padma Vibhushan in 1994**.



CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE DEFINED BY UN

- **Participation:** People should have a **voice in decision-making**, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that **represent their interests**.

- **Rule of law:** Legal frameworks should be **fair and enforced impartially**, particularly the **laws on human rights**.
- **Transparency:** Transparency is built on the free flow of information. **Processes, institutions and information** are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.
- **Responsiveness:** **Institutions and processes** try to serve all **stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe**.
- **Consensus orientation:** Good governance requires mediation of the **different interests in society** to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the **best interest of the whole community** and how this can be achieved.
- **Equity:** All groups, particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to **improve or maintain their well being**.
- **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Processes and institutions produce results that **meet needs while making the best use of resources**.
- **Accountability:** Decision-makers in government, the **private sector and civil society organisations** are accountable to the public, **as well as to institutional stakeholders**.



CHALLENGES TO GOOD GOVERNANCE

- **Women Empowerment:** Women are not **adequately represented** in government institutions, and other allied sectors.
- **Corruption:** The **high level of corruption in India** has been widely perceived as a major obstacle in improving the quality of governance.

- **Delay in Justice:** A citizen has the **right to avail timely justice**, but there are several factors, because of which a **common man doesn't get timely justice**. One such factor is lack of **personnel and logistics under disposal of court**.
- **Centralisation of Administrative System:** Governments at lower levels can only function efficiently if they are empowered to do so. This is particularly relevant for the **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**, which currently suffer from inadequate devolution of funds as well as **functionaries to carry out the functions** constitutionally assigned to them.
- **Criminalisation of Politics:** The **criminalisation of the political** process and the unholy nexus between politicians, civil servants, and business houses are having a baneful influence on public policy formulation and governance. **Environmental security, sustainable development.** Challenges of **globalization, liberalisation and market economy.**

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY GOVT. FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

- **Good Governance Index:** GGI has been launched by the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions** to determine the status of governance in the country. It assesses the impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.



- **National e-Governance Plan:** It has the vision to “make all government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and **ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services** at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man.”

- ***Right to Information Act, 2005:*** **Right to Information (RTI)** is an act of the Parliament of India which sets out the rules and procedures regarding **citizens' right to information**. It replaced the former **Freedom of Information Act, 2002**. Under the provisions of RTI Act, any citizen of India may request information from a "**public authority**" (**a body of Government or "instrumentality of State"**) which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. In case of matter involving a **petitioner's life and liberty, the information** has to be provided **within 48 hours**. The Act also requires every public authority to computerize their records for **wide dissemination and to proactively publish certain categories of information** so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.
- ***Setting up of NITI Aayog:*** The **NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India)** is a **policy think tank** of the Government of India, established with the aim to achieve sustainable development goals with **cooperative federalism by fostering the involvement of State Governments of India** in the economic policy-making process using a bottom-up approach. Its initiatives include "**15-year road map**", "**7-year vision, strategy, and action plan**", **AMRUT, Digital India**, Atal Innovation Mission, Medical Education Reform, agriculture reforms (Model Land Leasing Law, Reforms of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act, Agricultural Marketing and Farmer Friendly Reforms Index for ranking states), Indices **Measuring States' Performance in Health, Education and Water Management**, Sub-Group of Chief Ministers on Rationalization of Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Sub-Group of Chief Ministers on **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Sub-Group of Chief Ministers on Skill Development, Task Forces on Agriculture and up of Poverty**, and Transforming India Lecture Series. Other programme for good governance includes **Make in India programme, Lokpal**, etc.

LAUNCH OF E-SAMPADA WEB PORTAL

The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** on December 25, 2020, launched a new web portal and mobile app, **e-Sampada** to **boost transparency and accountability** while ensuring

ease of living for the citizens of India. **E-Sampada** aims to provide ‘**One Nation, One System**’, the four websites (eawas.nic.in, grpa.nic.in, holidayhomes.nic.in and states.gov.in) and the two mobile apps (m-Awas and m-Ashoka5) of the Directorate of Estates have been integrated into one paving the way for all the services on the same platform.

The new application will be providing a single window for all the services which includes office space allotment to government organizations in 45 office complexes in 28 cities, allotment for **over one lakh government residential accommodations**, booking of 5, Ashoka Road, and 1,176-holiday homes for the social functions, etc. The web portal and mobile app have been developed by NIC. **E-Sampada mobile app will be available for Android as well as iOS platforms.**

OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

- **E-Sampada** has been developed by the government to **simplify the process and for bringing uniformity in the systems across India.**
- It will **promote the ease of living for the Indian government’s officers/departments** as all the services can be easily availed online on a single window with live tracking of applications.
- Through e-Sampada, **the real-time information** on the delivery of service and **utilization of assets will facilitate the maximum utilization of resources.** The automated processes under it will lead to **greater transparency and will minimize human intervention.**

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Good governance day is celebrated annually on 25th December to mark the birth anniversary of which of the following personalities?

A. Rajiv Gandhi

- B. APJ Abdul Kalam
- C. Lal Bahadur Shastri
- D. Atal Bihari Vajpayee: ANSWER**

Q.2 Which of the following is not among the characteristics of Good Governance as defined by the United Nations?

- A. Transparency
- B. Accountability
- C. Trusteeship: ANSWER**
- D. Equity

Q.3 Which of the following ministries is responsible for the launch of the Good Governance Index?

- A. Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs
- B. Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions: ANSWER**
- C. Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment
- D. None of the above

Q.4 RTI which sets out the rules and procedures regarding citizens' right to information replaces which of the following earlier Acts?

- A. Freedom of Information Act, 2002: ANSWER**
- B. Right to Information Act, 1982
- C. Right to Information Act, 2003
- D. Freedom of Information Act, 2000

Q.5 E-SAMPADA which is a web portal and mobile app, to boost transparency and accountability for Good Governance, recently launched by which of the following Union Ministers?

- A. Ravi Shankar Prasad
- B. Thawar Chand Gehlot
- C. Hardeep Singh Puri: **ANSWER**
- D. Ramesh Pokhriyal

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX 2020

According to the **report released by UNDP- United Nations Development Programme**, India has been ranked at **131 among 189 countries in Human Development Index 2020**. The index is a measure of a nation's health, standards of living, and education. The 2020 Report has introduced planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index, which adjusts the standard **Human Development Index (HDI)** by a country's per capita carbon dioxide emissions and material footprint.

The other indices that form the part of the Report are:

- **Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI),**
- **Gender Development Index (GDI),**
- **Gender Inequality Index (GII) and**
- **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).**

HDI emphasizes that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the **development of a country, not economic growth alone**. The Index is based on three Basic Dimensions of Human Development: **A long and healthy life, Access to knowledge, and A decent standard of living.**

TOP PERFORMERS OF THE INDEX

Norway topped the index, followed by **Ireland and Switzerland**. Hong Kong and Iceland complete the top five.

Performance of the Asian Region: Singapore was ranked 11, Saudi Arabia 40, and Malaysia was at 62 in the global index, representing the top bracket among the Asian countries **with "very high human development"**. Sri Lanka (72), Thailand (79), China (85) and Indonesia and Philippines (both 107), and Vietnam (117), among others, were **"high human development"**

countries. India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Cambodia, Kenya and Pakistan were ranked among countries with “medium human development” with ranks between 120 and 156.

