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# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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

**1. Supreme Court flags concern over misuse of electoral bonds**

**Context:**

The Supreme Court flagged its concern that political parties could misuse crores of rupees received as donations through electoral bonds to bankroll violent protests or even terror.

**Arguments against Electoral Bonds:**

- The court highlighted that there was a scope for misuse of funds received through electoral bonds by political parties to fund activities outside their political agenda.
- It argued that the electoral bonds scheme introduces anonymity in political donations.
- The court, therefore, asked the government whether there was any control over how these donations were used by the political parties.

**Government's Response:**

- Only parties registered under the Representation of the People Act can receive donations through electoral bonds.
- Also, another condition is that they should not have secured less than 1% of the votes polled in the previous elections.
- It said that the sale of electoral bonds was announced after getting permission from the Election Commission of India.

**2. LS clears Bill on allied healthcare**

**Context:**

The Lok Sabha cleared the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professionals Bill, 2021. The Bill has already been passed by the Rajya Sabha.

- The Bill defines an 'allied health professional' as an associate, technician, or technologist trained to support the diagnosis and treatment of any illness, disease, injury, or impairment.
  - Such a professional should have obtained a diploma or degree under this Bill.
- A healthcare professional includes a scientist, therapist, or any other professional who studies, advises, researches, supervises, or provides preventive, curative, rehabilitative, therapeutic, or promotional health services.
  - Such a professional should have obtained a degree under this Bill.
- Allied and healthcare professions that are mentioned in the Bill include professionals working in life sciences, trauma and burn care, surgical and anaesthesia related technology, physiotherapists, and nutrition science.

### **Details:**

- The bill seeks to set up a commission to regulate the allied healthcare sector, standardise training and qualifications across the country.
- The functions of the proposed National Commission include:
  - Framing of standards for education and practice.
  - Creating and maintaining an online Central Register of all registered professionals.
  - Providing basic standards of education.
  - Providing for a uniform entrance and exit examination.
- Under the legislation, only those enrolled in a State Register or the National Register as a qualified allied and healthcare practitioner would be allowed to practice as an allied and healthcare practitioner.

### **Significance:**

- Union Health Minister said that the legislation is aimed at fulfilling long-pending demands of the sector, and enhance employment opportunities for professionals.
- There is an immense demand for qualified healthcare professionals and the legislation will provide the necessary impetus in providing affordable healthcare to the people.
- The paramedics and allied healthcare workers are a critical part of the medical profession and their contribution is similar to doctors, if not more. The group of allied professionals is large and the bill is trying to regulate this field, by providing dignity to their roles.

### 3. Tactical abstention

#### *Context*

- The UN Human Rights Council adopted a strong resolution against Sri Lanka's rights record.
- India abstained from voting in the United Nations Human Rights Council on a resolution against Sri Lanka for crimes committed against Tamils during the country's long civil war, which ended in 2009.

#### **Human Rights Council**

- The Human Rights Council is the principal United Nations intergovernmental body responsible for human rights. Established by General Assembly resolution 60/251, it replaced and assumed most mandates, mechanisms, functions and responsibilities previously entrusted to the Commission on Human Rights.
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the secretariat for the Human Rights Council.

#### *Membership*

- The Council is made of 47 Member States, which are elected by the majority of members of the General Assembly of the United Nations through direct and secret ballot.
- The General Assembly takes into account the candidate States' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitments in this regard.

The Council's Membership is based on equitable geographical distribution. Seats are distributed as follows:

- African States: 13 seats
- Asia-Pacific States: 13 seats
- Latin American and Caribbean States: 8 seats
- Western European and other States: 7 seats
- Eastern European States: 6 seats

#### *Members of the Council*

- They serve for a period of three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.
- With membership on the Council comes a responsibility to uphold high human rights standards.

### *What is the Universal Periodic Review?*

- The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process that involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States.
- The UPR is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council which is based on equal treatment for all countries. It provides an opportunity for all States to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights.
- The UPR also includes a sharing of best human rights practices around the globe.

### *Functions*

- The UNHRC, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, has two key functions –
- The council passes non-binding resolutions on human rights issues through a periodic review of all 193 UN member states called the Universal Periodic Review (UPR),
- It oversees the expert investigation of violations in specific countries (Special Procedures).

### *What is the goal of the UPR?*

- The ultimate goal of UPR is the improvement of the human rights situation in every country with significant consequences for people around the globe.
- The UPR is designed to prompt, support, and expand the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground.

### *Investigation*

- Human rights breaches that are investigated by the UNHRC across UN member states relate to themes such as freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women's rights, LGBT rights and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.
- The 47-member Human Rights Council passed the resolution, with 22 countries voting in favour, 11 against and 14 abstaining.

### *What does the UN resolution allow?*

- The resolution allows the UN “to collect, consolidate, analyse and preserve information and evidence, and to develop possible strategies for future accountability processes for gross violations of human rights or serious

violations of international humanitarian law in Sri Lanka, to advocate for victims and survivors, and to support relevant judicial and other proceedings”.

