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**GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations**

**1. A robust economic relationship**

The article talks about the future of the India-USA economic relationship under the new administration in the US.

- Under the new U.S. administration, the economic relationship with India can be expected to be important as India has enjoyed bipartisan support in the U.S.
- Both the countries will see gains in terms of GDP, employment, and productivity, with a closer economic partnership, given the complementary natures of their economies.

**Industry Perspective:**

- From the industry perspective, a robust collaborative agenda would rest on a comprehensive set of actions that can take bilateral trade in goods and services to the desired goal of \$500 billion.
  - In the five years to 2019, bilateral trade grew at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 7.7% per year to \$146 billion.
  - If the same rate of growth is assumed, the \$500 billion target will be achieved by 2036.
  - This is doable if the right policy actions are taken.

**Areas for collaboration:**

The Confederation of Indian Industry has outlined key areas for collaboration.

**Healthcare:**

- A collaborative response to the pandemic would contribute to the global containment of the virus.
- As India becomes the hub of global vaccine distribution, building confidence in the Indian IPR regime, reviving the U.S.-India Health Dialogue, and mutually recognising standards and approvals will help drive healthcare exchanges.

**Trade Agreement:**

- The macro trade architecture can be strengthened with a broad trade agreement.
- The U.S.-India Trade Policy Forum meetings can be revived.
- Convergence on issues such as market access must be discussed.
- There is potential for flexibility from both sides for restoring the Generalised System of Preferences which would help lower duties for certain Indian products.
- The two countries should consider initiating discussions on a free trade agreement.

#### Mobility of Professional Labours:

- Recent regulations in the U.S. have impacted labour mobility which can be addressed through immigration reforms for employment-based visa backlogs and smooth and timely processes.
- The MoU on labour cooperation signed in 2011 could be updated in line with India's recent labour regulatory changes.
- This may also be a good time to reconsider a totalisation agreement pertaining to social security, given that both have already entered into such agreements with many of the same partner countries.

#### Defence Industry Ties:

- Defence industry ties can be stepped up in coordination with industry, as both sides benefit from U.S. technology and Indian manufacturing in this sector.
- A defence dialogue including the private sectors of both sides could help in co-production and co-development in the defence and aerospace sectors.

#### Small Scale Industries:

- Smaller U.S. companies can find significant new opportunities for investments in India and sourcing from India.
- A U.S.-India SME CEOs Forum can be set up to catalyse such partnerships.

#### Climate Change:

- Clean energy and climate change are also areas where India has made rapid strides.
- This is now among the high priorities of the U.S. administration.
- The U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership should be geared towards joint investments in industrial decarbonisation, carbon dioxide removal and green hydrogen.

- The programmes of Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Research, Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Deployment and Promoting Energy Access through Clean Energy must be relaunched.

#### Partnership in Digital Economy:

- A digital economy partnership is critical.
- India has proved its mettle in this space with new opportunities opening up in robotics, space, AI and electric vehicles.
- It is also important to disseminate information on India's IPR regime improvements and work towards taking India off the U.S. Trade Representative IPR priority watchlist.

#### Conclusion:

- From an industry perspective, U.S.-India collaborations in certain areas will bring many gains.
- Other opportunities in the bilateral economic relationship include education, innovation and R&D, and agricultural trade and technology.
- In this backdrop, it is necessary to institute relevant dialogue mechanisms at the earliest.

## 2. Rajya Sabha passes MTP Bill

#### Context:

The Rajya Sabha passed the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020. The Bill was passed in March 2020 in the Lok Sabha. The original Bill was framed in 1971.

- Under the Indian Penal Code, 1860, voluntarily terminating a pregnancy is a criminal offence.
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 allows for aborting the pregnancy by medical doctors (with specified specialisation) on certain grounds.

#### Details:

- The Act regulates the conditions under which a pregnancy may be aborted.

- The bill increases the time period within which an abortion may be carried out.
- Women would need a nod from a medical board in the case of pregnancies beyond 24 weeks.
  - Currently, abortion requires the opinion of one doctor if it is done within 12 weeks of conception, and two doctors if it is done between 12 and 20 weeks.
- The Bill allows abortion to be done on the advice of one doctor up to 20 weeks, and two doctors in the case of certain categories of women, between 20 and 24 weeks.
- For a pregnancy to be terminated after 24 weeks in case of substantial foetal abnormalities, the opinion of the State-level medical board is essential.