INDIA'S PERFORMANCE IN THE INDEX

- The **Human Development Index value of India for 2019 was 0.645** which put the country in the medium human development category. India has **ranked 131 out of 189 countries** while it ranked **130 in 2018** in the development index. **Shoko Noda, the UNDP Resident Representative,** stated that the drop in India’s ranking from 130 to 131 doesn’t mean that India didn’t do well, it means that other countries did better. He added that India can also help other countries too and appreciated its commitment to reduce carbon emissions. Between **1990 and 2019**, India’s HDI value increased from **0.429 to 0.645, an increase of 50.3%.**



- **Long and Healthy Life:** Life expectancy for Indian’s at birth was **69.7 years in 2019**, slightly lower than the south Asian average of 69.9 years. Between **1990 and 2019**, **India’s life expectancy at birth increased by 11.8 years.**
- **Access to Knowledge:** The expected years of schooling in India was **12.2 years**, compared with 11.2 years in Bangladesh and 8.3 years in Pakistan. Between **1990 and 2019**, **mean years of schooling increased by 3.5 years**, and expected years of schooling increased by 4.5 years.
- **A Decent Standard of Living:** In terms of **Gross National Income (GNI) per capita**, India at USD 6,681 fared better than some others in 2019, despite a fall over the previous year. India’s GNI per capita increased by about 273.9% between 1990 and 2019.

PLANETARY PRESSURES-ADJUSTED HDI

- The **PHDI** adjusts the standard **HDI** by a country's level of **carbon dioxide emissions and material footprint**, each on a per capita basis.




- **Performance of the Countries:** Norway, which tops the HDI, falls 15 places if this metric is used, leaving **Ireland at the top of the table**. The United States (HDI Rank -17) and Canada (HDI Rank -16) would fall 45 and 40 places respectively, reflecting their disproportionate impact on natural resources. The **oil and gas-rich Gulf States** also fell steeply. **China would drop 16 places** from its **current ranking of 85**.
- **India's Performance:** India would move up eight places in the ranking. **Under the Paris Agreement, India pledged to reduce the emission intensity** of its GDP from the 2005 level by **33-35% by 2030** and to obtain **40% of electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030**. Solar capacity in India increased from 2.6 gigawatts in March 2014 to 30 gigawatts in July 2019, achieving its target of 20 gigawatts four years ahead of schedule. In 2019, **India ranked fifth for installed solar capacity**. The **National Solar Mission** aims to promote solar energy for power generation and other uses to make solar energy competitive with fossil fuel-based options.

OTHER INDICES RELATED TO IT

- ***Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index:*** The IHDI indicates percentage loss in HDI due to inequality. For India, **IHDI value for 2019 is 0.537** (16.8% overall loss).
- ***Gender Development Index:*** GDI measures **disparities on the HDI by gender**. For India, **GDI value for 2019 is 0.820** (World: 0.943).

- **Gender Inequality Index:** GII presents a composite measure of gender inequality using three dimensions: Reproductive health, Empowerment and The labour market. In **GII, India is at 123rd rank. Last year, it was ranked 122nd out of 162 countries.**
- **Multidimensional Poverty Index:** MPI captures the **multiple deprivations that people in developing countries face in their health, education and standard of living.** The most recent survey data publicly available for India's MPI estimation refer to 2015-2016. In India, **27.9% of the population** (3,77,492 thousand people) are **multidimensionally poor**, while an **additional 19.3%** are classified under **vulnerable to multidimensional poverty** (2,60,596 thousand people).

OTHER IMPORTANT FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- The **devastating effects of Covid-19** have taken the world's attention, other layered crises, from climate change to rising inequalities, continue to take their toll. The **challenges of planetary and societal imbalance are intertwined:** they interact in a vicious circle, each making the other worse.
- 
- **Challenges Related to Children:** Indigenous children in **Cambodia, India and Thailand show more malnutrition-related issues** such as stunting and wasting. In India, different responses in parent behaviour as well **as some disinvestment in girls' health and education** have led to higher malnutrition among girls than among boys as a consequence of shocks likely linked to climate change.
 - **Displacements in 2020:** Disasters continued to trigger **most new displacements in 2020. Cyclone Amphan hit Bangladesh and India**, driving the largest single displacement event in the first half of the year, triggering 3.3 million pre-emptive evacuations.

- **Expanding human development** - more education of **women and girls, more economic empowerment of women**, more bargaining power of young girls in households, reduced poverty, etc. Evidence from Colombia to India indicates that financial security and ownership of land **improve women's security and reduce the risk of gender-based violence**, clearly indicating that owning land can empower women.

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 The Human Development Index 2020 which is a measure of a nation's health, standards of living, and education is released by which of the following organization?

- A. United Nations Development Programme: **ANSWER**
- B. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- C. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- D. United Nations Environment Programme

Q.2 What has been the India's rank in recently released Human Development Index calculated among 189 countries?

- A. 122
- B. 117
- C. 131: **ANSWER**
- D. 108

Q.3 Which of the following is not one of the other indices that form the part of the Report?

- A. Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)
- B. Human Capital Index: **ANSWER**
- C. Gender Development Index (GDI)
- D. Gender Inequality Index (GII)

Q.4 Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the findings of the Index recently published?

- A. Switzerland topped the Human Development Index
- B. The Human Development Index value of India for 2019 was 0.645: **ANSWER**
- C. There are two other indices that form the part of the Report
- D. None of the above.

Q.5 From the following options, which of the countries is not in the list of top five?

- A. Ireland
- B. Norway
- C. Canada: **ANSWER**
- D. Switzerland.

INDIA & QATAR BILATERAL COOPERATION

Recently, **India's External Affairs Minister** met the **top leaders of Qatar** and discussed strengthening the **economic and security cooperation between the two countries**. The visit is part of **India's ongoing outreach to West Asia**, which the country sees as part of its extended **neighbourhood**. Qatar is a member of the **Gulf Cooperation Council**.



India and Qatar agreed to maintain regular consultations and coordination on all issues of **mutual interest at multilateral fora**. Issues of mutual interest include energy, power, petrochemicals, investments, infrastructure, development, project exports and education. Discussed ways to strengthen the **multifaceted bilateral relationship** in areas such as **energy, trade, investment, food processing, healthcare, education, culture, defence and security**. **Bilateral trade** was worth **USD 10.95 billion** in 2019-20. India thanked Qatar for taking care of people from the Indian community during the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

India and Qatar have maintained close **high-level contacts** during the pandemic. India appreciated **Qatari Businessmen Association's commitment** for business partnerships with India and briefed them about new opportunities flowing from **Atmanirbhar Bharat**. Qatar's leader appreciated the contribution of the **Indian community in Qatar** and recalled his visits to India.

ABOUT GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL GCC

GCC was established by an agreement concluded in **1981 among Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE** in view of their special relations, geographic proximity, similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives. The structure of the **GCC consists of the Supreme Council (the highest authority)**, the Ministerial Council and the Secretariat General. The **Secretariat is located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**. It is a **political, economic, social, and regional organisation** according to its charter.

INDIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GCC

Political: The governments of the GCC members are India-friendly. The **Prime Minister of India** has received the '**Order of Zayed**', the **highest civilian order of the UAE** and the '**King Hamad Order of the Renaissance**', the **third-highest civilian order of Bahrain**. In the recent past, **Saudi Arabia and the UAE** have not adopted hostile posture to India's domestic developments such as removing the special status for **Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370**.



Economic: The GCC states are among **India's key suppliers of energy, and annual remittances** from Indians in these countries are worth an **estimated USD 4.8 billion**. The **United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia** are India's third and fourth-largest trading partners respectively and the **total bilateral trade of the GCC countries** with India for the year 2018-19 stood at USD 121.34 billion. UAE also features in the top 10 sources of **FDI inflows into India**.