## Resolution

- In the resolution, the Human Rights Council expressed “deep concern” at the “deteriorating situation” in Sri Lanka, and criticised the erosion of judicial independence, marginalisation of minorities and impunity.
- The resolution also called on the Sri Lankan government to revise the law on the prevention of terrorism which rights groups have warned is being used as a weapon targeting dissidents and minorities in the country.

## *Sri Lanka's Response*

- Sri Lanka described the draft resolution as “unwarranted, unjustified and in violations of the relevant articles of the United Nations’ Charter”.

## *Why did India abstain from voting on the resolution at UNHRC?*

- India did not want to upset its neighbour.
- India does not want to be seen as ignoring Sri Lanka’s reluctance to meet the political aspirations of the Tamils.
- India seems to have utilized the opportunity to preserve its diplomatic space and to contain the pervasive influence of China over Sri Lanka even while maintaining its support for the Tamil minority to achieve equality, justice, dignity and peace.
- India has not been comfortable with externally mandated investigative mechanisms.
- India’s concerns in Sri Lanka have always been different from the rest of the international community, informed by a sense of the long-term well-being of the Tamils, and that power-sharing does foster reconciliation. Hence its emphasis is on devolution rather than accountability.

With this, it is clear that India has its own limitations in expressing disappointment over Sri Lanka’s move away from reconciliation and devolution.

## *The resolution holds value because of the following reasons:*

- There were clear disturbing signs of Sri Lanka going back to days of not respecting the minority views. This increased the democratic deficit that was witnessed prior to the 2015 elections.

- The present regime withdrew from the commitments made to the UNHRC by its predecessor on constructive engagement with the international community, and the consensual resolution on justice and accountability.
- The UN High Commissioner's report raises concern over increasing militarisation, heightened surveillance against rights defenders and NGOs, interference with the few prosecutions in emblematic cases from the past, and the dangerous anti-minority rhetoric.

### *Conclusion*

Therefore, the Centre seems to have chosen abstention as an easy way out.

## **4. 'Double mutant' virus variant found**

### **Context:**

According to the Union Health Ministry a unique double mutant coronavirus variant with a combination of mutations not seen anywhere else in the world has been found in India.

### **Details:**

- Genome sequencing of a section of virus samples by Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG), revealed the presence of two mutations, E484Q and L452R together.
- It is still to be established if this has any role to play in increased infectivity or in making COVID-19 more severe.

### **Concerns:**

- Specific mutations that help the virus evolve to thwart vaccines or the immune system or are linked to a spike in cases or in disease severity are causes of concern.
- While the two mutations have been individually identified in other variants of SARS-CoV-2 globally and have been associated with a reduction in vaccine efficacy, their combined effect and biological implications have not yet been understood.
- Since INSACOG initiated its work, 771 variants of concerns (VOCs) have been detected in a total of 10787 positive samples shared by States/UTs.

### **What's Next?**

- In the days ahead, the INSACOG will submit details of this variant to a global repository called GISAID and, if it merits, classify it as a variant of concern (VOC).
  - So far, only three global VOCs have been identified: the U.K. variant (B.1.1.7), the South African (B.1.351) and the Brazilian (P.1) lineage.
- After the new double variant has been submitted to GISAID, it will be categorised under a formal lineage, and will have its own name.

## GISAID

GISAID is a global science initiative and primary source established in 2008 that provides open-access to genomic data of influenza viruses and the coronavirus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 5. RS approves Bill empowering Delhi L-G amid Oppn. Walkout

### Context:

The Rajya Sabha passed the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill.

### Details:

- The bill seeks to empower the Lieutenant-Governor in Delhi.
- The Bill states that the government in the national capital territory of Delhi means the Lieutenant-Governor.
- The legislation says that the L-G is necessarily granted an opportunity to give her/his opinion before any decision taken by the Council of Ministers (or the Delhi Cabinet) is implemented.

### Criticisms:

- The opposition argued that the Bill would smother an elected government stating that the Bill is akin to dismissing the government.
- The proceedings saw a vociferous protest by the Opposition members accusing the government of going against democracy.



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

### 6. Tamil Nadu's distinct growth path is in peril

#### *Sen Bhagwati Debate*

#### *Amartya Sen*

Sen is a Nobel Prize winner in economics. In the book 'An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions', Sen and Drèze prescribe state-led redistributive efforts as the solution to India's problems.

- Sen believes that India should invest more in its social infrastructure to boost the productivity of its people and thereby raise growth.
- Investing in health and education to improve human capabilities is central to Sen's scheme of things. Without such investments, inequality will widen and the growth process itself will falter.
- Sen said that both growth and welfare programs are needed, and not at the cost of each other.
- Sen attacked Bhagwati's arguments by saying that in an under-nourished country such as India, it was very stupid to focus obsessively on growth.