### **Medical Termination of Pregnancy:**

- Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) is a legalized method of termination of pregnancy, intentionally, before its full term.
- It is also known as induced abortion or intentional or voluntary termination of pregnancy.

### **3. We need to urgently invest in public health**

The efforts of healthcare personnel, from ASHA workers to highly specialised intensive care physicians, have saved countless lives and made India proud. The editorial throws light upon how the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of healthcare and public health in times of a health crisis.

- That healthcare is science-based was convincingly demonstrated.
- Lab diagnosis, clinical assessments, management discriminating between useful and useless therapeutic modalities all gave society a glimpse of how modern medicine works.
- A good grounding in theory, long years in basics and specialisation, and apprenticing to gain experience in ethical, evidence-based medical practice are essential for the making of caring medical and nursing professionals.

### **Healthcare and public health:**

- While the health-care capability in India ranks among the world's best, it is not the case when it comes to public health. There is a need to distinguish between the two.
- Healthcare refers to the transaction between one caregiver and one sick person at a time.
- For public health, the client is the community at large and the goal is disease prevention and control.

- Disease control is the deliberate, intervention-based and quantified reduction of disease burden. It has to be data-driven.
- Reliable data must be collected from all sources including every healthcare provider, for monitoring disease burden by diagnosis and outcomes; for this exercise, the total population is the denominator.
  - For instance, data collection for HIV control is sample-based, under the unique Indian design of sentinel surveillance, established in 1986 and still continuing.
  - Counting of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and laboratory tests for polioviruses were crucial for polio elimination in India.

### Issues:

- The health management system in India does not have a way of prospectively collecting data on all diseases and deaths by diagnosis.
  - That is precisely the task of public health.
- There is no comprehensive and quantified profile of any disease in the entire population, including those under vertical programmes – tuberculosis, malaria, leprosy, AIDS.
- The sero-surveys on random samples was an attempt to derive the totality of infections. It reported widely disparate figures and failed to give us a reasonably reliable picture.
- In the absence of public health infrastructure, India's AIDS Task Force designed and successfully applied 'social vaccine' during the HIV/AIDS epidemic and this was continued by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO).
- Sadly, there was no crosstalk between the COVID-19 programme and NACO; hence principles of social vaccine, so effectively deployed in AIDS prevention, were not adopted for COVID-19 prevention.

### Way Forward:

- Social vaccine is the way forward. Social vaccination is another function of public health.
- Where India fell short is timely and comprehensive public education with authoritative and authentic information communicated effectively to the public for self-motivated behaviour modification.
- For COVID-19, there are non-pharmacological preventive interventions such as face masks, hand hygiene, physical distancing.
- Pharmacological prevention is by vaccination.
- Now, during the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out, authentic health education regarding vaccination is conspicuously lacking, leading to considerable vaccine hesitancy among even healthcare staff.

- Post-vaccination surveillance, vital for assessing vaccine efficacy and safety, must be conducted. There exists this lacuna in public health.
- COVID-19 has strong social determinants of infection transmission. In countries where public health is given equal status with healthcare, public health addresses both social and environmental determinants and controls these diseases.
- India's style of mounting ad hoc responses only when there is a pandemic is no longer tenable. Currently, our healthcare institutions are cluttered with too many infectious diseases that are amenable to control if only we had public health.
- Investment in public health will result in health, wealth and prosperity.

#### 4. Changes to NCT Act revive power tussle

##### Context:

Amendments have been proposed to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, three decades after it was enacted.

##### Details:

- The amendments have brought contradictions between the Central and Delhi governments to the fore once again.
- While some are of the opinion that the new Bill will seek to render the office of the Chief Minister a vestigial organ in the name of simplifying administration, others argued that the amendments will iron out needless issues arising out of politics in a city where the Lieutenant-Governor had always been the government.
- Delhi is a Union Territory with a legislature and it came into being in 1991 under Article 239AA of the Constitution inserted by the Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act, 1991.
- As per the existing Act, the Legislative Assembly has the power to make laws in all matters except public order, police and land.

#### 5. U.K. turns to Indo-Pacific in post-Brexit foreign policy

##### Context:

- As per a document laying out post-Brexit foreign and defence policy priorities, Britain wants to expand its influence among countries in the Indo-Pacific region to try to moderate China's global dominance.
- It is Britain's biggest foreign and defence policy review since the end of the Cold War.
- The document focuses on reinvigorated, rules-based international order based on cooperation and free trade.