Security: Both India and the GCC are members of the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**. Apart from the participation of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and others in India's mega **multilateral Milan Exercise**, India also has bilateral exercises with most of them. India and Oman hold annual bilateral exercises across all three wings of the armed forces (**Army Exercise 'Al Najah', Air Force Exercise 'Eastern Bridge', Naval Exercise 'Naseem al Bahr'**). Further, Oman has provided the Indian Navy access to the **Port of Duqm SEZ** which is one of Indian Ocean's largest deep-sea ports. India has a bilateral naval (**In-UAE BILAT**) as well as an air force exercise (**Desert Eagle-II**) with the UAE.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN BOTH THE COUNTRIES

Both the countries have decided to set up a special task force to facilitate investments by the **Qatar Investment Authority**, part of India's ongoing outreach to key West Asian states to overcome the economic impact of the **Covid-19 pandemic**. The two sides have agreed on **institutionalizing** measures to promote and protect the rights of workers, including settling **labour issues and facilitating the movement of people** between the two countries in a safe and secure manner.

INDIA & QATAR DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIP

Economic Relations: The last few years witnessed a palpable decline in the trade volume between the two countries due to the **decline in the rates of gas and oil** in the international market. India is considered to be the **fourth largest export destination for the State of Qatar**. Both **India and Qatar** also have a **good relation in the banking sector**.



Exports: Qatar's key exports to India include **LNG, LPG, chemicals and petrochemicals, plastics, and aluminium articles**. India's key exports to Qatar include cereals, copper articles, iron and steel articles, vegetables, plastic products, construction material, textiles & garments, etc.

Cooperation in the Field of Energy: Qatar is the **largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG)** to India. India imports **around 70%** of its needs for the natural gas from Qatar.

Defence: India's defence cooperation with Qatar has so far been limited to training, participation in each other's conferences/events and visits by ships of **Indian Navy and Coast Guard**. **Za'ir-Al-Bahr (Roar of the Sea)** is the naval exercise between Indian and Qatar Navy.

Cultural Relations: There is a regular flow of Indian artists performing in Qatar at events organised by community organizations affiliated to the **Indian Cultural Centre (ICC)**. ICC is an apex body of associations of the Indian community functioning under the aegis of Embassy of India, Doha, and private sponsors.

Yoga: India appreciated **Qatar's support**, as a co-sponsor, to its Resolution at the **United Nations General Assembly**, adopted unanimously with a record 177 co-sponsors, **declaring 21 June as the International Day of Yoga (IDY)**.

Education: There are **14 Indian schools in Qatar**, offering **CBSE curricula** to over 30,000 students, most of whom are the children of **Indian nationals working in Qatar**.

Indian Community: Indian community is the largest expatriate group in Qatar which is estimated to be around 700 million people. They are making their contribution in different sectors. Indians are **highly respected in Qatar** for their sincerity, hard work, technical expertise and law-abiding nature. Indians are employed in almost every **local establishment, governmental or private, in various capacities**.

Remittances: The remittances which the **Indian expatriate community in Qatar** sends to India are estimated to be around **750 million dollar per annum**.

CONCLUSION

Qatar wants to make investment in India in the domain of the infrastructure which includes roads, highways, economic corridors, airports, ports, tourism and hotels apart from the projects related to **gas and fertilizers**. India is looking forward to the direct investment in the manufacturing and production of the **liquefied natural gas** and in **chemical industries, especially the industry of fertilizers, urea, petrochemicals**.

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Recently, which of the following Ministers have represented India at Qatar and discussed strengthening the economic and security cooperation between the two countries?

- A. Rajnath Singh
- B. Amit Shah
- C. Narendra Modi
- D. S. Jaishankar: **ANSWER**

Q.2 Which of the following statements is/are incorrect regarding the bilateral cooperation and relationship between India and Qatar?

- A. Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to India.
- B. Both India and Qatar are the permanent members of GCC: **ANSWER**
- C. India maintains an embassy in Doha.
- D. None of the above

Q.3 Which of the following is the annual maritime or the Naval exercise held between the Qatar and Indian Navy?

- A. Naseem Al Bahr
- B. Ekuverin
- C. Za'ir-Al-Bahr: **ANSWER**
- D. Khanjar

Q.4 Among the options, which of the following nations is not the permanent or the founding members of the Gulf Cooperation Council?

- A. Iran: **ANSWER**
- B. Bahrain

C. Qatar

D. United Arab Emirates

Q.5 Gulf Cooperation Council which is a regional intergovernmental political and economic union is headquartered at which of the following places?

A. Muscat, Oman

B. Doha, Qatar

C. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: **ANSWER**

D. Manama, Bahrain

ISRAEL-MOROCCO NORMALISATION DEAL

Recently, **Morocco and Israel have agreed to normalize relations** in a deal **brokered by the USA**. It makes Morocco the **fourth Arab country**, after the **UAE, Bahrain (Abraham Accords) and Sudan**, to set aside hostilities with Israel in the past four months. US President Donald Trump announced the agreement through a post on Twitter. He tweeted saying, "**Another HISTORIC breakthrough today!** Our two GREAT friends Israel and the Kingdom of Morocco have agreed to full diplomatic relations - a massive breakthrough for peace in the Middle East!

MAJOR CONCERNS OF THE DEAL

Morocco will establish full diplomatic relations and resume official contacts with Israel, reopen their liaison offices in **Rabat (capital of Morocco) and Tel Aviv (a city in Israel)** immediately with the intention to open embassies and promote economic cooperation between **Israeli and Moroccan companies**. Morocco intends to facilitate direct flights for Israeli tourists to and from Morocco.



The USA has changed its **longstanding policy and recognised Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara**. Since 2007, the **UN Security Council**, of which the USA is a veto-capable permanent member, has called on **Morocco and the Polisario** to engage in negotiations without preconditions to reach a "**mutually acceptable political solution**, which will provide for the self-determination of the **people of Western Sahara.**"

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEAL

The **USA is putting in efforts to present a united front against Iran and minimise Tehran's regional influence**. This step is considered as a sovereign move and will contribute to

strengthening the common quest for stability, prosperity and lasting peace in the region. The deal **would deepen Morocco's engagement** with the West and will also boost Israel's motive which has made it a priority to forge ties with **formerly hostile countries in Africa** and the **Arab world** in the absence of any progress with the Palestinians.

REACTIONS OF PALESTINIANS AND OTHERS

Palestinian officials condemned the agreement, saying it **would encourage Israel's denial of their rights**. They had also condemned the earlier agreements of the Arab states with Israel, calling it a **betrayal on their part to the Palestinian cause**. Palestinians have been critical of the **normalisation deals**, saying **Arab countries** have set back the cause of peace by abandoning a longstanding demand of Israel giving up land for a Palestinian state before it can receive recognition. **Egypt and the UAE have welcomed Morocco's decision**. Egypt and Israel signed **a peace treaty in 1979**. In an official statement, **Morocco's King agreed** to the peace deal with Israel with minimal delay. However, the royal statement clarified that these measures to **normalise relations with Israel** do not in any manner affect Morocco's ongoing and sustained commitment to the just Palestinian cause. The statement added that the King had spoken with **Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas** and assured him that he would not leave his position on defending the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The King reiterated his support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. **Polisario Front's representative to the UN, Sidi Omar** said Western Sahara's legal status is determined by international law and UN resolutions. **The group's Europe representative, Oubi Bchraya**, said that the change in US policy will not change an inch of the reality of the conflict and the **right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination**.