#### *Bhagwati*

Jagdish N. Bhagwati is a University Professor of Economics, Law, and International Relations at Columbia University and former Adviser to the Director-General of GATT. In 'Why Growth Matters: How Economic Growth in India Reduced Poverty and the Lessons for Other Developing Countries', Bhagwati and Panagariya hold up growth as the panacea for all of India's ills.

- Bhagwati argues that only a focus on growth can yield enough resources for investing in social sector schemes.
- Bhagwati argues that growth may raise inequality initially but sustained growth will eventually raise enough resources for the state to redistribute and mitigate the effects of the initial inequality.
- Bhagwati argues that by providing the intellectual foundations for populist excesses and fiscal profligacy that stoke inflation, Sen is actually hurting the life chances of the poor. By arguing for redistribution to precede growth, Sen is putting the cart before the horse, Bhagwati says.
- Bhagwati argued that it is the reforms of 1991 that have made even the lowest social classes greatly more prosperous today. Hence, those reforms must be strengthened. Critiquing the critics of India's growth experience, Bhagwati

argued that a low rank on the human development index (HDI) did not mean much.

## 7. Water, the looming frontier

### *Context*

- The article analyses the causes of water pollution, issues emanating from it and possible solutions to reduce water contamination.

### *Background*

- NITI Aayog and WaterAid have found that over 70% of India's surface and groundwater is contaminated by human and other waste and is likely to carry viruses.
  - The primary reason being excessive human activity leading to environmental degradation and pandemics.
- Industrialized farming makes a zoonotic outbreak likely.
  - The practice of keeping animals locked together for mass production of meat produces an artificial environment that can give birth to mutations in dormant viruses.
- Previously, wild animals were far away from human contact and habitats. With increasing interference of humans in the natural home of the animals, it has resulted in wild animals living closer to humans increasing the risk of virus transmission.

### *A source of virus*

- Once the virus has found its way into the human population, it is bound to proliferate in wastewater.

### *Examples*

- In England, Wales and Scotland, several wastewater samples were tested and were found to carry traces of SARS-CoV-2.
- Remnants of the virus have also been detected in raw sewage across Sydney.
- Research at the University of Stirling in Scotland indicates that the SARS-CoV-2 virus can spread through sewage water.

In India, such water is often discharged into water bodies.

- This should raise alarm as we do not know where and how these viruses can mutate and strike.
- Some water-transmitted viral pathogens are astrovirus, hepatitis A and norovirus.
- Unlike in the developed world, a huge section of the population in India uses polluted water from sources like rivers, lakes, or groundwater for drinking.

### *Measures to be taken*

- The government has announced a ₹3 lakh crore 'Nal se Jal' scheme to provide drinking water connections to every rural household by 2024.
- Since most of the water sources are contaminated, the only way to purify water is through Reverse Osmosis (RO).
  - But though RO removes contaminants, it also takes out all the healthy minerals and nutrients required by the human body. This is an unhealthy and exorbitantly priced proposition.
- To neutralize the virus, we would need at least an ultraviolet aquaguard treatment.
  - While this won't take out chemical contaminants, it is also costly.

### *So, what is the solution?*

- We must conserve and use our natural living resources judiciously.
- The water beneath our forests is as good as natural spring water. We must safeguard it for our own lives and for future generations.
- We have destroyed our natural living resources in our rush for development. Our development model is always focused on artificial infrastructure, building highways, industrial plants, high-rise structures. In doing this, we kill our natural resources.
  - As a result, we are running out of natural infrastructure at an alarming pace.
  - We need to safeguard the forests and natural habitats with a sustainable and cautious development model.

### *Freshwater sources*

There are two unpolluted freshwater sources left in the country.

- The first is the water lying below our forests; the second is the aquifers that lie below the floodplains of rivers.
- Both these sources provide natural underground storage and are renewable – the rains provide natural recharge year after year and it is this recharge that can be used to water our cities and towns. But we should use only a fraction of the annual recharge.

### *Way forward*

- It is important to remember that these water resources, once lost, will be lost forever. Therefore, forests and floodplains must be declared as water sanctuaries.

## **8. 'Define unfair trade practice for e-com'**

### **Context:**

A parliamentary panel tabled its report on 'The Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020' in Parliament.

### **Concerns:**

- The panel noted that while e-commerce enterprises offer many benefits, the development of the segment has rendered consumers vulnerable to new forms of unfair trade practices, violation of privacy and issues of unattended grievances.
- It warned that there was a risk that predatory pricing by e-commerce firms may result in the competition being wiped out and prove detrimental to consumers in the long run.
- However, it added that from a legal standpoint it was very hard to substantiate allegations of predatory pricing, since the impact of such practice on the competition in the market would be very difficult to prove.

