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

**1. 'India has assured Sri Lanka of support'**

**Context:**

A new resolution on Sri Lanka's human rights record will be put to vote at the UN Human Rights Council.

**Background:**

- The human rights situation in Sri Lanka has worsened since Gotabaya Rajapaksa became President in 2019.
- Tamil communities in the north and the east fear increasing abuses.

**Details:**

- Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary has said that India has assured Sri Lanka of its support at the UN Human Rights Council.
- Sri Lanka had sought India's proactive support at the UN Human Rights Council, where a resolution on the country will be soon put to vote.

**Issue:**

- Tamil communities in the north and the eastern parts of Sri Lanka fear increasing abuses.
- Tamil parties continue demanding full implementation of the 13th Amendment since the civil war ended in 2009.
- Despite Tamil parties seeking greater power devolution within an undivided, indivisible Sri Lanka, their demands are viewed as leaning towards separatism.

**Sri Lanka's Dilemma:**

- The foreign secretary expressed concerns that while a developing country should be able to make decisions based on economics and needs, unfortunately, a country like Sri Lanka "is not free to make that decision".
- Sri Lanka's foreign policy dilemma is that before making an economic decision, the strategic consideration of the powers in the Indian Ocean Region must be taken into account.

- He asserted that they are determined to balance factors such as seeing how best it can maintain neutrality, maintaining friendly relations for economic purposes with all the countries, and keeping India's strategic security concerns in mind.

### **India's vote:**

- The appeal comes at a time when Indo-Lanka bilateral ties have come under strain, following a series of decisions taken by Colombo on development projects involving India and China.
- It remains to be seen how India might vote on the Sri Lanka resolution.
- The resolution draws from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet's damning report on Sri Lanka's alarming path towards the recurrence of grave human rights violations.
  - Colombo has categorically rejected the report.

## **2. Second wave of infections unlikely: expert**

### **What's in News?**

One of India's leading mathematicians who is involved with the National 'Super Model' initiative led by the Department of Science and Technology said that India is unlikely to see a second wave in COVID-19 infections.

- The reason, he said, is because around 60% of India's population had already been exposed to the virus and the country had reached herd immunity, or where the number of susceptible individuals was too few to allow the virus to exponentially grow.
- Whether herd immunity levels have been reached is subject to debate, because the ICMR reported that only 21% of Indians were estimated to have been infected, as per its third national serological survey. The Super Model's estimate is about thrice that number.

### **National Super Model Initiative:**

- Inspired by India's history of using mathematical models for disaster management planning of metrological events, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has initiated a COVID-19 Indian National Supermodel.
- This is to help monitor the future transmission of infection, thus aiding decisions involving health system readiness and other mitigation measures.
- This exercise would pool in expertise in the field and create one model for the entire country that will be subjected to rigorous tests required for evidence-based forecasting, routinely practised in weather forecasting communities.

### 3. India 'out of recession', GDP grows 0.4%

#### What's in News?

As per the data from the National Statistical Office (NSO), India's economy has resurfaced to growth territory in the third quarter of the fiscal year 2020-21, with a 0.4% rise in the GDP.

- As per revised data, GDP had shrunk in the first two quarters by 24.4% and 7.3% amid the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, marking a technical recession.
- India's farm sector remained resilient, with a 3.9% growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy in the third quarter, after recording a 3.3% and 3% rise in the first two quarters, respectively.
- Services including trade, hotels, transport and communication remained in trouble, with GVA declining 7.7%.
- The Finance Ministry said the resurgence in manufacturing and construction augured well for them to drive growth in FY22 and added that services, which account for more than 50% of India's GVA and the biggest source for pushing consumption, had done remarkably better in Q3.

### 4. SC to hear plea against sale of electoral bonds

#### Context:

Chief Justice of India has agreed to urgently hear a plea by an NGO, Association for Democratic Reforms to stay the sale of a new set of electoral bonds on April 1, before the Assembly elections in crucial states such as West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

#### Issue:

- The NGO voiced serious apprehensions about the sale of electoral bonds before elections.
- The NGO argued that the data obtained through RTI had shown that illegal sale windows had been opened in the past to benefit certain political parties.
- It said that the scheme had opened doors to unlimited political donations, even from foreign companies, thereby legitimising electoral corruption at a huge scale, while at the same time ensuring complete non-transparency in political funding.

- It reminded the court that both the RBI and the Election Commission had objected to the electoral bond scheme.
- Further, advocate Prashant Bhushan said that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Election Commission had both said that the sale of electoral bonds had become an avenue for shell corporations and entities to park illicit money and even proceeds of bribes with political parties.

