

[www.vishnuias.com](http://www.vishnuias.com)



**APRIL**

**07.04.2021**

# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

A MAGAZINE FOR CIVIL SERVICES PREPARATION

JOIN OUR TELEGRAM: <https://t.me/vishnuiasmentor>

**Articles of the day  
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS**

**UPSC**

General Studies

**Test Series**

**Online &  
Offline  
classes**

**One-Stop  
Solution**

**Free daily  
materials**

## GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

### 1. Anti-Defection Law

#### What's in News?

The Supreme Court has nudged the Goa Assembly Speaker to advance the date of his decision on the disqualification petitions filed against 10 former Congress MLAs who 'merged' with the BJP in 2019.

- The 10th Schedule of the Indian Constitution popularly referred to as the 'Anti-Defection Law' was inserted by the 52nd Amendment (1985) to the Constitution.
  - 'Defection' has been defined as, "To abandon a position or association, often to join an opposing group".
- It is designed to prevent political defections prompted by the lure of office or material benefits or other like considerations.

### 2. Talks begin to revive Iran nuclear deal

#### Context:

Indirect talks aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal will begin as Iran and world powers will meet to discuss how the United States would lift sanctions and Iran return to its obligations.

#### Details:

- Two expert-level groups have been given the task of marrying lists of sanctions that the U.S. could lift with nuclear obligations Iran should meet.

#### Background:

#### Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action:

- The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, or the Iran nuclear deal) was the result of negotiations from 2013 and 2015 **between Iran and P5+1** (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union, or the EU).

- The deal was hailed as a diplomatic success given that Iran was then estimated to be months away from accumulating enough highly enriched uranium to produce one nuclear device.
- The JCPOA **obliged Iran to accept constraints on its enrichment programme in return for a partial lifting of economic sanctions.** The Iranian nuclear programme would be verified by an **inspection regime under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).**

#### U.S. policy reversal:

- The U.S. administration under Mr. Trump pulled out of the deal in May 2018 and embarked on a **policy of 'maximum pressure'** to coerce Iran back to the negotiating table.
- The U.S. pushed ahead with its sanctions, widening their scope to cover nearly all Iranian banks, industries and even important individuals.

#### E-3 stance:

- The U.S. decision was criticised by all other parties to the JCPOA (including the European allies) because Iran was in compliance with its obligations under the nuclear deal.
- The **E-3 (France, Germany, the U.K.) and the EU promised to find ways to mitigate the U.S. decision.**

#### Policy under new U.S. administration:

- Biden has consistently advocated a return to the JCPOA provided Iran returns to full compliance.
- Joe Biden has been a strident critic of the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear agreement with Iran. He had promised during his presidential election campaign that subject to Iran's compliance with its obligations, the U.S. would re-enter the agreement.

#### Concerns:

- The Nuclear deal is complicated and time is running out as both Iran and the U.S. struggle to overcome the current impasse.

#### Tehran's strategy of 'maximum resistance':

- Tehran's 'strategic patience' has been wearing out as the anticipated economic relief from the E-3/EU failed to materialise. As the U.S. sanctions began to hurt, **Tehran shifted to a strategy of 'maximum resistance'.**

- Iran has been moving away from JCPOA's constraints incrementally by expanding its nuclear capabilities.
  - A recent IAEA report has confirmed that **20% enrichment had begun** as had production of uranium metal at Isfahan.
- Following the drone strike on Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Gen. Qasem Soleiman, Tehran announced that it would no longer observe the JCPOA's restraints, though its cooperation with the IAEA would continue.

#### **Failed promises of relief:**

- The E-3's promised relief **Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX)**, created in 2019 to facilitate limited trade with Iran has been a disappointment.
- The first transaction under INSTEX took place only in March 2020.
- EU-Iran trade fell from €18 billion in 2018 to less than a third in 2019 and dropped further last year.

#### **Events in Iran:**

- **COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on the Iranian economy** which was already contracting due to the U.S. sanctions.
- Iran has also been witness to a series of unexplained fires and blasts at a number of sensitive sites including one at the Natanz nuclear facility and another at Khojir, a missile fuel fabrication unit. Recently, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a senior nuclear scientist and head of the Research and Innovation Organisation in the Iranian Defence Ministry was killed outside Tehran amid rumours of external intelligence agencies' involvement. The above events have **hardened the stance of the conservatives in Iran.**
- Iranian Parliament, dominated by the conservatives, passed a bill seeking enrichment to be raised to 20% and suspending implementation of some of the special inspection provisions with the IAEA within two months if sanctions relief was not forthcoming.
- There seems to be **little appetite for more negotiations in Iran.** Mr. Trump's policy failed to bring Iran back to the negotiating table and only strengthened the hardliners in Iran.