### **Recommendations:**

- The panel has recommended that the government should offer a more clear-cut definition of what constitutes unfair trade practice as well as spell out a practical legal remedy to tackle the issue.
- It recommended fixing a cap on delivery charges levied by e-commerce firms.
- The panel also suggested that the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution should issue broad guidelines for the fixation of delivery charges charged by the marketplace entities along with a cap on the highest limits of the delivery charges in peak hours of service.
- It said that the Ministry should also clearly define 'drip pricing' wherein the final cost of the product goes up due to additional charges, and provide for protecting consumers against this by including penal provisions for violation.
- It asked the government to provide penal provisions for violation of rules related to misinformation.

- It asked the Ministry to clearly distinguish in the Rules itself the cases of misinformation, no information and the information which is otherwise correct but creates a false impression and provide for penal provisions accordingly.

## 9. 'No digital tax if goods sold via India arm'

### What's in News?

In a bid to provide a level-playing field, the government has decided not to levy 2% digital service tax if goods and services are sold through an Indian arm of foreign e-commerce players.

- The amendment to the Finance Bill 2021 clarifies that offshore e-commerce platforms don't have to pay the levy if they have a permanent establishment or they pay any income tax here.
- However, foreign firms that do not pay any tax will have to pay the levy.

### Note:

The digital tax, introduced in April 2020, applies only to non-resident companies with annual revenues in excess of 2 crore, and covers online sales of goods and services to Indians.

**THE INDIAN EXPRESS**

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

## 1. Anti-Corruption Strategies

### Why in News

Recently, the Lokpal of India organized a Webinar on 'Bringing Synergies in Anti-Corruption Strategies'.

## Key Points

- **Corruption** can be defined as the **abuse of entrusted power for private gain**. It can impact a nation's development in various ways.
- **Impact of Corruption:**
  - **Political Costs:** The political costs of corruption are manifested in weakened public trust in political institutions, reduced political participation, perversion of the electoral process, restricted political choices available to citizens and loss of legitimacy of the democratic system.
  - **Economic Costs:** Corruption reduces economic efficiency by misallocation of resources in favour of **rent seeking** activities, increasing the cost of public transactions, acting as an additional tax on business thereby reducing investment, reducing genuine business competition.

## Rent Seeking

- It is a concept in public choice theory as well as in economics, that involves seeking to increase one's share of existing wealth without creating new wealth.
- It results in reduced economic efficiency through misallocation of resources, reduced wealth-creation, lost government revenue, heightened income inequality, and potential national decline.
- **Social Costs:** Corruption distorts the value systems and wrongly attaches elevated status to occupations that have rent seeking opportunities. This results in a disillusioned public, a weak civil society, which attracts unscrupulous leaders to political life.
- **Environmental Costs:** Environmentally devastating projects are given preference in funding, because they are easy targets for siphoning off public money into private pockets.
- **Issues of national security:** Corruption within security agencies can lead to a threat to national security, including through distortion of procurement, recruitment of ineligible persons, providing an easy route for smuggling of weapons and terrorist elements into the country and money laundering.
- **Legal Framework for Fighting Corruption:**
  - **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** provides for penalties in relation to corruption by public servants and also for those who are involved in the abetment of an act of corruption.
    - Amendment of 2018 criminalised both bribe-taking by public servants as well as bribe giving by any person.

- **The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002** aims to prevent instances of money laundering and prohibits use of the 'proceeds of crime' in India.
  - The offence of money laundering prescribes strict punishment, including imprisonment of up to 10 years and the attachment of property of accused persons (even at a preliminary stage of investigation and not necessarily after conviction).
- **The Companies Act, 2013** provides for corporate governance and prevention of corruption and fraud in the corporate sector. The term 'fraud' has been given a broad definition and is a criminal offence under the Companies Act.
  - In cases involving fraud specifically, the **Serious Frauds Investigation Office (SFIO)** has been set up under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, which is responsible for dealing with white collar crimes and offences in companies.
  - The SFIO conducts investigation under the provisions of the Companies Act.
- **The Indian Penal Code, 1860** sets out provisions which can be interpreted to cover bribery and fraud matters, including offences relating to criminal breach of trust and cheating.
- **The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010** regulates the acceptance and use of foreign contributions and hospitality by individuals and corporations.
  - Prior registration or prior approval of the Ministry of Home Affairs is required for receipt of foreign contributions and in the absence of such registration or approval, receipt of foreign contributions may be considered illegal.
- **Regulatory Framework:**
  - **The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013** provides for an establishment of an ombudsman for the central and state governments (Lokpal and Lokayuktas, respectively).
    - These bodies are required to act independently from the government and have been empowered to investigate allegations of corruption against public servants, which include the prime minister and other ministers.
  - The **Central Vigilance Commission** though created in 1964, became an independent statutory body only in 2003 by an Act of Parliament.
    - Its mandate is to oversee the vigilance administration and to advise and assist the executive in matters relating to corruption.