### **Electoral Bonds:**

- Electoral bonds are instruments/securities that are used to donate funds to political parties.
- The Finance Act of 2017 introduced the use of Electoral Bonds. They are exempt from disclosure under the Representation of People's Act, 1951.
- Contributions received by any eligible political party in the form of electoral bonds will be exempt from income tax.

## **5. A colonial relic**

### **Context:**

A session's court in Delhi has affirmed the belief that a rational scrutiny of outlandish claims by the police is necessary for protecting the liberty of those jailed on flimsy, often political, reasons.

### **What's in News?**

- The sessions court in Delhi, rejecting the purported evidence presented by the Delhi Police against climate change activist Disha Ravi, as "scanty and sketchy", has granted bail to her.
- 22-year-old Disha Ravi was arrested for editing a document shared among a network of activists raising global support for the farmers' protests against three central laws.

### **Details:**

- The order of bail is notable for subjecting the specific charges to strict judicial scrutiny at a fairly early stage.
- In particular, the judge has applied the established test for a charge of sedition under Section 124A of the IPC to pass muster: that the act involved must constitute a threat to public order and incitement to violence.
  - He found that there was not even an iota of evidence indicating that the 'toolkit', a shared Google cloud document with ideas on how to go about amplifying the protests, in any way incited violence.

- He was clear that there was no causal link between the violence and Ms Ravi.
- This conclusion confirmed the widespread criticism that the arrest was unnecessary.

#### Sedition Law:

- Section 124A, IPC states: “Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law in India, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which a fine may be added; or, with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which a fine may be added; or, with fine.”
- According to the law, disaffection includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity. However, disapprobation (criticism) of the measures or administrative action of the government to obtain their alteration by lawful means is not an offence.
- It is classified as “cognisable” and “non-bailable” – the accused cannot get bail as a matter of right, but is subject to the discretion of the session’s judge.
- As far as the history of this particular provision itself is concerned, this was brought at a certain point of time when the British Indian Government wanted to clamp down on people who were asking for independence.

#### Concerns:

- The episode highlights a trend that has caused concern in recent times.
  - The tendency to treat instances of dissent, especially involving strident criticism of policies and laws as attempts to provoke disaffection and disloyalty.
- It is significant that the judge not only saw freedom of speech and expression, but went on to say that an attempt to reach a global audience is part of that freedom.
- In the backdrop of the claim that those who prepared the toolkit made common cause with Khalistani separatists, the judge showed refreshing clarity in maintaining that mere interaction with a group with dubious credentials could not be used to consider someone culpable.

#### Conclusion:

- The bail order must but be routine judicial responses to cases in which there is a mismatch between the accusation and the evidence.

- There is no place in a modern democracy for a colonial-era legal provision such as sedition.
- The article suggests that Sedition Law, too broadly defined, prone to misuse, and functioning as a handy tool to repress activism deserves to be scrapped.

## 6. U.S. welcomes India-Pak. ceasefire agreement

### What's in News?

The United States has welcomed the announcement by India and Pakistan that they would observe the 2003 ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC).

- The White House called for the two countries to build upon this progress and the State Department encouraged a reduction in tensions and violence along the LoC.
- This is a positive step towards greater peace and stability in South Asia, which is in our shared interest, it said.
- The European Union (EU) and the United Nations also welcomed the ceasefire agreement.

## 7. Imparting direction to science in India

The article throws light upon the progress that India has made in science and technology research, problems faced in research and opportunities.

### Publications:

- From the report published by the National Science Foundation of the U.S. in December 2019, India was the third largest publisher of peer-reviewed science and engineering journal articles and conference papers.
- The average yearly growth rate was 10.73% from 2008, which was greater than China's 7.81%.
- However, China and the United States had about thrice and twice the number, respectively, of India's publications.

### Issue:

- The publications from India are not impactful.
- In the top 1% of the most cited publications from 2016 (called HCA, or Highly Cited Articles), India's index score of 0.7 is lower than that of the U.S., China and the European Union.
- An index score of 1 or more is considered good.

Steps must be taken to ensure that the impact, and hence the citation of publications from India, should improve.

### **Patents:**

- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) through their Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) is the primary channel of filing international patent applications.
- In its report for 2019, WIPO says India filed a modest number of 2,053 patent applications.
- During the same period, China filed 58,990 and the U.S filed 57,840 patents.
- China filed just 276 patent applications in 1999 but rose to become an innovation titan in 2019.

### *Steps taken:*

- The Indian Government has put in place the National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy in 2016 to stimulate a dynamic, vibrant and balanced intellectual property rights system.
- One of the objectives is human capital development.
- The mission to foster innovation, replicate it at scale and commercialise it is a work in progress consequent to the policy.