WESTERN SAHARA DISPUTE (MOROCCO'S CLAIM)

- As a part of the **Israel-Morocco Peace deal**, the **United States agreed to recognise Morocco's claim over Western Sahara**. US President Donald Trump reaffirmed his support for Morocco's serious, credible, and realistic autonomy proposal as the only basis

for a just and lasting solution to the dispute over the Western Sahara territory. **Trump recognised Moroccan sovereignty over the entire Western Sahara territory**, as per a statement by the White House. **Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony, was claimed by Morocco in 1975.** Since then it has been a matter of **territorial dispute between Morocco and its indigenous Saharawi people,**



led by the pro-**independence Polisario Front**, which seeks to establish an independent state in the region. While Morocco claims the territory to have always been a part of its region, the **African Union recognises it as an independent state.**

- The 16-year-long insurgency over the territory ended with an **UN-brokered truce in 1991.** A promise of an independence referendum was also made but it is yet to take place. As per the official US statement, an independent **Sahrawi State** is not a realistic option for resolving the dispute and **Morocco's genuine autonomy over the region** is the only feasible solution. The United States will now open its consulate in **Western Sahara** as part of the **Israel-Morocco deal.**

OTHER PEACE DEALS OF ISRAEL BROKERED BY US

ABRAHAM ACCORD 2020

The Abraham Accord between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain is mediated by the **USA.** It is the first Arab-Israeli peace deal in **26 years.**

As per the agreements, the **UAE and Bahrain** will establish:

- Embassies and exchange **ambassadors.**
- Working together with Israel across a range of sectors, including **tourism, trade, healthcare and security.**

- The **Abraham Accords** also open the door for Muslims around the world to visit the **historic sites in Israel** and to peacefully pray at **Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem**, the **third holiest site in Islam**.

The agreement shows how **the Arab countries are gradually decoupling themselves from the Palestine question**. Palestine was among former Ottoman territories placed under UK administration by the **League of Nations in 1922**. All of these territories eventually became fully independent States, except Palestine. **Full diplomatic ties will be established between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain** which will have a positive impact on the entire region. The deal buys **UAE a lot of goodwill in the US**, where its image has been tarnished by its involvement in the Yemen war.

ISRAEL & SUDAN PEACE DEAL

Israel and Sudan have also agreed to **normalise ties in a deal brokered with the help of US President Donald Trump**. This makes **Sudan the third Arab nation** to recognise Israel in the last two months after **Bahrain and the UAE**. As per a joint statement issued by Israel, **Sudan and the United States**, the leaders of **Israel and Sudan** have **agreed to normalise relations and end hostilities**



between the two nations. Both Israel and Sudan plan to begin normalisation of ties by opening up economic and trade relations with an initial focus on agriculture. The issues concerning **formal establishment of diplomatic ties would be resolved later**. An Israeli delegation is expected to travel to Sudan in the coming days to complete the peace agreement, announced **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** on October 24, 2020. It is, however, unclear as to how long it will take for a peace accord to be completed.

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Recently, Morocco and Israel have agreed to normalise relations in a deal which was brokered by which of the following countries?

- A. United States of America: **ANSWER**
- B. Russia
- C. United Arab Emirates
- D. India

Q.2 Which of the following statements is/are correct about the normalisation deal Signed between Israel & Morocco?

- A. The deal was brokered by India.
- B. Morocco will reopen their liaison offices in Rabat (capital of Morocco) and Tel Aviv (a city in Israel): **ANSWER**
- C. The country which brokered the deal does not recognized Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.
- D. None of the above

Q.3 Morocco becomes the 4th country which agreed to the normalisation deal with Israel. Earlier to this Which of three countries have signed the peace deal?

- A. Jordan, Egypt, UAE
- B. Bahrain, UAE, Sudan: **ANSWER**
- C. UAE, Iran, Saudi Arabia
- D. None of the above

Q.4 'Abraham Accord' which is a peace deal Signed between Israel and two Arab countries after 26 years. which of the following is other than those two countries?

- A. Bahrain
- B. United Arab Emirates
- C. Sudan: **ANSWER**
- D. Both A & B

Q.5 Consider the following statements and answer that which of the following statements are the possible advantages to India due to these normalisation deal Signed between Israel & Other Arab countries?

- A. India can ramp up defence and security relations with Arab Countries
- B. India will further strengthen its diplomatic ties with Israel.
- C. These Gulf countries are largest oil producing countries which will benefit India.
- D. All of the above: **ANSWER**

TRUMP AWARDED 'LEGION OF MERIT' TO PM MODI

President of the United States of America, Donald Trump has conferred the **Legion of Merit on Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, one of the **highest military honours of the US**. The PM was given this honour for his **exceptionally meritorious service as the leader of India**. PM has been given this award for his role in **“advancing the Indo-US relationship”**. The award recognises the efforts of the people of India and the USA to improve bilateral ties, reflected in the bipartisan consensus in both countries about the **Indo-US Strategic Partnership**. Australian PM was presented the award for **“addressing global challenges and promoting collective security”**. Japanese PM for his **“leadership and vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific”**.



Indian Ambassador, **Taranjit Singh Sandhu**, accepted the award on behalf of **PM Modi**. USA has also awarded the **‘Legion of Merit’ to the Prime Ministers of Japan and Australia**. All these four countries were key to reviving the **Quadrilateral grouping since 2017**, which is part of the Indo-Pacific strategy and is aimed at countering the growing dominance of China in the region.

WHAT IS LEGION OF MERIT?

- **Legion of Merit is the US military decoration** having distinct ranks. It is by far the **first US medal** that is awarded to the **citizens of other countries**. The award is being given since 1943. The medal is awarded for extraordinary services, fidelity shown by the person in either combat or non-combat situations. One of the **USA’s highest military decorations**, the award was instituted in **1942 by former President Franklin D. Roosevelt**.



- It is awarded to members of the USA armed forces and also **members of foreign (i.e. non-USA) armed forces** and sometimes heads of state or government. The award is presented to foreign recipients in four categories: **Chief Commander, Commander, Officer and Legionnaire**. There have been two Indian recipients of the honour in the past: **Field Marshal K M Cariappa in 1950, and Gen S M Srinagesh in 1955**.
- It is unique in itself as any **US military personnel can qualify only for the lowest rank of a legionnaire** but a **foreigner is eligible for higher ranks of officer, commander, and chief commander**. The award is usually conferred upon foreign officials of high rank or on foreign military advisers. The badge is a **five-rayed white cross, edged with red, placed on a green wreath with a blue centre consisting of 13 white stars**. This honour holds significance as the four leaders receiving it are the key to revive the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, QUAD since 2017**. It was a part of the **Indo-Pacific strategy** and was set as an alternative to the **growing belligerence of China in the East**.
- *History of the legion of Merit:* In September 2020, the Legion of Merit was awarded to late **Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah**. He was the senior-most Royal in the Middle-East and was given the award for his efforts in bridging divides in the region. Among others, **China's Chiang Kai-shek** was awarded in **1943**, **Gen Georgy Zhukov** from the **Soviet Army in 1945**, France's **Charles de Gaulle** in 1945, Thailand's **King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1960**.