#### **Details:**

- The document sets out a planned increase of Britain's nuclear warhead stockpile by more than 40% to weigh against evolving global security threats.
- It underlines the importance of strong ties with the U.S.
- It names Russia as the top regional threat.
- While stating the benefits of bilateral trade and investment with China, it stated that the country presents the biggest state-based threat to the U.K.'s economic security.
- Calling the Indo-Pacific increasingly the geopolitical centre of the world, the government highlighted a planned British aircraft carrier deployment to the region.

## **GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment**

### **6. Responsible AI – the need for ethical guard rails**

The article talks about the need for adequate safeguards while applying artificial intelligence (AI), failing which, social and economic schisms could be widened, leading to discriminatory outcomes.

#### **AI's growth:**

- The use of Artificial Intelligence has seen exponential growth.
- And the more AI is used, the more data is generated, and the smarter it gets.
- In just the last decade, AI has evolved with unprecedented velocity.
- Automation, big data and algorithms will continue to sweep into new corners of our lives.
- AI has immense potential. Just as electricity enabled us to radically alter virtually every aspect of existence, AI can leapfrog us toward eradicating



hunger, poverty and disease – opening up new and unimaginable pathways for climate change mitigation, education and scientific discovery.

### **AI's potential:**

- AI has helped increase crop yields, raised business productivity, improved access to credit and made cancer detection faster and more precise.
- It could contribute more than \$15 trillion to the world economy by 2030 adding 14% to global GDP.
- Google has identified over 2,600 use cases of “AI for good” worldwide.
- A study reviewing the impact of AI on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) finds that AI may act as an enabler on 79% of all SDG targets. On the flip side, it states that AI can actively hinder 35% of SDG targets.

### **Concerns:**

- AI requires massive computational capacity, which means more power-hungry data centres and a big carbon footprint.
- Robotics and AI companies are building intelligent machines that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers, but the day is not far when many desk jobs will also be edged out by AI.
- Without clear policies on reskilling workers, the promise of new opportunities will in fact create serious new inequalities.
- Investment is likely to shift to countries where AI-related work is already established, widening gaps among and within countries.
- Without adequate safeguards, AI would exacerbate existing problems.
  - There have been AI facial recognition and surveillance technology discriminating against people of colour and minorities.
  - Also, an AI-enhanced recruitment engine, based on existing workforce profiles, taught itself that male candidates were preferable to female.
- AI also presents serious data privacy concerns. The algorithm's never-ending quest for data has led to our digital footprints being harvested and sold without our knowledge or informed consent.

### **Need for safeguards:**

- Without ethical guard rails, AI will widen social and economic schisms, amplifying any innate biases at an irreversible scale and rate and lead to discriminatory outcomes.
- It is neither enough nor is it fair to expect AI tech companies to solve all these challenges through self-regulation. They are not alone in developing and deploying AI; governments also do so.

### **Conclusion:**

- Many countries, including India, are cognisant of the opportunities and the risks, and are striving to strike the right balance between AI promotion and AI governance – both for the greater public good. NITI Aayog’s Responsible AI for All strategy is a case in point.
  - It recognises that our digital future cannot be optimised for good without multi-stakeholder governance structures that ensure the dividends are fair, inclusive, and just.
- Only a whole of society approach to AI governance will help in developing broad-based ethical principles, cultures and codes of conduct for AI to flourish and bring about the extraordinary breakthroughs it promises.
- Given the global reach of AI, such a “whole of society” approach must rest on a “whole of world” approach.
- The UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap on Digital Cooperation is a good starting point.
- Also, UNESCO has developed a global, comprehensive standard-setting draft Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence to the Member States for deliberation and adoption.
- Agreeing on common guiding principles is an important first step. But the challenging part is in the application of the principles. It is where principles meet reality that the ethical issues and conundrums arise in practice.
- For this, we must be prepared for deep, difficult, multi-stakeholder ethical reflection, analyses and resolve. Only then will AI provide humanity with its full promise.

## 7. Delhi remains most polluted capital: report

### Context:

According to a report from IQ Air, Delhi remained the most polluted capital city in the world.

### Details:

- IQ Air is a Swiss air quality technology company specialising in protection against airborne pollutants, and developing air quality monitoring and air cleaning products.
- In the 2020 report, 106 countries were evaluated.
- The pollution levels are weighted averages, meaning that the population of a country influences the pollution values reported.