### **Science policies over time:**

- India realised early as a republic the need to use science to become a welfare state.
- There have been four science policies after 1947.
- The draft of the fifth policy was released recently.

### *First Science Policy:*

- Scientific Policy Resolution – India's first science policy adopted in 1958, aimed to develop scientific enterprise and lay the foundation for scientific temper.
- It led to the establishment of many research institutes and national laboratories.
- By 1980, India had developed advanced scientific infrastructure with sufficient scientific personnel.

### *Second Science Policy:*

- The focus in the second science policy, Technology Policy Statement, in 1983, was technological self-reliance and to use technology to benefit all sections of



society, while strengthening research in fields such as electronics and biotechnology.

*Third Science Policy:*

- The Science and Technology Policy 2003 was the first science policy after the economic liberalisation of 1991.
- It aimed to increase investment in research and development and brought it to 0.7%.
- The Scientific and Engineering Research Board (SERB) was established to promote research.

*Fourth Science Policy:*

- In 2013, India's science policy included Innovation in its scope and was called Science, Technology and Innovation Policy.
- The focus was to be one of the top five global scientific leaders.
- India achieved this through:
  - Building partnerships with States
  - Establishing more research and development centres
  - Collaborating in international projects such as the Large Hadron Collider in the European Union.

*Draft of the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020 (STIP 2020):*

- STIP 2020 is the fifth science policy.
- It was released in January 2021 and offers hope to research in India.
- Vision of the policy:
  - To double the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) researchers, Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD) and private sector contribution to the GERD every 5 years.
  - To position India among the top three scientific superpowers in the next decade.
- STIP 2020 defines an Open Science Framework which will create a "one nation, one subscription" solution that will give all individuals and institutions in India access to all top journals through a central subscription.
- This scheme would help in improving access to knowledge.
- It also defines strategies to improve funding for and participation in research.
- The policy seeks to define strategies that are "decentralized, evidence-informed, bottom-up, experts-driven, and inclusive".
- It makes the right moves and strikes the right notes to make India future-ready.

- More specific directives and implementation with a scientific temper will be key to the policy's success.

### Way Forward:

- There is a need to improve Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD).
  - India's GERD is currently around 0.6% of GDP.
  - This is quite low when compared to the investments by the U.S. and China which are greater than 2%.
  - Israel's GERD is more than 4%.
  - A key reason is the low private sector contribution.
- STIP 2020 defines solutions to improve funding thus: all States to fund research, multinational corporations to participate in research, fiscal incentives and support for innovation in medium and small-scale enterprises.
  - The government should also invest more into research.
- There is a need for inclusion of under-represented groups of people in research, support for indigenous knowledge systems, using artificial intelligence, reaching out to the Indian scientific diaspora for collaboration, science diplomacy with partner countries, and setting up a strategic technology development fund to give impetus to research.

### Conclusion:

Science diplomacy is at the fore now with India offering COVID-19 vaccines to many countries; formulating a policy around it will yield dividends. Support for indigenous knowledge systems should enable them to improve upon their limitations in subscribing to transparency and verifiability.

### Note:

**National Science Day (NSD) is celebrated on February 28th to commemorate the discovery of Raman Effect by Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman. He went on to receive a Nobel Prize for this discovery in the year 1930.**

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

### **8. 'Domestic businesses need more govt. support'**

#### **Context:**

Minister of External Affairs stressed the need for strong policies to foster and promote manufacturing in India and called for more governmental support for domestic businesses.

#### **Details:**

- He stressed that it is the business of the government to support domestic businesses.
- He pointed out that there existed a huge potential for manufacturing which had not been fostered by the right policies yet.
- It was emphasised that lot more people-centric policies are needed at home.

#### **Fifth Asia Economic Dialogue 2021:**

- Asia Economic Dialogue is a unique dialogue based in India where Asia gets together to talk trade, finance, and business opportunities.
- It is the flagship geoeconomics conference of the MEA.
- The Asia Economic Dialogue (AED) is jointly being convened by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Pune International Centre (PIC).
- The theme of the fifth edition of the AED, and the second one organised by PIC is "Post Covid-19 Global Trade and Finance Dynamics".
- The AED 2021 virtual conference will see participation from Foreign Ministers of Asian countries, senior government officials, officials from multilateral organisations and industry leaders.

## THE INDIAN EXPRESS

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

#### 1. Anangpal II: Tomar Dynasty

##### Why in News

Recently, a seminar highlighted the **legacy** of the long-forgotten **Tomar king - Anangpal II**.