## Lokpal and Lokayukta

- **The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013** provided for the establishment of Lokpal for the Union and Lokayukta for States.
  - The Bill was passed in 2013 in both the Houses of Parliament and came into force on 16th January 2014.
- These institutions are **statutory bodies** without any constitutional status.
- They perform the function of an "**ombudsman**" and inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries and for related matters.
- The term Lokpal and Lokayukta were coined by Dr L. M. Singhvi.
- **Composition:**
  - Lokpal is a **multi-member body**, that consists of one chairperson and a maximum of 8 members.
  - Out of the maximum eight members, half to be judicial members and minimum 50% of the Members will be from SC/ ST/ OBC/ Minorities and women.
  - The Chairperson of the Lokpal should be either the former Chief Justice of India or the former Judge of Supreme Court or an eminent person with impeccable integrity and outstanding ability.
- The **term of office** for Lokpal Chairman and Members is 5 years or till the age of 70 years.
- **Jurisdiction of Lokpal** includes Prime Minister, Ministers, members of Parliament, Groups A, B, C and D officers and officials of Central Government.
  - However, the jurisdiction of the Lokpal included the Prime Minister except on allegations of corruption relating to international relations, security, the public order, atomic energy and space.
  - The Lokpal does not have jurisdiction over Ministers and MPs in the matter of anything said in Parliament or a vote given there.

### Way Forward

- **Strengthen oversight institutions** to ensure resources reach those most in need. Anti-corruption authorities and oversight institutions must have sufficient funds, resources and independence to perform their duties.
- **Publish relevant data and guarantee access to information** to ensure the public receives easy, accessible, timely and meaningful information.
- All agencies should cooperate to eradicate corruption. **Preventive corruption measures** must be appreciated and adopted as "**Prevention is better than cure**"

## 2. The Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill, 2021



## Why in News

Recently, the Lok Sabha passed the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2021** that seeks to strengthen and streamline the provisions for protection and adoption of children.

- The Bill amends the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015** and contains **provisions related to children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.**

## Key Points

- **Need of the Amendment:**
  - The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** audit of **Child Care Institutions (CCIs)** in 2020, 90% of which are run by NGOs, found that 39% CCIs were not registered, even after the 2015 amendment was brought in.
  - It also found that less than 20% CCIs, especially for girls, had not been set up in some states, 26% child welfare officers were not there.
  - Moreover, three-fifths have **no toilets**, one-tenth have **no drinking water** and 15% homes don't have provisions of separate beds, no diet plans.
  - Rehabilitation of children is not a priority for childcare homes and children are reportedly kept in such institutions to get funds.
- **Key Amendments Proposed by the Bill:**
  - **Serious offences:** Serious offences will also include offences for which maximum punishment is imprisonment of more than seven years, and minimum punishment is not prescribed or is of less than seven years.
    - Serious offences are those for which the punishment under the Indian Penal Code or any other law for the time being is **imprisonment between three and seven years.**
    - Juvenile Justice Board inquires about a child who is accused of a serious offence.
  - **Non-cognizable Offences:**
    - The present Act provides that an offence which is punishable with imprisonment between three to seven years to be cognizable (where arrest is allowed without warrant) and non-bailable.
      - The Bill amends this to provide that **such offences will be non-cognizable.**
  - **Adoption:** Presently, the **adoption order issued by the court** establishes that the child belongs to the adoptive parents. The Bill provides that instead of the court, the **District Magistrate (including Additional District Magistrate) will issue** such adoption orders.

- **Appeals:** The Bill provides that any person aggrieved by an adoption order passed by the District Magistrate **may file an appeal before the Divisional Commissioner**, within 30 days from the date of passage of such order.
  - Such appeals should be disposed within four weeks from the date of filing of the appeal.
- **Additional Functions of the District Magistrate:** These include: (i) supervising the District Child Protection Unit, and (ii) conducting a quarterly review of the functioning of the **Child Welfare Committee**.
- **Designated Court:** The Bill proposes that all offences under the earlier Act be tried in children's court.
- **Child Welfare Committees (CWCs):** It provides that a person will **not eligible** to be a member of the CWC if he/she
  - has any record of **violation of human rights** or child rights,
  - has been **convicted of an offence** involving moral turpitude,
  - has been removed or dismissed from service of the central government, or any state government, or a government undertaking,
  - is part of the management of a child care institution in a district.
- **Removal of Members:** The appointment of any member of the committee shall be terminated by the state government after an inquiry if they fail to attend the proceedings of the CWCs consecutively for three months without any valid reason or if they fail to attend less than three-fourths of the sittings in a year.

### **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**

- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 **replaced the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000**.
- **Change in Nomenclature:**
  - The Act changes the nomenclature from 'juvenile' to 'child' or 'child in conflict with law'. Also, it removes the negative connotation associated with the word "juvenile".
  - It also includes several new and clear definitions such as orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children; and petty, serious and heinous offences committed by children.
- **Special Provisions for Age 16-18 years:**
  - Included special provisions to tackle child offenders committing heinous offences in the age group of 16-18 years.
- **Mandatory Constitution of the JJ Board:**
  - It mandates setting up Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in every district. Both must have at least one woman member each.