### Key findings:

- Of the 106 monitored countries, only 24 met the World Health Organization annual guidelines for PM 2.5
- Bangladesh and Pakistan were the countries in 2020 with worse average PM2.5 levels than India.
- When ranked by cities, Hotan in China was the most polluted followed by Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh.

India:

- Delhi's PM2.5 concentration level in 2020 saw a 15% improvement from that recorded in 2019 when the city was ranked the world's most polluted capital for the second straight year.
  - This was based on data from the Central Pollution Control Board.
- Average pollution levels were 51.9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2020 compared with 58.1  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2019, making India the third most polluted country in 2020, unlike in 2019, when it was ranked fifth.
- Of the 15 most polluted cities in the world, 13 were in India.
- In spite of being a pandemic year, 2020 was particularly severe for agricultural burning. Farm fires in Punjab increased by 46.5% over 2019. Read more on stubble burning in the link.

**THE INDIAN EXPRESS**

## **GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations**

### **1. Orunodoi Scheme**

Ahead of the Assam Assembly elections, the Orunodoi scheme, with women as its primary target group, is the most popular.

#### **Orunodoi Scheme**

- Through Orunodoi – announced in the 2020-21 Budget – monthly assistance of Rs 830 is transferred to women members of marginalised families of Assam.

- On account of being a DBT, or a Direct Benefit Transfer scheme, the money is credited directly to the bank account of the woman head of a family because they are primary caretakers of the household.
- The scheme gives a choice to the poor and needy households on how they want to spend their money.

### Eligibility criteria

- The applicant, a woman, has to be a permanent resident of Assam, whose composite household income should be less than Rs 2 lakh per annum.
- Families with specially-abled members and divorced/widowed/separated /unmarried women are prioritized.
- Poorer families, those without the National Food Security Act (NFSA) or ration cards, are also given priority.

## 2. Anti-defection law: when a nominated MP loses RS membership

A nominated MP had to resign from Rajya Sabha before the completion of his term due to the Anti-defection law.

### The story of Nominated Members

- During the making of the Constitution, members of the Constituent Assembly felt that Rajya Sabha should have members who might not win elections but will bring knowledge and expertise to discussions.
- It led to Rajya Sabha having 12 nominated members from different walks of life.
- The broad criterion for their nomination is that they should have distinguished themselves in fields like literature, science, art, and social service.
- The President nominates such individuals as recommended by the Centre.
- Nominated members have the same rights and privileges as elected members, with one notable difference – they cannot vote in the election of the President.

### Anti-defection law

- In 1985 the Tenth Schedule, popularly known as the anti-defection law, was added to the Constitution.
- But its enactment was catalyzed by the political instability after the general elections of 1967.

- This was the time when multiple state governments were toppled after MLAs changed their political loyalties.
- The purpose of the 1985 Constitution Amendment was to bring stability to governments by deterring MPs and MLAs from changing their political parties on whose ticket they were elected.
- The penalty for shifting political loyalties is the loss of parliamentary membership and a bar on becoming a minister.

### **What invites defection?**

The law covers three types of scenarios with respect to MP switching parties.

1. The first is when a member elected on the ticket of a political party “voluntarily gives up” membership of such a party or votes in the House contrary to the wishes of the party.
2. The second possibility is when an MP who has won his or her seat as an independent candidate after the election joins a political party. In both these instances, the MP lose the seat in the House on changing (or joining) a party.
3. The third scenario relates to nominated MPs. In their case, the law specifies that within six months of being nominated to the House, they can choose to join a political party.

### **Why is a nominated member given 6month time?**

- The time is given so that if a nominated MP is not a member of a political party, they can decide to join one if they want.
- But if they don't join a political party during the first six months of their tenure, and join a party thereafter, then they lose their seat in Parliament.

### **3. ACT-Accelerator Coalition**

ACT-Accelerator, a global coalition formed in April 2020 to fight the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is facing a severe fund crunch to meet its goals for 2020-21.

#### **ACT-Accelerator**

- The Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT Accelerator) is a G20 initiative announced on 24 April 2020.
- A call to action was published simultaneously by the World Health Organization (WHO).

- The ACT Accelerator is a cross-discipline support structure to enable partners to share resources and knowledge.
- It comprises four pillars, each managed by two to three collaborating partners:
  1. Vaccines (also called “COVAX”)
  2. Diagnostics
  3. Therapeutics
  4. Health Systems Connector
- India is an active donor in this alliance.