##### Key Points

- **About Anangpal II:**
  - **Anangpal II**, popularly known as **Anangpal Tomar**, belonged to the Tomar dynasty.
  - He was the founder of **Dhillika Puri**, which eventually became Delhi.
    - Evidence about the early history of Delhi is inscribed on the **iron pillar of Masjid Quwaatul Islam**, adjacent to **Qutub Minar**.
  - Multiple inscriptions and coins suggest Anangpal Tomar **was the ruler of present-day Delhi and Haryana in between the 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries**.
    - He had built the city from ruins and under his supervision, **Anang Tal Baoli and Lal Kot were constructed**.
  - Anangpal Tomar II was succeeded by his grandson **Prithviraj Chauhan**.
    - **Delhi Sultanate** was established in **1192 after Prithviraj Chauhan's** defeat in the **Battle of Tarain** (present-day Haryana) by the Ghurid forces.
- **About Tomar Dynasty:**
  - Tomara dynasty is **one of the minor early medieval ruling houses** of northern India.
  - Puranic evidence (writings of the Puranas) gives its early location in the Himalayan region. According to bardic tradition, the dynasty was **one of the 36 Rajput tribes**.
  - The history of the family spans the period between the reign of Anangpal, who founded the city of Delhi in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE, and the incorporation of Delhi within the Chauhan (Chahamana) kingdom in 1164.

- Although Delhi subsequently became decisively a part of the Chauhan kingdom, numismatic and comparatively late literary evidence indicates that Tomara kings such as Anangapala and Madanapala continued to rule as feudatories, presumably until the final conquest of Delhi by the Muslims in 1192-93.

## 2. Stop TB Partnership Board

### Why in News

**Dr. Harsh Vardhan**, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, has been appointed **Chairman of the Stop TB Partnership Board**.

- He will **serve a three year term, commencing July 2021**, as the Chair of the Board of Stop TB Partnership.

### Key Points

- **About the Stop TB Partnership Board:**
  - It was **established in 2001** and is mandated to eliminate Tuberculosis as a public health problem.
  - The organization was **conceived following the meeting of the First Session of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Tuberculosis Epidemic** held in London in March 1998.
  - In its inaugural year itself, the Stop TB Partnership through the **Amsterdam Declaration** gave a call for collaborative action from ministerial delegations from 20 countries that bear the highest burden of TB.
  - In 2019, it launched the updated **Global Plan to End TB 2018-2022**.
  - The **Kochon Prize** is awarded annually by Stop TB Partnership to individuals and/or organizations that have made a significant contribution to combating TB.
    - The **Kochon Prize**, which is endowed by the Kochon Foundation, a non-profit foundation registered in the Republic of Korea, consists of a USD 65,000 award.
  - Its secretariat is based at **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- **High TB Burden Countries:**
  - In 2019, the **30 high TB burden countries** accounted for 87% of new TB cases.
  - Eight countries account for two thirds of the total, with **India leading the count**, followed by Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh and South Africa (**Global Tuberculosis Report: WHO**)
- **Scenario in India:**

- With an estimated **2.64 million TB patients**, India has the largest burden of TB globally in terms of absolute numbers.
- Recently, the “**Step Up for TB 2020**” report by the Stop TB Partnership and Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has **highlighted India’s conservative approach regarding the new medicines for Drug Resistant TB**, putting lives of patients including children in danger.
- **Steps Taken by India:**
  - India has **committed to eliminating TB in the country by 2025**.
    - Five years ahead of the global deadline of 2030.
  - **National Strategy Plan for TB Elimination 2017-2025:**
    - The requirements for moving towards TB elimination in India have been arranged in **four strategic areas of Detect, Treat, Prevent & Build**.
    - There is also across all four areas, an overarching theme of the **Private Sector**. Another overarching theme is that of **Key Populations**.
  - **TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign, Nikshay Poshan Yojana**, etc.
- **Global Efforts:**
  - The **End TB Strategy of WHO**.
  - **World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is observed on 24<sup>th</sup> March** to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB.

## Tuberculosis

- **Tuberculosis is caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*)** that most often affect the lungs.
- **Transmission:** TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.
- **Symptoms:** Cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- **Treatment:** TB is treatable and curable disease. It is treated with a standard 6 month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs that are provided with information, supervision and support to the patient by a health worker or trained volunteer.
- **Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs. MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.
- **Extensively drug resistant TB (XDR TB)** is a rare type of MDR TB that is resistant to isoniazid and rifampin, plus any fluoroquinolone and at least one

of three injectable second-line drugs (i.e., amikacin, kanamycin, or capreomycin).

### 3. Vehicle Scrapping Policy

#### Why in News

Recently, the Union Road and Transport Minister announced the **Vehicle Scrapping Policy** in the Lok Sabha.