- **Adoption Related Clauses:**
  - A separate new chapter on Adoption to streamline adoption procedures for an orphan, abandoned and surrendered children.
  - Also, the **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)** was granted the status of a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively.
  - The Act states that the adoption of a child is final on the issuance of an adoption order by the court. Currently, there are 629 adoption cases pending in various courts.
- **Child Care Institutions (CCI):**
  - All Child Care Institutions, whether run by State Government or by voluntary or non-governmental organisations are to be mandatorily registered under the Act within 6 months from the date of commencement of the Act.

### 3. Shigmo Festival of Goa

The Shigmo or the Goan Carnival celebrations may be terminated this year due to rising covid cases.

#### What is Shigmo or Shigmotsav?

- Shigmo is the celebration of a 'rich, golden harvest of paddy' by the tribal communities of Goa.
- Agricultural communities including the Kunbis, Gawdas and Velips celebrate the festival that also marks the onset of spring.
- Shigmo celebrations last over a fortnight in the months of Phalgun-Chaitra months of the Hindu calendar that correspond with March-April every year.

#### Various activities in celebrations

- The festival begins with 'Naman' that is the invocation of the local folk deities on the village 'maand' or the village stage.
- It is held to the beats of percussion instruments like the Ghumat, Dhol, Mhadle and Tashe by the male folk.
- This is called the 'romta mell' that moves from one village to another.
- The celebration is replete with traditional, colourful costumes, mythological installations, painted faces and costumes of various hues.
- Folk dances like Ghodemodini (a dance of equestrian warriors), Gopha and Phugadi are among the many dances performed by the participating communities.

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

### 4. How fiscal stimulus in the U.S. will impact emerging economies

#### About the fiscal stimulus in the U.S.

- With the recent passage of Biden’s \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, the cumulative fiscal stimulus amounts to **25 per cent of GDP**.
- This reliance on **fiscal stimulus** is in sharp contrast to the policy response in the aftermath of the **2008 global financial crisis (GFC) when monetary policy was the main tool**.
- The over reliance on fiscal measures is because of the “liquidity trap” – **interest rates are already trading close to zero**.

#### So, what does this mean for the US and emerging economies?

- From the US perspective, this is good news.
- The U.S. economy is expected to converge to the pre-pandemic GDP projection after the third quarter of 2021, exceeding it by 1 per cent in the fourth quarter.
- The impact on emerging economies is less certain.
- A booming US economy **generally bodes well for global growth** as higher demand “**spills over**” to the rest of the world.
- However, the sectoral contribution to US growth presents a different picture this time.
- **Private consumption of goods (tradable)** is already back to pre-pandemic levels, while **consumption of services** remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels.
- As the vaccination drive gathers pace in the US and the economy slowly opens up, it should be fair to assume that **the non-tradable sector would be driving growth**.
- But given the expected nature of the underlying growth, the **positive impact on emerging economies will perhaps be softer**.
- With smaller fiscal stimulus in emerging economies and the slower vaccine roll, the US recovery largely being led by the non-tradable sector will result in **a divergence in growth between the US and emerging countries**.

#### Policy challenge for emerging economies which is different from GFC

- Post-GFC, a combination of **zero interest rates** and **quantitative easing in advanced economies** led to a significant surge in **capital inflows to emerging countries** in search of higher yield leading to an appreciation of their currencies.
- Now, the situation is exactly the opposite.
- The differential rate of recoveries has already **led to capital outflow from emerging economies**.
- The rise in **yield in the U.S.** may further fuel capital **outflows** in coming days leading to tighter monetary conditions in emerging markets.

### What should be India's policy response

- As far as India is concerned, the macro-economic fundamentals are much stronger than **during the taper-tantrum days**.
- The **foreign exchange reserves remain at historically high** levels, the current account situation is comfortable and the inflation rate remains within the target band of the RBI.
- In the event of capital outflows, the RBI should **let the currency depreciate as the first line of defence** to preserve India's external competitiveness and intervene only to smoothen out extreme volatility.
- It should **avoid the temptation to increase interest rates** at the risk of hurting the pace of economic recovery.

### Conclusion

Uneven recovery at the global level demands an unconventional policy approach. The policy approach of India should be based on this premise.

## 5. Why privatising public assets is poor economics

### How public asset selling could affects private investment decisions

- Public sector assets are not bought by reducing consumption or investment.
- Current investment expenditure depends on **decisions taken in the past** and is more or less **pre-determined**.
- Investment decisions that are taken today for fructification tomorrow that **may be scaled down** by such a purchase.
- However, if investment decisions taken today are **scaled-down**, then it results in **crowding out** and such a strategy should be avoided anyway.
- This implies that selling public sector assets therefore **does not release** any resources from private use for government spending.