#### 4. Amend the NCC Act: Kerala High Court

##### Why in News

Recently, the **Kerala High Court** ordered the **Central government** to amend the **National Cadet Corps Act (NCC Act) 1948** which excludes **transgender** persons from joining the **National Cadet Corps (NCC)**.

##### Key Points

- **Background:**
  - A writ petition was filed in 2020 by a student **opposing her exclusion from the NCC unit** at the college on the basis of her gender (Transgender).
  - The petition challenged **Section 6** of the **NCC Act, 1948** which only allows either ‘male’ or ‘female’ cadets.
  - Central government **argued** that transgender persons **cannot be allowed into the NCC as there is no provision for the same**.
- **High Court’s Order:**
  - The court took exception to the position and stressed that it goes contrary to **Kerala’s Transgender Policy** and other applicable statutes.
    - The provisions of the NCC Act, 1948 cannot preclude the operation of the **Transgender Rights Act, 2019**.
    - The Transgender Rights Act Act was intended to give effect to the rights of transgenders under **Article 14, 15, 19, and 21 of the Constitution**.
  - Observed that a **transgender person is entitled to enroll in the NCC** in accordance with her self-perceived gender equality.
  - Ordered the **central government to amend Section 6 of the NCC Act 1948** within six months so that the law offers equal opportunities for everyone.
- **Kerala’s Transgender Policy:**

- **About:**
  - Kerala was **one of the first states** in the country to formulate and implement a **welfare policy for transgender persons in 2015**.
    - The move followed the **Supreme Court** verdict in **National Legal Services Authority v Union of India 2014** in which the **right to equality and equal protection for transgender persons under articles 14, 15 and 16 was upheld** and the bracket of a **'third gender'** allotted to transgender persons.
- **Justice Board:**
  - A **Transgender Justice Board**, aimed to monitor and address concerns where necessary in the implementation of the policy, was formed.
- **No Discrimination:**
  - The policy asked for all government offices and public functionaries to **extend non-discriminatory treatment to transgender** and help provide them with **easy access to education, health, transport and social security**.
- **Social Benefits:**
  - Providing **free legal aid** to those fighting discrimination, recording statistics at the local police station level for crimes against transgenders, a **24×7 helpline and crisis management centre, a monthly pension scheme** for destitutes and those above the age of 55 and establishing **shelter homes** were some of the policy promises.
- **Educational Programs:**
  - In 2018, the government decided to set aside **two additional seats for all transgender applicants** for courses in universities and arts and science colleges under it.
  - There is also a **literacy aid programme for transgender** under which a monthly scholarship of up to Rs. 1,250 and shelter home accommodation is provided.

## National Cadet Corps

- **The National Cadet Corps Act, 1948:**
  - **About:**
    - It is an Act to provide for the constitution of a **National Cadet Corps**.
    - It extends to the whole of India and applies to all persons enrolled or appointed under this Act, wherever they may be.
  - **Section 6:**
    - Any student of the **male sex** of any university may offer himself for enrolment as a cadet in the Senior Division, and any student

of the male sex of any school may offer himself for enrolment as a cadet in the Junior Division if he is of the prescribed age or over.

- Any student of the **female sex** of any university or school may offer herself for enrolment as a cadet in the Girls Division:
  - Provided that in the latter case **she is of the prescribed age or over.**
- **About NCC:**
  - The NCC was **formed in 1948** (on the recommendation of **H. N. Kunzru Committee-1946**), and has its roots to British era uniformed youth entities like University Corps or University Officer Training Corps.
    - Currently, **it has a strength of around 14 lakh cadets** from **Army, Navy and Air Force** wings.
  - The NCC falls under the purview of the Ministry of Defence and is **headed by a Director General of three-star military rank.**
  - It **enrolls cadets at high school and college level** and also awards certificates on completion of various phases.
    - The NCC **cadets receive basic military training** at various levels and also have academic curriculum basics related to Armed forces and their functioning.
    - Various training camps, adventure activities and military training camps are an important aspect of NCC training.
- **Significance:**
  - NCC cadets have **played an important role over the years in relief efforts** during various emergency situations.
  - During the ongoing **pandemic**, over 60,000 NCC cadets have been deployed for voluntary relief work in coordination with district and state authorities across the country.



## GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

### 5. Multi-Layer Farming

ICAR is undertaking location-specific multi-layer farming involving crops of different heights.