SOME PERSONALITIES TO HAVE RECEIVED THE LEGION OF MERIT

- **King George VI**, Commonwealth armed forces in 1945
- **Brother of Sir Baber Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana** in 1946
- **Shah Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi**, Iranian Armed Forces on October 7, 1947
- Field Marshal & Prime Minister **Tin Maharaja Mohan Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana**, GBE, GCIE Royal Nepalese Army in 1948.
- **Field Marshal Kodandera Madappa Cariappa**, OBE, Indian Army in 1950

- **General Satyawant Mallana Srinagesh**, Indian Army on September 2, 1955
- **King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX)**, Thai Armed Forces on June 28, 1960

QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE (QUAD)

The **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue** also known as the **Quad** or **Asian NATO** is an informal strategic forum between the **United States, Japan, Australia and India** that is maintained by semi-regular summits, information exchanges and military drills between member countries. The forum was initiated as a dialogue in 2007 by then **Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, with the support of Vice**



President Dick Cheney of the US, Prime Minister John Howard of Australia and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India. The dialogue was paralleled by joint military exercises of an unprecedented scale, titled **Exercise Malabar**. The diplomatic and military arrangement was widely viewed as a response to increased Chinese economic and military power, and the **Chinese government responded to the Quad by issuing formal diplomatic protests to its members.**

SIGNIFICANCE OF QUAD GROUPING

- India has **taken a significant turn in its policy** for the subcontinent by joining quad grouping. It provides **New Delhi a powerful platform** to advance its **interests in East Asia.**
- It will **deepen India's ties with the US, Australia, and Japan** with benefits in diplomatic leverage and sharing of burden in defense. It will also provide India a significant chance in shaping US policies in **Afghanistan-Pakistan to the benefit of India.**

- It will provide a powerful platform to advance Indian interest in the region and **strengthen the Act East policy**. Foster economic growth with better market adaptation, so it will lead to more **employment opportunities in India**.
- It helps India and the other three nations to counter **China's OBOR**. As **India is refused to join OBOR** it helps India to connect with other markets like **Central Asian and Southeast Asian markets**.

OTHER STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INDIA & US

Recently, India has signed the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)** with the USA. **BECA** will enable the **exchange of geospatial data and information** between the two countries and will improve the accuracy of India's missiles in precision strikes. The geospatial maps and charts to be shared, will be acquired from multiple sources like **satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), reconnaissance aircraft, aerostats among others**. As part of measures to enhance military to military cooperation, Liaison Officers at each other's establishments could be leveraged to enhance information sharing. **BECA is one of the four foundational military communication agreements between the two countries.**

The other three are:

- **General Security Of Military Information Agreement.**
- **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement.**
- **Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement.**

Both countries released a **Joint Statement on shared Indo-USA** goals in the Asia-Pacific region and emphasised that the **Code of Conduct in the South China Sea** should not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of any nation in **accordance with international law**. They also decided to expand joint capacity building activities with partner countries in the **Indo-Pacific region**.

(QUESTIONS 1-5)

Q.1 Which of the following nation's Prime Minister is not awarded with the 'Legion of Merit' by the US President Donald Trump?

- A. Prime Minister of Australia
- B. Prime Minister of Israel: ANSWER**
- C. Prime minister of Japan
- D. Prime Minister of India

Q.2 Which of the following statement is/are incorrect about one of the honour of United States of America 'Legion of Merit'?

- A. The award was instituted by US President John F. Kennedy: ANSWER**
- B. It is one of the highest military honours of US government.
- C. It was given since the year of 1943.
- D. None of the above

Q.3 The three country's which were awarded 'Legion of Merit' by US President are the members of which of the following along with the USA?

- A. North Atlantic Treaty organization
- B. ASEAN
- C. Quad Groupings: ANSWER**
- D. Collective Security Treaty organization

Q.4 The honour presented by the US President is accepted by which of the following on the behalf of PM Narendra Modi?

- A. Minister of External Affairs
- B. Defence Minister of India

C. Indian Ambassador to USA: ANSWER

D. None of the above

Q.5 Which of the following is among the foundational military communication agreements recently signed between US and India?

A. Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)

B. General Security Of Military Information Agreement.

C. Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement.

D. All of the above: ANSWER

MISSION COVID SURAKSHA

The Central Government has launched 'Mission COVID Suraksha' in order to facilitate the development of approximately 5-6 COVID-19 vaccine candidates. According to the Department of Biotechnology, it will also ensure that the vaccine candidates are brought closure to introduction and licensure in the market. The Government of India has announced the **stimulus package of Rs.**



900 crore for the **Mission COVID Suraksha**, the **Indian Covid-19 Vaccine Development Mission**, which will help the development process of the vaccine candidates.

The **DBT** further informed that the mission focuses on the **COVID-19 vaccine development** with end-to-end focus from the preclinical stage through **clinical development** as well as manufacturing and regulatory facilitation.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE OF THE MISSION

- **Mission COVID Suraksha** is India's targeted effort to enable the development of indigenous, affordable and accessible vaccines for the country and will complement the **ongoing mission of Atmanirbhar Bharat**. The Centre had announced this package during the third economic stimulus. The Mission with its end-to-end focus from preclinical development through clinical development and manufacturing and regulatory facilitation for deployment, would consolidate all available and funded resources towards accelerated product development.
- **Phase-I of the Mission** has been allotted Rs. 900 Crore for a period of 12 months. The grant will be provided to the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** for **Research and Development (R&D)** of Indian Covid-19 vaccines. To facilitate the **pre-clinical and**



clinical development as well as licensure of vaccine candidates that are in the clinical stages or are ready to enter the clinical stages of development.

- The mission's aim will also be to **establish clinical trial sites**. It will also strengthen the central laboratories, existing immunoassay laboratories, and suitable facilities for production studies, animal studies, and other test facilities for supporting vaccine development.
- **Supporting the development of common harmonized protocols**, data management systems, training, regulatory submissions, accreditations, internal and external quality management systems. Under the mission, cell line development, capabilities for process development, manufacturing of **Good Manufacturing Practices**, clinical trials, and batches for animal toxicology will also be supported. The key portion will be the development of a suitable target product profile so that the vaccines that are being introduced through mission have characteristics that are applicable to India.

OTHER KEY POINTS OF THE MISSION

- ❖ It will be **led by DBT** and implemented by a dedicated Mission Implementation Unit at the **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)**. The existing activities under **National Bio Pharma Mission (NBM)** and Ind-CEPI Mission will provide complementary strengths to this Mission. The DBT is supporting the implementation of the Ind-CEPI Mission, "**Epidemic preparedness through rapid vaccine development**: Support of Indian vaccine development aligned with the global initiative of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)". The **Ind-CEPI Mission** was approved in March 2019.
- ❖ Accelerating **pre-clinical and clinical development**. Licensure of **Covid-19 vaccine candidates** that are currently in clinical stages or ready to enter the clinical stage of development. Strengthening the existing central laboratories and suitable facilities for animal studies, production facilities and other testing facilities to support the vaccine

development. **Supporting the development of common harmonized protocols**, training, data management systems, regulatory submissions, internal and external quality management systems and accreditations. Supporting capabilities for process development, cell line development and **manufacturing of GMP** batches for animal toxicology studies and clinical trials. Developing suitable **Target Product Profile so that vaccines being introduced** through the mission have preferred characteristics applicable to India.

OTHER COVID-19 VACCINE CANDIDATES

A **total of 10 vaccine candidates** have been supported by DBT so far at both academia and industry and as on date and 5 vaccine candidates are in human trials.



- **Covishield:** The **Serum Institute of India (SII)** is conducting the phase-3 trial of the **Oxford-Astrazeneca** Covid-19 vaccine.
- **Covaxin:** The indigenously developed **Bharat Biotech** and the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** vaccine has already started the phase III clinical trial.
- **ZyCoV-D:** Indigenously developed vaccine by **Zydus Cadila** has completed the phase-2 clinical trial in the country.
- **Sputnik V:** The combined phase 2 and 3 clinical trials of the **Russian Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V** in India are about to get started.
- **BNT162b2:** India is focusing on training for conducting phase II and III human clinical trials of the **Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine** candidate along lines of India's regulatory mechanism.