- It was first announced in the **Union Budget for 2021-22**.
- The policy is **estimated to cover 51 lakh Light Motor Vehicles (LMVs)** that are **above 20 years of age** and another **34 lakh LMVs** above **15 years of age**.
- India will also implement a **Global Positioning System (GPS)-based toll collection system** and **do away with all toll booths within a year**.

#### Key Points

- **Aim:**
  - Reducing the population of old and defective vehicles, bringing down vehicular air pollutants, improving **road and vehicular safety**.
- **Provisions:**
  - **Fitness Test:**
    - Old vehicles will have to **pass a fitness test before re-registration** and as per the policy **government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old** and **private vehicles which are over 20 years old** will be scrapped.
    - Old vehicles will be tested at the **Automated Fitness Center** and the fitness test of the vehicles will be conducted according to international standards.
      - Emission test, braking system, safety components will be tested and the vehicles which fail in the fitness test will be scrapped.
      - The Ministry has also **issued rules for registration procedure for scrapping facilities**, their powers, and scrapping procedure to be followed.
  - **Road Tax Rebate:**
    - The state governments may be advised to offer a **road-tax rebate** of up to **25% for personal vehicles** and up to **15% for commercial vehicles** to provide **incentive to owners** of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles
  - **Vehicle Discount:**

- Vehicle manufacturers will also give a **discount of 5%** to people who will produce the '**Scrapping Certificate**' and registration fees will be waived off on the purchase of a new vehicle.
- **Disincentive:**
  - As a disincentive, **increased re-registration fees** would be applicable for **vehicles 15 years or older** from the initial date registration.
- **Significance:**
  - **Creation of Scrap yards:**
    - It will lead to creation for more scrap yards in the country and effective recovery of waste from old vehicles.
  - **Employment:**
    - In the new fitness centers, **35 thousand people will get employment** and an investment of Rs 10,000 crores will be pumped in.
  - **Improved Revenue:**
    - This will **boost sales of heavy and medium commercial vehicles** that had been in the contraction zone as a result of economic slowdown triggered by the **bankruptcy of IL&FS** (Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services) and **Covid-19 pandemic**.
    - The government treasury is **expected to get around Rs 30,000 to 40,000 crores** of money through **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** from this policy.
  - **Reduction in Prices:**
    - Prices of auto components would fall substantially with the **recycling of metal and plastic parts**.
    - As scrapped materials will get cheaper the **production cost of the vehicle manufacturers will also reduce**.
  - **Reduce Pollution:**
    - It will help **improve fuel efficiency and reduce pollution**.
      - As older vehicles pollute the environment 10 to 12 times more, and estimated that 17 lakh medium and heavy commercial vehicles are more than 15 years old.
- **Other Initiatives to Curb Vehicular Pollution:**
  - **Go Electric Campaign**
  - **FAME India Scheme Phase II.**
  - **Electric Vehicles (EV) Policy 2020 for Delhi.**
  - **Hydrogen Fuel Cell Based Bus and Car Project.**
  - **National Electric Mobility Mission 2020.**

#### **4.MMDR Amendment Bill, 2021**

#### **Why in News**



Recently, the Coal and Mines Minister introduced the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Bill, 2021** in Lok Sabha.

- The Bill seeks to amend the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957** which regulates the mining sector in India.

### Key Points

- **Proposed Changes:**
  - **Removal of restriction on end-use of minerals:**
    - The Act **empowers the central government to reserve any mine** (other than coal, lignite, and atomic minerals) to be leased through an auction for a particular end-use (such as iron ore mine for a steel plant). Such mines are known as captive mines.
    - The Bill provides that **no mine will be reserved for particular end-use.**
  - **Sale of minerals by captive mines:**
    - The Bill provides that **captive mines** (other than atomic minerals) **may sell up to 50% of their annual mineral production in the open market** after meeting their own needs.
      - The **central government may increase this threshold through** a notification.
      - The **lessee will have to pay additional charges** for minerals sold in the open market.
  - **Auction by the central government in certain cases:**
    - The Bill **empowers the central government to specify a time period for completion of the auction process** in consultation with the state government.
    - If the state government is unable to complete the auction process within this period, the **auctions may be conducted by the central government.**
  - **Transfer of statutory clearances:**
    - It **provides that transferred statutory clearances will be valid throughout the lease period** of the new lessee.
      - Currently the new lessee has to apply for fresh clearances within two years of the transfer from the previous lessee.
  - **Allocation of mines with expired leases:**
    - The Bill adds that mines whose lease has expired, may be allocated to a government company in certain cases.
    - This will be applicable if the auction process for granting a new lease has not been completed, or the new lease has been terminated within a year of the auction.