#### Multi-Layer Farming

- Multi-layer farming means growing and cultivating compatible plants of different heights on the same field and at the same time.
- It is generally practised in orchards and plantation crops for the utmost use of solar energy even under high planting density.
- It is mostly cash crop-based and it includes a combination of vegetables and fruits that can be grown together.

#### How it is done?

- In Multi-layer farming, the crops are grown at different heights on the same land.
- This farming cannot be done in open fields as shade is required. It is one type of intercropping.
- Growing plants of different height in the same field at the same time is termed Multi-layer cropping. It is generally practised in orchards and plantation crops for maximum use of solar energy even under high planting density. It is the practice of several crops of varying heights, rooting pattern and duration to cultivate together.
- The objective is to utilize vertical space more effectively.
- In this, the tallest components have foliage of strong light and high evaporative demand and shorter components with foliage requiring shade and high humidity.

#### Benefits offered

- Prevent water evaporation from the soil; as an effect, 70% of water is saved.
- The income per unit area increases substantially
- Minimize risks of crop yield loss and this system enables a steady supply of farm products the whole round the year.
- Reduces the impacts of hazards such as high-intensity rainfall, soil erosion, and landslides.

- Improve the soil characteristics and adds organic matter to the soil.
- Effective utilization of leaching materials and helps in effective weed control.
- Provide micro-climate conditions that advantage crops underneath.

**What else?**

**: Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA)**

- In addition to this, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme ‘Support to State Extension Programs for Extension Reforms’ popularly known as ATMA Scheme is already under implementation since 2005.
- Presently, the Scheme is being implemented in 691 districts of 28 states & 5 UTs in the country.
- The scheme promotes a decentralized farmer-friendly extension system in the country.
- Under the scheme, grants-in-aid are released to the State with an objective to make available the latest agricultural technologies and good agricultural practices in different thematic areas of agriculture and allied areas to farmers including training for multi-layer farming.
- Training of farmers is one of the eligible activities of the ATMA Scheme.

## **6. Back Door Entry Closed for Defaulters: SC**

**Why in News**

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has closed the back-door entry of defaulting promoters by using a **special provision of compromise** or arrangement during the liquidation phase of the insolvency proceeding.

- The ruling **reaffirms the spirit of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**.

**Key Points**

- **Background:**
  - In a case involving the liquidation of a Limited Company, the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)** in 2019 held that any person who was ineligible, under **Section 29A of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**, to bid for his company, **was also barred from proposing a scheme of compromise and arrangement under Section 230 of the Companies Act 2013.**

- The Companies Act 2013 is an **Indian company law** which **regulates incorporation of a company, responsibilities of a company, directors, dissolution of a company.**
  - Company means a company incorporated under this Act or under any previous Company Law.
- **Section 230** of the Companies Act allows promoters or creditors of the company to propose a scheme of arrangement or compromise under which the debt of the company can be restructured.
- **Recent Ruling of the SC:**
  - SC upheld NCLAT's decision and said that while **Section 230 would be applicable for promoters and creditors in the normal course** of the workings of the company, it would **not be applicable if the company is facing liquidation under IBC.**
- **Reason Given by SC:**
  - The company has to be protected from its management and a corporate death.
  - It would lead to a **manifest absurdity** if the very persons who are **ineligible for submitting a resolution plan**, participating in the sale of assets of the company in liquidation or participating in the sale of the corporate debtor as a 'going concern', **are somehow permitted to propose a compromise or arrangement under Section 230 of Companies Act 2013.**
- **Significance of the Judgement:**
  - **Speed up the Resolution:**
    - The clarification by the SC with respect to participation of promoters in the liquidation process of an insolvent company will **speed up the corporate insolvency resolution process.**
  - **Maximisation of the Asset Value:**
    - Since the **objective of the IBC** is to find a suitable buyer for the company and liquidation is ordered only in cases where there are no viable plans submitted, experts believe that a **quick liquidation is of utmost importance to maximise the value of assets of the company.**
  - **Settled Conflicting Judgements:**
    - It settles down the conflicting judgments given by different benches of the NCLT, wherein these forums had, in order to follow the IBC's principle of value of asset maximisation, allowed some of the promoters to re-bid for the company or propose some arrangement when it was sent to liquidation.

## Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016

- **About:**
  - It provides a **time-bound process** for resolving insolvency in companies and among individuals.
  - It covers all **individuals, companies, Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) and partnership firms.**
- **Objective:**
  - To **streamline and speed up the resolution process** of failed businesses.
  - To **consolidate provisions of the existing legislative framework** to form a common forum for debtors and creditors of all classes to resolve insolvency.
  - To **stipulate that the resolution process** of a stressed company will **have to be completed in a maximum of 270 days.**
- **Section 29A:**
  - It is a **restrictive provision**, it specifically lists down the **persons who are not eligible to be resolution applicants.**
  - Section 29A in its entirety not only restricts promoters but **also the people related/connected with the promoters.** ★
  - This section was introduced to **disqualify those who had contributed in the downfall of the corporate debtor** or were unsuitable to run the company.
- **Adjudicating Authority:**
  - **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** for companies and LLPs.
  - **Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT)** for individuals and partnership firms.

### National Company Law Appellate Tribunal

- The NCLAT was **constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013** to hear appeals against the orders of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
  - NCLT is a **quasi-judicial body** that adjudicates issues relating to companies.
- It is **also the appellate tribunal for orders passed by the NCLT(s)** under Section 61 of the IBC, 2016, and for orders passed by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) under Sections 202 and 211 of the IBC.
- Any **person aggrieved by any order of the NCLAT may file an appeal to the SC.**

## 7. Moving Black Hole

### Why in News

Scientists have discovered the **first moving supermassive black hole** whose mass is **about three million times that of our Sun**.

- The black hole was **travelling within its own galaxy (J0437+2456)** which is around **228 million light years** away from Earth.

### Key Points

- **Study Conducted by the Scientists:**
  - Scientists **studied 10 faraway galaxies with supermassive black holes** in the centre, **expecting them to have the same velocity as that of the galaxies they reside in**.
  - **Focus of their study was the water in the accretion disk** (the spiralling mass around a supermassive black hole made of matter that is eventually ingested by the black hole).
    - As the water **circles around the black hole** before falling into it **like liquid in a sink, it produces a laser-like beam of radio light known as a maser**. These masers can tell the velocity of black holes very accurately.
- **About the Moving Supermassive Black Hole:**
  - Of the 10 black holes they studied, **only the one at the center of J0437+2456 was unusual**. It was **not moving at the same velocity as its home galaxy**.
    - Besides the empirical evidence, the **enormous size of these black holes had led people to imagine them to be stationary objects** planted in the middle of galaxies as opposed to objects floating around in space.
  - It is **moving with a speed of about 1,10,000 miles per hour** inside its galaxy.
  - **Possible Causes for the Motion:**
    - **Two Supermassive Black Holes Merging:** Scientists might have spotted the resulting black hole moving in a rearward motion after the merger before settling down in a position.
    - **One in a Binary System of Black Holes,** where not one but two supermassive black holes might exist within the host galaxy held together by a shared centre of gravity, which they might be orbiting.
      - The twin of the newly-discovered wandering black hole might not be emitting masers, keeping it from being detected by the radio antenna network.

### Black Hole

- It refers to a point in space where the **matter is so compressed as to create a gravity field from which even light cannot escape.**
- The concept was **theorized by Albert Einstein in 1915** and the term '**black hole**' was **coined in the mid-1960s** by American physicist **John Archibald Wheeler.**
- Usually, the black holes **belong to two categories:**
  - One category **ranges between a few solar masses and tens of solar masses.** These are thought to form when massive stars die.
  - The other category is of **supermassive black holes.** These range from **hundreds of thousands to billions of times that of the sun** from the Solar system to which Earth belongs.
- In April 2019, the scientists at the **Event Horizon Telescope** Project released the **first-ever image of a Black Hole** (more precisely, of its shadow).
  - The **Event Horizon Telescope** is a **group of 8 radio telescopes (used to detect radio waves from space)** located in different parts of the world.
- **Gravitational waves are created** when two black holes orbit each other and merge.

### **Prelims Practice Questions**

#### **1. Consider the following statements with respect to Bara-lacha La:**

1. It is a high mountain pass in Zaskar range.
2. The pass connects Kargil and Srinagar.

#### **Which of the given statement/s is/are INCORRECT?**

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

**Answer: b**

#### **Explanation:**

- Bara-lacha La is a high mountain pass in Zaskar range.
- It connects Lahaul district in Himachal Pradesh to Leh district in Ladakh, situated along the Leh-Manali Highway.