WHAT IS CLINICAL TRIAL?

It is a **systematic study to generate data for discovering or verifying** the clinical and pharmacological profile (including pharmacodynamic and pharmacokinetic) or adverse effects of

a new drug on humans. It is the only way of **establishing the safety and efficacy of any drug** before its introduction in the market for human use and is preceded by **animal trials where the efficacy and side effects** are observed in animals and an estimated drug dose is established. **Clinical trials of drugs** developed in India have to undergo all four phases of trials in India.

- Phase I or **clinical pharmacology trials** or “first in man” study.
- Phase II or **exploratory trials**.
- Phase III or **confirmatory trials**.
- Phase IV trials or **post-marketing phase**.

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Which of the following Mission was launched in order to facilitate the development of approximately 5-6 COVID-19 vaccine candidates?

- A. Mission Covid Security
- B. Mission Covid Suraksha: ANSWER**
- C. Mission CoviDefeat
- D. None of the above

Q.2 The Government of India has announced the stimulus package of how much Rs. for the Indian Covid-19 Vaccine Development Mission?

- A. Rs. 800 crore
- B. Rs. 900 crore: ANSWER**
- C. Rs. 1000 crore
- D. Rs. 1200 crore

Q.3 Which of the following statements is/are Correct regarding the Mission initiated by the government?

- A. Enable the development of indigenous vaccines for the country.
- B. Phase-I of the Mission has been allotted Rs. 900 Crore.
- C. The grant will be provided to the CSIR for Research and Development (R&D) of Indian Covid-19 vaccines: **ANSWER**
- D. None of the above

Q.4 Serum Institute of India (SII) which is conducting the phase-3 trial of the Oxford-Astrazeneca Covid-19 vaccine is headquartered at which of the following places?

- A. Pune: **ANSWER**
- B. New Delhi
- C. Mumbai
- D. Ahmedabad

Q.5 Sputnik V which is Covid-19 vaccine is a project of which of the following countries?

- A. United Kingdom
- B. United States of America
- C. France
- D. Russia: **ANSWER**

PM-WANI SCHEME (SIGNIFICANCE & IMPORTANCE)

The **Union Cabinet led by PM Modi** has approved the setting up of **public Wi-Fi networks across the length and breadth of the country** on December 9, 2020. The public Wi-Fi network service is to be called as **PM Wi-Fi Access Network Interface or WANI scheme**. It would be set up by the **public data office aggregators or PDOAs** and would provide Wi-Fi service through the public



data offices or PDO's. No license fee will be charged for providing broadband internet services. The scheme envisages setting up of **public Wi-Fi networks and access points** by local Kirana and neighbourhood shops through public data offices (PDO will be set up on the lines of **Public Call Offices (PCOs)**) that will not involve any **licence, fee or registration**. Apart from, Public Wi-Fi being a low-cost option to reach unserved citizens and grow the economy, it can revolutionise the tech world and significantly improve **Wi-Fi availability** across the length and breadth of India.

INTENDED BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

- ***New wave of Internet Users:*** PM WANI will be able to connect a new wave of users not just to commercial and entertainment options, but also to education, telehealth and agriculture extension, and **bring greater accountability to the government by boosting transparency and interactivity.**
- ***Enabler for Digital India:*** The scheme would enable small shopkeepers to **provide Wi-Fi service**. This will boost incomes as well as ensure youth gets seamless internet connectivity. It can also strengthen the Digital India mission.
- ***Cutting The Red Tape:*** Through PM WANI, the government is hoping that by cutting through **layers of bureaucracy and eliminating licences and fees**, it can make it easy

even for a tea shop owner to register online as a service provider, opening up new income avenues.

- **Domino Effect on Economy:** According to the **TRAI report**, public Wi-Fi system on the WANI architecture can lead to a **10% rise in net penetration** which in turn can lead to a **1.4% increase in GDP**.
- **Bridging the Digital Divide:** PM WANI can result into a rapid scale-up of the Internet in rural India, which will be transformative, given the low level of penetration — **27.57 subscribers per 100 population in 2019**. Wi-fi linked to broadband fibre service can be the fastest route to bridging the existing gap.
- **Low-Cost Alternative:** Upcoming mobile technologies such as **5G may provide good quality data**, but they involve high investment in the new spectrum, connectivity equipment and regular subscriber fees. The **WANI system offers a way forward to connect low revenue consumers**.

OTHER OBJECTIVES OF PM-WANI SCHEME

PM-WANI scheme would introduce more **business-friendly environment** by boosting **ease of doing business**. It aims to provide high-speed internet that has come up as a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic. **High-speed internet** is not accessible in areas that do not have a 4G mobile coverage. PM WANI aims to aid the deployment of a **public Wi-Fi network service**. The

proliferation of a public Wi-Fi network will create employment. Enhancement of the disposable incomes is also expected in the hands of small and medium businessmen and this would in turn increase GDP. Using public Wi-Fi hotspots would encourage its penetration across the country. As per **TRAI**, in various economies, mobile users use WiFi technology to **communicate for 50-70% of their net time**. But, in India, this figure is **less than 10%**. In 2018



various service providers stated that they aimed to provide 5 lakh hotspots by March 31, 2019, and **10 lakh hotspots** by September 30, 2019. These targets are yet to be achieved. The step of the **government of introducing free WIFI is commendable** and is expected to increase the number of hotspots.

PROCESS OF PM-WANI SCHEME

The public Wi-Fi access network interface would be an eco-system operated by various players. PM-WANI scheme will work through:



- **Public Data Office (PDO):** These units would help in **establishing, operating the WANI compliant Wi-Fi access points.** These would also deliver broadband services to subscribers.
- **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):** These would **aggregate the PDOs** and perform **all the actions** including authorization and accounting.
- **App Provider:** An application is on cards that would register the users and also look for all the **WANI-compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in the local area.** It would be displayed within the application for accessing internet service.
- **Central Registry:** There would also be a central registry maintaining the details of the app providers, PDOAs, as well as PDOs. This central registry will be maintained by **C-DoT or Centre of Development for Telematics.**

CONCERNS & ISSUES RELATED TO THE SCHEME

- **Security Risks:** A public WiFi network has several security issues. That's because several people access the network at the same time on the same spot. Thus **public Wi-Fi**

is at a high risk of sending out confidential data (like passwords, pins etc.) over the network.

- **Low Speed:** As public WiFi network is usually accessed by several people at the same time, it results in a **considerable loss of bandwidth** resulting in a **slow network speed**. It is due to this fact, **Google and Facebook's attempts** to provide public Wi-fi got shut down earlier this year.
- **Cheap Mobile Data:** As per **TRAI in 2019**, India now has among the cheapest mobile data per GB in the world, with mobile data prices **having reduced by 95% in the last five years**. As 4G has become cheap and widely accessible, is there still a need to drive Wi-Fi in this manner, rather than the **"leapfrogging" of technology** that people have frequently talked about in the context of India

CONCLUSION

Strong Cyber-Security Architecture: What the citizen expects is robust service, protection of data integrity, transparency on commercial use of data, and **security against cyberattacks**. PM WANI should **ensure the public data is protected and safe**. In this context, the enactment of the **public data protection bill, 2019**, is the need of the hour.