- The state government may grant a lease for such a mine to a government company for a period of up to 10 years or until the selection of a new lessee, whichever is earlier.
- **Extension of leases to government companies:**
  - The Act provides that the period of mining leases granted to government companies will be prescribed by the central government and may be **extended on payment of additional amounts** prescribed in the Bill.
- **Conditions for lapse of mining lease:**
  - If the lessee is **not able to start mining operations within two years** of the grant of a lease.
  - If the lessee has **discontinued mining operations for a period of two years.**
    - The lease will not lapse at the end of this period if a concession is provided by the state government upon an application by the lessee.
    - The Bill adds that the threshold period for lapse of the lease may be extended by the state government only once and up to one year.
- **Non-exclusive reconnaissance permit:**
  - The Act provides for a non-exclusive reconnaissance permit (for minerals other than coal, lignite, and atomic minerals).
    - **Reconnaissance** means preliminary prospecting of a mineral through certain surveys. The **Bill removes the provision for this permit.**
- **Significance:**
  - **Transparency:**
    - It would lead to **greater transparency in the auction process** as there is a perception that state governments may in some cases prefer some bidders, and try to delay or cancel mining rights if their preferred bidders do not win mining rights.
  - **Maximization of Output:**
    - Increased **flexibility would allow miners to maximise output from captive mines** as they would be able to sell output in excess of their own requirements.
  - **Ease of Doing Business:**
    - It will provide **ease of doing business**, simplification of procedure and benefit all the parties in areas where minerals are located.
    - It will also **speed up the process** of implementation of projects.
  - **Efficient Energy Market:**
    - It will create an **efficient energy market** and bring in more competition as well as **reduce coal imports.**

- **Access to High-End Technology:**
  - It would also help India gain access to high-end technology for underground mining used by miners across the globe.

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

### 5. Soft-touch regulation for digital lending

#### 3 digital lending models

- Presently, there are **three digital-lending models**, seen through the regulatory-approach lens:
- 1) Bank/NBFC-owned **digital platforms operating** under the direct regulatory purview of RBI.
- 2) **Fintech companies' proprietary digital platforms**, working in partnership with banks/NBFCs.
- Being mere **intermediaries**, these platforms **are not required to seek any registration with RBI**, and are only indirectly regulated through RBI's outsourcing guidelines applicable to Banks/NBFCs.
- 3) **Peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platforms**, which usually involve the otherwise unregulated retail lenders.
- RBI has mandated such platforms to seek registration as NBFC-P2P; thus, they are **directly regulated by RBI**.

#### Issues with digital lending

- The specific issues are unauthorised lenders, exorbitant rates of interest, use of coercive repayment methods, and **non-consensual collection or use of user data**.
- These issues entail serious **adverse implications for borrowers** and have **systemic implications**, hampering the rise of legitimate fintech players.

#### Steps taken

- With a view to curb such practices, RBI, in 2020, issued a **notification to Banks/NBFCs mandating additional disclosures/compliances**, and an advisory to borrowers warning them against such platforms.
- Following the notification, **Google removed several such loan apps from its PlayStore**.

- The Digital Lenders' Association of India (DLAI) also issued **guidelines to help borrowers identify such unscrupulous platforms**.
- In the regulatory pipeline on this front is the report of the working group on digital lending, constituted by RBI in January 2021.

### Framing effective policy solutions

- Given the significant contribution of legitimate fintech players, it is important to ensure that any policy solutions to address such issues **do not impede the growth of such players**.
- The key to this lies in **adoption of light-touch regulation**, along with the effective implementation of the already proposed regulatory initiatives.
- For instance, the primary cause of the rising supply of unauthorised lending platforms is the **existing credit information asymmetry that genuine lenders face** in respect of small borrowers.
- Here, operationalising and on-scale implementation of RBI's proposed '**Public Credit Registry**' and the '**Open Credit Enablement Network**' (an infrastructure protocol enabling digital low cost lending to small borrowers through access of consented data) would lead to **increased participation of legitimate players** and curb proliferation of unauthorised lenders.
- Another foundation for framing effective policy solutions lies in **leveraging the interdependence and impact** of each individual constituent of the digital lending ecosystem, on other constituents.
- Apart from lenders/ platforms/ borrowers, these constituents also include the digital lending industry associations, consent managers and technology developers.
- Regulators and industry associations working together can provide the necessary foundations for addressing these issues.
- Other solutions spear-headed by industry associations could be to establish '**certification system**' based maintenance of a repository of lending platforms for easy identification of genuine players.
- Similarly, on the **data protection aspect**, a structural solution through coordinated efforts of various digital lending constituents is required.