#### **2. Consider the following statements about Project RE-HAB:**

1. It has been launched to mitigate the elephant attacks in human habitations.
2. It is a sub-mission of the National Honey Mission.
3. The project will be implemented by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 and 2 only
- B 2 only
- C 1 and 3 only
- D 1, 2 and 3

**Answer : D**

**Explanation**

- **Project RE-HAB (Reducing Elephant-Human Attacks using Bees)** has been recently launched in Karnataka which entails installing bee boxes along the periphery of the forest and the villages to mitigate human-elephant conflict.
  - It is intended to create “bee fences” to **thwart elephant attacks in human habitations using honeybees. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
    - The bee boxes will dissuade elephants without causing any harm to them.
    - Extremely cost-effective as compared to various other measures such as digging trenches or erecting fences.
- These **spots are located on the periphery of Nagarhole National Park and Tiger Reserve**, which is a known conflict zone.
- The Project is an initiative of the **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**.
  - It is a sub-mission of KVIC’s National Honey Mission. **Hence, statement 2 and 3 are correct.**

**3. Consider the following statements with respect to the Great Indian Bustard:**

1. The bird is omnivorous.
2. It is classified as ‘critically endangered’ on the IUCN Red List.
3. It is the state bird of Gujarat.

**Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?**

- a. 1 only

- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 3 only
- d. 1 and 2 only

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- The Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), is a bustard native to the Indian subcontinent.
- Bustards are large terrestrial birds found in dry grasslands and steppe regions.
- It is among the heaviest of flying birds in existence.
- It is listed as critically endangered on the IUCN Red List.
- Great Indian bustards are omnivores.
- It is the state bird of Rajasthan.

**4. Consider the following statements:**

1. India's arms imports have increased in the period 2016-2020 from 2011-2015.
2. USA is the largest arms supplier to India in the periods 2016-2020.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer :D**

**Explanation**

- According to a recent report by **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** India's **arms imports came down** by a third (about 33%) between 2011-2015 and 2016-2020. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- **Russia is the largest arms supplier** to India in both periods (2011-2015 and 2016-2020). However, Russia's share of Indian arms imports fell from 70% to 49%. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
  - The **USA became the fourth largest supplier** for the period 2016-20. It was the second largest arms supplier to India in 2011-15.



- France and Israel were the second and third largest arms suppliers in 2016–20. India's arms imports from France increased by 709% while those from Israel rose by 82%.

**5. Consider the following statements:**

1. India is the largest arms importer.
2. In the last five years, Russia was the largest arms supplier to India followed by the U.S.

**Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- India is the second-largest arms importer after Saudi Arabia.
- Russia was the largest arms supplier between 2011–15 and 2016–20.
- The U.S. was the second-largest arms supplier to India in 2011–15 but in 2016–20 India's arms imports from the U.S. were 46% lower than in the previous five-year period, making the U.S. the fourth-largest supplier in 2016–20.
- France and Israel were the second and third largest arms suppliers in 2016–20.
- Therefore, both statements are wrong.

**6. Consider the following statements:**

1. The Nagarhole National Park lies in the Western Ghats and is a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
2. The Srivilliputhur Meghamalai Tiger Reserve is located in Tamil Nadu.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer :C**

### **Explanation**

- The Nagarhole National Park is also known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park.
  - It was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1955 and was upgraded into a national park in 1988.
  - It was declared as the 37th Tiger reserve under Project Tiger in 1999.
  - There are 51 Tiger reserves in India.
    - The latest addition in this list is **Srivilliputhur Meghamalai Tiger Reserve** of Tamil Nadu, which got approval in 2021.  
Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- The **Nagarhole National Park** lies in the **Western Ghats** and is a part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.
- The Nagarhole River flows through the park, which joins the Kabini River which also is a boundary between Nagarhole and Bandipur National Park.

### **Mains Practice Questions**

**1. Including more women in science and applied technologies is critical for the advancement of society. Discuss.**

#### **Approach**

- Start the answer by mentioning the status of gender equality in India.
- Discuss the status of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) fields.
- Suggest some measures to improve women's participation in STEM fields.
- Conclude Suitably.

**2. Genetic engineering is a double-edged sword. The only solution is to accelerate the good side of these technologies. Discuss (250 words)**

#### **Approach**

- Introduce by briefly explaining what genetic engineering is.
- Mention the advantages and challenges associated with Genetic engineering.
- Provide a way forward to accelerate the good side of such technologies.
- Conclude suitably.