Ensuring Competition: The government must also **ensure true unbundling of hardware, software, apps and payment gateways in the WANI system**, as advocated by TRAI, to prevent monopolies. Also, increased competition will address the low data speed issue. If executed properly, the **public data offices (PDOs) of PM WANI** can do what the PCOs did for phone calls, going well beyond 'ease of doing business' to genuinely empower citizens and providing "**ease of living**".

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Which of the following has led the Union Cabinet that has approved the setting up of public Wi-Fi networks across the length and breadth of the country?

- A. Prakash Javadekar
- B. Narendra Modi: ANSWER**
- C. Smriti Zubin Irani
- D. Ravi Shankar Prasad

Q.2 Which of the following statements is/are incorrect regarding the intended benefits of PM-WANI scheme, recently launched by Union Cabinet?

- A. The scheme envisages setting up of public Wi-Fi networks.
- B. Public Data Office (PDO) are to set up for operating the WANI compliant
- C. It would also set up Quantum Key Distribution system: ANSWER**
- D. None of the above

Q.3 Which of the following is the correct full form of 'WANI' in PM-WANI scheme?

- A. Wi-fi Access Network Interface: ANSWER**
- B. Wi-fi Aggregators Network Interface
- C. Wi-fi Availability & Network Integration
- D. None of the above-mentioned

Q.4 Which of the following units of the scheme would help in establishing, operating & registering the WANI compliant Wi-Fi access points?

- A. Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA)
- B. Central Registry
- C. App Provider

D. Public Data Office (PDO): ANSWER

Q.5 The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is the regulator of the telecommunications sector in India is headquartered at which of the following places?

- A. Mumbai, Maharashtra
- B. New Delhi: ANSWER**
- C. Gurugram, Haryana
- D. Pune, Maharashtra

VISION 2035: PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE IN INDIA

Recently, the NITI Aayog has released a white paper, “**Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India**” which is envisaged to serve as a vision document to propel **Public Health Surveillance (PHS)** in India and establish India as a global leader in the area. A white paper is an informational document, usually issued by a company or **not-for-profit organization, to promote or highlight the features of a solution, product, or service.**



NITI Aayog’s mandate is to provide strategic directions to the various sectors of the Indian economy. In line with this mandate, the Health Vertical released a set of four working-papers compiled in a volume entitled ‘**Health Systems for New India: Building Blocks-Potential Pathways to Reforms**’ during November 2019. This **white paper** is a continuation of the work on strengthening the health systems.

WHAT IS WHITE PAPER BY NITI AAYOG?

This paper is a joint effort of **Health Vertical, NITI Aayog, and Institute for Global Public Health, University of Manitoba, Canada** with contributions from technical experts from the Government of India, States, and International agencies. It lays out **India’s vision 2035 for PHS** through the integration of the three-tiered (primary, secondary and tertiary) **public health system into Ayushman Bharat.** It contributes by suggesting mainstreaming of surveillance by making individual electronic health records the basis for surveillance.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS & FEATURES

- **Strengthen non-communicable disease prevention, detection, control and to reduce out of pocket expenses of individuals and families.** It builds on initiatives such as the **Integrated Health Information Platform** of the Integrated Disease Surveillance

Program. Aligns with the citizen-centricity highlighted in the **National Health Policy 2017** and the **National Digital Health Blueprint**. It encourages the use of mobile and digital platforms and point of care devices and diagnostics for amalgamation of data capture and analyses. It highlights the importance of capitalizing on initiatives such as the **Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act 2010** to enhance private sector involvement in surveillance. It points out the importance of a cohesive and coordinated effort of apex institutions including the **National Centre for Disease Control**, the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, and others.

- **Vision: To make India's PHS system** more responsive and predictive to enhance preparedness for action at all levels. To make it more citizen-friendly to ensure individual privacy and confidentiality, enabled with a client feedback mechanism. To **improve data-sharing mechanisms** between **Centre and states** for better disease detection, prevention, and control. To provide regional and global leadership in managing events **that constitutes a public health emergency of international concern.**



PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE (PHS)

PHS is an important public health function that cuts across the three-tiered public health system and care provided. Surveillance is **'Information for Action'** and is an essential action for disease detection, prevention, and control.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH IT

- **Data Collection and Sharing:** Various verticals to collect data work differently and in separation with no mechanism for data sharing. There is no single system where surveillance data generated by target specific populations like the **National AIDS**

Control Programme, National TB Elimination Programme, etc. could be understood in its entirety.

- **Poor Quality Data:** The **data generated is of low quality** and the research or use of data to **answer critical health policy questions** of the country has been very limited.
- **Limited Synchronisation:** There is the limited ability of programme implementation structures to work in synchrony with **research organisations and vice versa.**
- **Missing Linkages:** India invests significant resources in the registration of deaths. However, various reviews have not been able to link the **causes of mortality with morbidities.** There was still no proper linking to **find common ground between the causes of diseases and deaths.**
- **Lack of Human Resources:** Human resources also form a formidable challenge. **As many as 42% vacancies** existed at state and district level surveillance systems. Most of the positions of the **Central Surveillance Unit** at the Centre are filled either by deputation or on contract and the individuals are loaded with multiple other responsibilities.
- **Lack of Epidemic Intelligence:** India does not have an adequate number of public health professionals having expertise in the field. '**Epidemic intelligence**' can be defined as all the activities related to early identification of potential health threats, their verification, assessment and investigation in order to recommend **public health measures to control them.**
- **Under-developed Systems:** A **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** surveillance system hardly exists in India and other factors like integration of surveillance for **NCD risk factors, surveillance of injury and accidents, air pollution and its effects, etc,** are yet to be included in surveillance.

- ***Lack of Occupational Health Surveillance:*** This type of surveillance addresses issues like lead toxicity, silicosis, etc. Whatever data has been generated hardly became part of **India's PHS system.**
- ***Emerging Challenges:*** Growing **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)**, new infectious diseases or new strains of existing diseases and increased rate of NCDs.

CONCLUSION

- **Creation of a skilled and strong health workforce** dedicated to surveillance activities. Integration of NCDs, reproductive and child health, occupational and environmental health and injury into PHS.
- **Merger of morbidity data from health information systems.** Amalgamation of plant, animal, and environmental surveillance in a **One-Health approach** that also includes surveillance for antimicrobial resistance and predictive capability for pandemics. Strengthening of laboratory capacity with new diagnostic technologies including **molecular diagnostics, genotyping, and phenotyping.**
- **Establishment of a governance framework** that is inclusive of political, policy, technical, and managerial leadership at the national and state level. Enhancement of **surveillance of NCDs, citizen-centric and community-based surveillance** and use of point of care devices and self-care diagnostics. **Prioritization of diseases** that can be targeted for elimination as a public health problem, regularly.
- **Improvement of core support functions** and system attributes for surveillance at all levels. Establishment of mechanisms to streamline data sharing, capture, analysis, and dissemination for action. These could include the use of situation-aware real-time signals from social media, mobile sensor networks, and participatory surveillance systems for



event-based epidemic intelligence. **Encouragement of innovations at every step-in surveillance activity.**

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 Recently, NITI Aayog has released the white paper which is titled by which of the following names?

- A. Vision 2030: Public Health Surveillance
- B. Vision 2030: Public Welfare Watchlist
- C. Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance: **ANSWER**
- D. Vision 2035: Public Welfare Watchlist

Q.2 The white paper which is released by NITI Aayog is a joint offer of which of the following?

- A. NITI Aayog
- B. Institute for Global Public Health
- C. University of Manitoba, Canada
- D. All of the above: **ANSWER**

Q.3 Which of the following statements is/are incorrect about India's 2035 vision of Public Health Surveillance?