### How selling public asset has same macroeconomic effect as fiscal deficit

- In case of fiscal deficit, the government puts its bonds in private hands; in sale of a public asset, the government puts its equity held in public sector assets in private hands.
- The **macroeconomic consequences** of a fiscal deficit on the economy are **no different** from those of selling public assets.
- However, finance capital, and institutions like the IMF treat the sale of public assets on a different footing from a fiscal deficit, for ideological – not economic – reasons, because they ideologically favour a dismantling of the public sector.

### How fiscal deficit leads to wealth inequality

- In a situation of demand-constraints, where **unutilised capacity and unemployed workers** exist aplenty, if an appropriate monetary policy is pursued, it can have no adverse effects whatsoever, except one: It increases **wealth inequality**.
- The government expenditure financed by the fiscal deficit **creates additional aggregate demand** that increases output and incomes until the **additional savings** generated out of such incomes exactly match the fiscal deficit.
- These additional savings **accrue to the savers without their having to reduce their consumption**, compared to the initial situation (that is, prior to government expenditure increase).
- Since **savings represent additions to wealth**, this amounts to putting extra wealth into the hands of the rich.
- Selling public assets puts into private hands **public assets**, and that too at prices well **below the capitalised value of earnings**.
- This increases wealth inequality for two reasons:
- First, it does so exactly as a fiscal deficit does.
- Second, the public asset it puts in private hands is **under-priced**.

### Why tax financed government spending should be preferred

- If the same government expenditure is financed by taxation, no matter who was taxed, then **there would be no addition to private wealth** and hence **no increase in wealth inequality**.
- Which is why tax-financed government expenditure should always be preferred to fiscal-deficit-financed government expenditure.

### What alternative government have

- The obvious one is **wealth taxation**.

- Taxing away the private wealth created by a fiscal deficit leaves private wealth **inequality unchanged at its initial level**; it does not exacerbate it.
- If the government is unwilling to impose higher wealth or profit taxes, **it can raise GST rates on several luxury goods.**

## Conclusion

Thus, selling public assets to finance government spending is both undesirable and unnecessary.

## 6. Inter-state Tiger Relocation Project

Sundari – a tigress shifted as part of India’s first inter-state translocation project in 2018 from Madhya Pradesh to Odisha has returned home.

### What is the news?

- The five-year-old tigress Sundari spent 28 months in captivity in Satkosia Tiger Reserve, Odisha.
- The two states lingered on the process for her relocation despite the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) shelving off the much-vaunted inter-state tiger translocation drive.

### What was the Tiger Relocation Project?

- The tiger relocation project was initiated in 2018 wherein two big cats, a male (Mahavir) from Kanha Tiger Reserve and a female (Sundari) from Bandhavgarh from MP were relocated to Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Odisha.
- The relocation was meant to serve two purposes
  1. to reduce the tiger population in areas with excess tigers to majorly reduce territorial disputes and
  2. to reintroduce tigers in areas where the population has considerably reduced due to various reasons

### How were Mahavir and Sundari chosen for the project?

- Both the big cats were selected for the translocation project as per the NTCA guidelines and in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India and the GoI.
- Two key factors were considered for choosing the animal – first, a dispersing young animal which is to find a new and second, an adult transient which was yet to establish any territory.

### **What is the Satkosia Tiger Reserve and why was it chosen?**

- Encompassing an area of 963.87 sq km, the Satkosia Tiger Reserve spreads across four districts and has as its core area 523 sq km.
- According to NTCA, Satkosia falls under reserves where “there is a potential for increasing tiger populations”.
- Declared as a Tiger Reserve in 2007, Satkosia had a population of 12 tigers then. The numbers reduced to two in 2018.
- The purpose of the relocation was to repopulate tigers in the reserve areas.

### **Unexpected outcomes of the project**

The project ran into trouble within weeks of initiation.

- The arrival of the tigers was followed by severe protests by villagers living on the fringes of the reserve and the matter eventually snowballing into a poll issue.
- Forest department officials were attacked and their offices burnt down by irate villagers most of whom were tribals.
- The villagers feared the big cats would endanger their livelihoods, lives and livestock. They also alleged that they were not consulted or informed prior to the translocation.
- The major reason which contributed to the failure of the project was the lack of confidence and trust-building between the forest department and the villagers.
- Within months of the translocation, Mahavir was found dead and was killed in poaching.

### **Prelims Practice Questions**

**1. SAANS and the SUMAN initiative have been launched under which of the following?**

- a. National Health Mission (NHM)



- b. National Nutrition Mission (NNM)
- c. Ayushman Bharat Abhiyan
- d. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

The new initiatives under NHM that were introduced in 2019-20 are:

- SAANS initiative: Social Awareness and Actions to Neutralize Pneumonia Successfully (SAANS) initiative was launched to accelerate action to reduce deaths due to childhood pneumonia.
- SUMAN initiative: Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) initiative was launched to provide assured, dignified, respectful and quality healthcare at no cost and zero tolerance for denial of services; and all existing schemes for maternal and neonatal health have been brought under one umbrella.