### Conclusion

- For the continued development of the Indian digital lending economy, it is important to implement policy solutions that adequately protect the borrowers from malpractices, while, at the same time, do not dampen innovation in this fast-evolving sector.

## 6. Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project

### Why in News

The Chief Minister of Rajasthan has **demande**d the national project status for the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP).

- The main advantage of a project which has received national project status is that **90% of the funding for the project will be given by the central government.**
- The estimated cost of the ERCP is around Rs. 40,000 crore.

### Key Points

- **Background:**
  - According to the state Water Resources Department, **Rajasthan**, the **largest state of India** with a geographical area of 342.52 lakh hectares which amount to 10.4% of the entire country, **holds only 1.16% of India's surface water and 1.72% of groundwater.**
  - Among the state's water bodies, **only the Chambal river basin has surplus water** but this water cannot be tapped directly because the area around the Kota barrage is designated as a crocodile sanctuary.
  - Through the help of diversion structures, interbasin water transfers, linking channels and construction of pumping main feeder channels, the **ERCP aims to create a network of water channels** which will cover 23.67 % area of Rajasthan along with 41.13 % population of the state.
- **About the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project:**
  - It **aims to harvest surplus water** available during rainy season in **rivers in Southern Rajasthan** such as **Chambal** and its tributaries, including Kunnu, Parvati, Kalisindh, and use this **water in south-eastern districts of the state**, where there is scarcity of water for drinking and irrigation.
  - **ERCP** is planned to meet **drinking and industrial water needs** of the southern and south eastern Rajasthan, for humans and Livestock till the year 2051.
  - It **proposes to provide drinking water to 13 districts of Rajasthan** and provide irrigation water for 2.8 lakh hectares of land through 26 different large and medium projects.
    - **13 districts:** Jhalawar, Baran, Kota, Bundi, Sawai Madhopur, Ajmer, Tonk, Jaipur, Karauli, Alwar, Bharatpur, Dausa and Dholpur.
- **Benefits:**
  - A significant area of land will get **irrigation facilities.**

- It intends to improve the ground water table in the rural areas of the state.
  - Positively influencing the socio-economic conditions of the people.
- It adds special emphasis on the **Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)** and envisages that sustainable water sources will enhance and help industries grow in these areas.
  - Resulting in investment and revenue.

### Chambal River

- It is one of the most pollution-free rivers of India.
- It **originates at the Singar Chouri peak** in the northern slopes of the Vindhya mountains (Indore, Madhya Pradesh). From there, it flows in the North direction in Madhya Pradesh for a length of about 346 km and **then follows a north-easterly direction for a length of 225 km through Rajasthan.**
- It **enters U.P.** and flows for about 32 km before joining the Yamuna River in Etawah District.
- It is a rainfed river and its **basin is bounded by the Vindhyan mountain ranges and the Aravallis.** The Chambal and its tributaries drain the Malwa region of northwestern Madhya Pradesh.
- The **Hadauti plateau in Rajasthan** occurs in the upper catchment of the Chambal River to the southeast of the Mewar Plains.
- **Tributaries:** Banas, Kali Sindh, Sipra, Parbati, etc.
- **Main Power Projects/ Dam:** Gandhi Sagar Dam, Rana Pratap Sagar Dam, Jawahar Sagar Dam, and Kota Barrage.
- The **National Chambal Sanctuary** is located along river Chambal on the tri-junction of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. It is known for critically endangered gharial, the red-crowned roof turtle, and the endangered Ganges river dolphin.

### Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to the Appropriation Bill, consider the following statements:

1. It enables the government to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India.
2. It is mandatory for the Government to accept the recommendations of the Rajya Sabha on the Appropriation Bill.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

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

**Answer : B**

#### Explanation

- An **Appropriation Bill** gives power to the government to **withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India** for meeting the expenditure during the financial year.
  - The amount withdrawn is used to meet the current expenditure during the financial year.
  - Both appropriation and finance bills are classified as **money bills**.  
**Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Appropriation Bill is introduced in the Lok Sabha after discussions on Budget proposals and Voting on Demand for Grants.
  - Once it is passed by the Lok Sabha it is sent to the Rajya Sabha.
- The Rajya Sabha has the power to recommend any amendments in this Bill. However, the bill does not require the explicit consent of the Rajya Sabha.
  - The Lok Sabha can **either accept or reject the recommendations** made by the Rajya Sabha. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

2. With respect to World Air Quality Report, 2020, which was launched recently, consider the following statements:

1. India, on the whole, had improved its average annual PM2.5 (particulate matter) levels in 2020 than in 2019.

2. Delhi is the most polluted capital city in the world.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

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

**Answer : c**

**Explanation:**

**World Air Quality Report, 2020**

- The report was launched by **IQ Air**, a Swiss air quality technology company specialising in protection against airborne pollutants, and developing air quality monitoring and air cleaning products.
- According to the report, Delhi remained the most polluted capital city in the world.
- The report, however, shows that Delhi's air quality improved by approximately 15 per cent from 2019 to 2020.
- India, on the whole, had improved its average annual PM2.5 (particulate matter) levels in 2020 than in 2019.
- 22 of the world's 30 most polluted cities are from India.
- South Indian cities recorded relatively better air quality, though they remained above the daily WHO limit of 25 g/m<sup>3</sup> for most parts of 2020.