- A. It Strengthens non-communicable disease prevention, detection & control.
- B. PHS is an important public health function that cuts across the five-tiered public health system: **ANSWER**
- C. To enhance preparedness for action at all levels.
- D. None of the above

Q.4 NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) which is a policy think tank of Government of India replaces which of the following commission earlier?

- A. Planning Commission: **ANSWER**
- B. Finance Commission
- C. Law Commission
- D. Human Rights Commission

Q.5 Which of the following also holds the chairmanship of the NITI Aayog?

- A. Finance Minister of India
- B. Prime Minister of India: ANSWER**
- C. Minister of Education
- D. Comptroller and Auditor General

WORLD BANK AIDED GREEN-NH PROJECT

The **Indian government** on December 22, 2020, **signed a loan pact of \$500 million** with the World Bank for the development of safe and green national highway corridors in **Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh.**



The agreement between the Indian government and the **World Bank** was signed by an additional secretary, Department of economic affairs, **CS Mohapatra, and World Bank** acting **country director of India, Sumila Gulyani.** The loan has been granted with a tenor of 18.5 years along with a 5 years grace period.

GREEN NATIONAL HIGHWAY CORRIDOR PROJECT

The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** had launched a **National Green Highways Mission (NGHM)** following the promulgation of '**Green Highways Policy**' in **September 2015.** The **Green National Highways Corridor Projects (GNHCP)** supports the implementation of the NGHM and the provision of green and safe transport. The objective of the Project is to demonstrate safe and green **National Highway corridors in selected States and enhance the institutional capacity of the MoRTH** in mainstreaming safety and green technologies. The project will be providing efficient transportation for road users in the four major states. It will connect people with the market and services; it will help **lower Greenhouse gas emissions,** and will promote efficient use of construction materials and water for reducing the depletion of scarce natural resources. The project will also widen and strengthen the existing structures by **constructing drainage facilities, new pavements, and bypasses.** It will also improve junctions and introduce road safety measures.

THREE MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT

- **Green Highway Corridor Improvement and Maintenance:** This includes upgradation and maintenance for five years of about 783 km of selected existing National Highways in the states of **Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Institutional Capacity Enhancement:** It will support the capacity enhancement of MoRTH in its pursuit to conserve natural resources and improve climate vulnerability of the National Highways network and reduce **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.**
- **Road Safety:** It will provide support to improve road safety data analytics and highway safety monitoring and implementation.
- **About the Pact between the Government and the World Bank:** The **USD 500 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD),** an arm of the World Bank, has a maturity of 18.5 years including a five-year grace period.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

The **National Highways of India** carries about **40% of road traffic.** However, several sections of these highways have inadequate capacity, weak drainage structures and black spots prone to accidents. The ultimate objective of **transport infrastructure** is to provide **seamless connectivity and reduce logistics costs.**

Historically, **the transport sector in India has offered limited**

employment opportunities for women. The project will support the ministry with an in-depth analysis of gender-related issues in the transport sector along with help in creating jobs for women by training women-led micro enterprises and women collectives to implement green technologies in the highway corridors. It will also support the **Bharatmala Pariyojana Program (BPP).**



FEATURES OF GREEN HIGHWAY POLICY 2015

It promotes **greening and development of eco-friendly National Highway corridors** across the country with **participation of farmers, private sector and government institutions** including the Forest Department. It addresses the issues that lie in the road of development and shows the way **towards sustainable development**. Planting of trees in any particular area will depend on the soil suitability and climatic conditions. Its objective is to **reduce the impact of air pollution** and dust by planting trees and shrubs along the **National Highways**. They will act as natural sinks for air pollutants and arrest soil erosion at the embankment slopes.

ABOUT WORLD BANK

World Bank as an organisation was founded at the **Bretton Woods conference in 1944**, the **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development**—soon called the World Bank—has expanded to a closely associated group of **five development institutions**.

- ***Five Development Institutions***: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (**IBRD**) provides loans, credits, and grants.
- **International Development Association (IDA)** provides low- or no-interest loans to low-income countries.
- **The International Finance Corporation (IFC)** provides investment, advice, and asset management services to companies and governments.
- **The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)** insures lenders and investors against political risk such as war.
- **The International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)** settles investment-disputes between investors and countries. **India is not a member of ICSID.**

Recently, the **World Bank has released new Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs)** for reference year 2017, under **International Comparison Program (ICP)** that adjusts for differences in the

cost of living across economies of the world. It has also developed the **Logistics Performance Index**.

OTHER PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY WORLD BANK

National Hydrology Project: The **National Hydrology Project** will scale up the successes achieved under **Hydrology Project-I and Hydrology Project-II** to cover the entire country including the states of **Ganga and Brahmaputra-Barak basins**. For the first time, under **HP-I and HP-II**, real-time flood forecast systems integrated with weather forecast in **Krishna and Satluj-Beas river systems** will give reservoir managers an accurate picture of the water situation in their region. Apart from benefitting the states in further upgrading and completing their monitoring networks, it will also help new states to **better manage water flows from the reservoirs**.



Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) Project: Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Program (STARS) will help in improving assessment systems, facilitating school-to-work transition, strengthening classroom instruction and remediation, decentralizing management and strengthening the governance. **It will also support India's goal 'Education for All'**. For this vision, the World Bank has earlier assisted with more than \$3 billion. The program will be carried out in six Indian states-- **Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan**.

National Nutrition Mission: The mission targets to **reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls and reduce low birth weight by at least 2 percent per annum**. Though the target to reduce stunting is at least 2 per cent per annum, the mission would strive to achieve reduction in stunting from **38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022**. More than 10 crore people are expected to be benefitted by the programme. It would cover all the states and districts in a phased manner. While **315 districts will be covered in 2017-18 and 235 districts in 2018-19**, the remaining districts **will be covered in 2019-20**.

Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY): It is also known as **National Groundwater Management Improvement Programme**. The scheme will be implemented in **Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka**. All these states have alluvial aquifers of the Indus-Gangetic plains and hard rock aquifers of peninsular India. The objective of **Atal Bhujal Yojana** is to promote **panchayat-led groundwater management**. ABHY also aims to increase farmers' incomes and improvement in water use efficiency on a larger scale. It has another objective to **improve cropping patterns and use of groundwater at the community level**.

QUESTIONS (1-5)

Q.1 The Government of India signed a loan pact of \$500 million with which of the following for the development of safe and green national highway corridors?

- A. International Monetary Fund
- B. Asian Development Bank
- C. New Development Bank
- D. World Bank: ANSWER**

Q.2 National Green Highways Mission (NGHM) for the development of safer National Highways is launched by which of the following?

- A. Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs
- B. Ministry of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways: ANSWER**
- C. Ministry of Defence
- D. Border Road Organization

Q.3 Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the implementation of the Green National Highways Corridor Project?

- A. The project was aided by Asian Development Bank.



- B. It was launched to develop roads in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Odisha & Madhya Pradesh
- C. It was launched a National Green Highways Mission (NGHM) following the promulgation of 'Green Highways Policy' in September 2015: **ANSWER**
- D. None of the above

Q.4 Which of the following purposes is fulfilled by the recently launched STARS project which is supported by the World Bank?

- A. Access to Public Wi-fi Systems.
- B. It will strengthen education and improve assessment systems: ANSWER**
- C. For the protection of Children against the Child labour.
- D. None of the above

Q.5 Which of the following Organization is not correctly matched with its headquarters?

- A. World Bank ----- Washington DC, USA
- B. International Monetary Fund ----- New York, USA: ANSWER**
- C. Asian Development Bank ----- Manila, Philippines
- D. New Development Bank ----- Shanghai, China

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