**2. Consider the following statements about Kaziranga National Park:**

1. It is declared as a tiger reserve and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
2. The national park lies in the Brahmaputra valley floodplain.

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**

- **Kaziranga National Park** is located in the State of Assam and covers 42,996 Hectare (ha).
  - It is the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The national park has been declared as a **tiger reserve** since 2007.
  - It has a total tiger reserve area of 1,030 sq km with a core area of 430 sq. km.

- It was also declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1985. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
  - It is recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International.

**3. With reference to the Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, consider the following statements:**

1. He was a part of Congress Socialist Party (CSP) founded in 1934.
2. He mobilized support for the Quit India movement through underground activities.

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**

- In 1934, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia became actively involved in the **Congress Socialist Party (CSP)**, founded that year as a left-wing group within the Indian National Congress. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- A vehement opponent of Indian participation on the side of Great Britain in World War II (1939-45), he was arrested for anti-British remarks in 1939 and again in 1940.
- With the emergence in 1942 of the Quit India movement – a campaign initiated by Mahatma Gandhi to urge the withdrawal of British authorities from India – Lohia and other CSP leaders (such as Jaya Prakash Narayan) **mobilized support from the underground.** For such resistance activities, he was jailed again in 1944–46. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- However on the next day of the launch of the 'Quit India' movement Gandhi, Nehru and many other leaders of the Indian National Congress were arrested by the British Government.

**4) Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary is located in which of the following states?**

- a. Kerala
- b. Gujarat
- c. Karnataka
- d. Maharashtra

Answer : a

- The annual faunal survey of the Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary has resulted in sightings of five new birds and three new butterflies for the first time in the biodiversity hotspot.
- The four-day endeavour undertaken by the Forest Department in association with the Travancore Natural History Society witnessed 187 butterfly, 167 bird, 49 odonate, and 43 spider species in the 171 sq. km. sanctuary.

### ***Bird Species***

1. Jerdon's bush lark (*Mirafra affinis*)
2. White browed fantailed flycatcher (*Rhipidura aureola*)
3. Wire tailed swallow (*Hirundo smithii*)
4. Greater spotted eagle (*Clanga clanga*)
5. Grey-breasted prinia (*Prinia hodgsonii*)
6. Chestnut-winged cuckoo (*Clamator coromandus*)
7. Banded bay cuckoo (*Cacomantis sonneratii*)
8. Grey bellied cuckoo (*Cacomantis passserius*)

### ***Butterfly Species***

1. Small cupid (*Chilades parrhasius*)
2. Hampson's hedgeblue (*Acytolepis lilacea*)
3. Broad tailed royal (*Creon cleobis*)

### **5. Consider the following statements:**

1. Schedule Banks are collectively referred to as Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs).
2. The stock exchange in India serves as a market where financial instruments are traded.

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 : B**

### **Explanation**

- **Stock exchanges, depositories and clearing corporations** are collectively referred to as securities **Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs)**. Hence, **statement 1 is not correct**.
  - According to the Bimal Jalan Committee (2010), these institutions are systemically important for the country's financial development and serve as the infrastructure necessary for the securities market.
- The **stock exchange in India serves as a market where financial instruments** like stocks, bonds and commodities are traded. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.

### **6. PRANIT is an e-Tendering Portal launched recently by?**

- a. Ministry of Coal
- b. Ministry of Mines
- c. Ministry of Power
- d. Ministry of Steel

**Answer : c**

- *Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a central PSU under Ministry of Power has recently established an e-Tendering Portal-PRANIT.*
- The portal will lead to less paperwork and ease of operation, making the tendering process more transparent.
- It has been certified by Standardisation, Testing and Quality Certification Directorate (STQC), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India.
- With this, POWERGRID is now the only organization in India to have an eProcurement solution on SAP Supplier Relationship Management (SRM), complying with all applicable requirements relating to security and transparency as stipulated by STQC.

## **Mains Practice Questions**

**1. What do you mean by Basel accords? Discuss the major changes proposed in Basel III over earlier accords and its significance over the Indian banking sector. (250 words)**

### **Approach**

- Explain Basel accord.
- Mention major changes proposed in Basel III over earlier accords.
- Discuss the significance of these accords for Indian banking sector.
- Conclude with the likely impact on Indian banking sector.

**2. "India faces challenges in providing quality education to its children and the youth". Discuss the importance of new education policy in the light of this statement. (250 words)**

### **Approach**

- Explain the problems of quality education in India.
- Explain how these problems will be catered by the new education policy by citing the relevant proposals of the policy.
- State the challenges this new policy would encounter.
- Conclude with some suggestions on a positive note.