**3. With reference to the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, consider the following statements:**

1. It received the TX2 award in 2020 for doubling the number of tigers in the past four years.
2. It forms the part of Terai Arc Landscape in the upper Gangetic Plain.

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

- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (Uttar Pradesh) is located in Pilibhit and Shahjahanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. It was notified as Tiger Reserve in 2014.
- In 2020, it **bagged international award TX2** for doubling up the number of tigers in the past four years. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It forms the part of Terai Arc Landscape in the upper Gangetic Plain. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
  - The northern edge of the reserve lies along the Indo-Nepal border while the southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.

#### 4. Bhaona, a traditional form of entertainment belongs to which of the following Indian states?

- a. Karnataka
- b. Assam
- c. West Bengal
- d. Gujarat

Answer : b

### Explanation:

#### Bhaona

- It is a mythology-based theatrical performance that involves dialogues, songs, and dances.
- It was the creation of saint-reformer Sankardev, who started neo-Vaishnavite movement.
- It usually involves 40-50 performers wearing costumes and ornaments including those playing heavy drums and cymbals.
- The actors who perform it are known as Bhaoriya.

#### Other Art forms developed by Sankaradeva

- Initially, Sankaradeva wrote his prose in Sanskrit but later used Assamese and Brajavali.
  - Brajavali is a literary language limited to theatrical usage, in which Sankardeva wrote his songs and plays to develop the following artforms
1. Borgeet- a new form of spiritual music.
  2. Monastic dance that evolved as Sattriya - a classical dance form which acts as a medium for propagation of the Vaishnava faith.

5. Arrange the following stages of budget enactment in the correct sequence:

1. General discussion
2. Passing of Appropriation Bill
3. Passing of Finance Bill
4. Voting on demands for grants
5. Presentation in Parliament

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A 1-2-3-4-5  
B 5-1-4-2-3  
C 5-1-4-3-2  
D 5-1-3-4-2

**Answer :B**

#### **Explanation**

- The budget goes through the following six stages in the Parliament:
  - **Presentation of budget:** Since 2017, the presentation of the budget has been advanced to 1<sup>st</sup> of February.
  - **General discussion:** The general discussion on budget takes place in both the Houses of Parliament.
  - **Scrutiny by departmental committees:** After the general discussion on the budget is over the 24 departmental standing committees of Parliament examine and discuss in detail the demands for grants of the concerned ministers and prepare reports on them.
  - **Voting on demands for grants:** The Lok Sabha takes up voting of demands for grants. The voting of demands for grants is the exclusive privilege of the Lok Sabha.
  - **Passing of appropriation bill:** An appropriation bill is introduced to provide for the appropriation, out of the Consolidated Fund of India.
  - **Passing of finance bill:** The Finance Bill is introduced to give effect to the financial proposals of the Government of India for the following year. **Hence, option B is correct.**

6. Consider the following statements about the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI):

1. It is constituted under Article 266 of the Indian constitution.
2. It consists of all types of tax and non-tax revenues received by the Central Government.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

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

**Answer :D**

### **Explanation**

- **Consolidated Fund of India** is constituted under **Article 266 (1)** of the Constitution of India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is made up of:
  - **All revenues** received by the Centre by way of **taxes** (Income Tax, Central Excise, Customs and other receipts) and **all non-tax revenues.** **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
  - All loans raised by the Centre by issue of Public notifications, treasury bills (internal debt) and from foreign governments and international institutions (external debt).
- The Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG) audits the fund and reports to the relevant legislatures on the management.

## **Mains Practice Questions**

**1Q. Discuss the socio-economic impact of climate change on India.**

### **Approach**

- Give a short introduction of 'Climate Change'.
- Enumerate the Socio-economic impact of climate change.
- Conclude with steps taken by government at national and global level.

**2Q. Technology, if not effectively disbursed, creates new power asymmetries. Examine.**

### **Approach**

- Briefly write about technology keeping in perspective the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution and its role in creating power asymmetry.
- Write how technology can create power asymmetry globally, economically and socially.
- Provide the way forward so that technology can be effectively disbursed.