#### **Elections in Iran:**

- Iranian elections are due in June 2021 and it is likely that President Hassan Rouhani's successor may not be from the 'moderate' camp. This would only make negotiations tougher.

#### **Threat of breakdown in talks:**

- If the U.S. waits for Iran to return to full compliance before lifting sanctions or Iran waits for the U.S. to restore sanctions relief before returning to full compliance, it can only lead to one outcome – the **collapse of the JCPOA with Iran going nuclear like North Korea**. Such an outcome would have major reverberations in the region and beyond.

#### Way forward:

#### Creating a conducive atmosphere for talks:

- Positive steps along multiple tracks are necessary for creating a conducive atmosphere.
  - Iran should consider releasing European and American nationals currently in custody in Iran.
  - The U.S. should **support Iran's applications to the International Monetary Fund for COVID-19 relief and for supply of vaccines under the international COVAX facility**.
  - The U.S. could consider removing sanctions on Iranian political leaders.

#### Role of regional nations:

- **Oman, Qatar and Kuwait need to play a diplomatic role** in facilitating talks between the U.S. and Iran, with help from the EU and the UN.

#### E-3/EU's role:

- The E-3/EU need to fast track deals worth several hundred million euros stuck in the INSTEX pipeline.
- The EU should **pursue a more independent foreign policy in this issue by taking the lead in future negotiations**.

#### Iran's actions:

- Iran needs to **refrain from any further nuclear brinkmanship**. The IAEA and the E-3/EU should work on a parallel reversal of steps taken by Iran to ensure full compliance with the JCPOA.

### 3. The start of a more authoritarian era

#### Context:

Recently, China's legislature formally approved sweeping changes to Hong Kong's electoral system.

### Details:

- The changes were passed by the 167 members of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee.
- China's President signed orders to promulgate the amended annexes to Hong Kong's Basic Law, the constitution that has governed the SAR under the "one country, two systems" model since its return to China in 1997.

### What has changed?

- The amendments mark the biggest changes to Hong Kong's political system since the handover, and reduce the share of directly elected representatives in its Legislative Council (LegCo).
- While previously, 35 of its 70 members were directly elected, that number has been reduced by 15.
- Now, Hongkongers will only be able to directly vote for 20 representatives while the size of LegCo has been expanded to 90, thereby drastically reducing the share of elected representatives.
- The 70 others will be broadly chosen from pro-establishment bodies.
- The other big change is the setting up of a Candidate Eligibility Review Committee "for reviewing and confirming the eligibility of candidates".
- Also, a Committee for Safeguarding National Security will be set up that will make findings as to whether a candidate for Election Committee member or for the office of Chief Executive meets the legal requirements.
- There will be no scope for legally challenging the findings.
- District Councillors, who are directly elected, will no longer have a place either in the Election Committee or in LegCo.

### Concerns-Erosion of autonomy:

- Pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong have seen the political changes, as well as national security law that punishes subversion as the most significant changes in the "one country, two systems" model and as dramatically eroding the autonomy enjoyed by the SAR previously.
- The National Security Law allows Beijing to draft national security laws for Hong Kong and also operate its national security organs in the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

### "One country, two systems":

- Since the return to China in 1997, Hong Kong, a former British colony, has been governed by the Basic Law, which allows the territory "to enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication", barring matters of defence and foreign affairs.

- Article 23 of the Basic Law requires Hong Kong to pass national security legislation, but past attempts to do so were shelved amid protests.

#### **4. NOTA: None of the Above**

- The option of NOTA for Lok Sabha and assembly elections was prescribed by the SC in 2013. Thereby, India became the 14th country to institute negative voting.
- Allowing a PIL in 2013, the Supreme Court ordered the Election Commission to provide the voter with a 'right to reject' option.
- NOTA in India does not provide for a 'right to reject'. The candidate with the maximum votes wins the election irrespective of the number of NOTA votes polled.
- Unfortunately, before and after NOTA came into existence, political parties or governments did nothing to strengthen the provision. The button is of no use now, other than for filing a vote count.
- Election Commission currently has no power to call a fresh election even if NOTA secures the highest votes.

#### **Note:**

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre and the Election Commission of India to respond to a plea that fresh elections should be conducted in constituencies where the highest number of votes polled are NOTA (None Of The Above).

#### **5. Russia calls for inclusive solution to Afghan crisis**

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

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov asserted that a solution to the Afghan civil war should balance the ethnic and religious groups of Afghanistan and no group should be left out of the final settlement.

- He said that India and Russia were working for stability and connectivity in the region and urged that military alliances should not come up in Asia.
- He emphasised the need for participation of all political, ethnic and religious groups in Afghanistan for a stable solution on settlement.
- India's External Affairs Minister said there is a need to harmonise the interests of various stakeholders that are active in and around Afghanistan.
  - For India, what happens in Afghanistan impacts its security directly.

#### **6. Justice Ramana will be next CJI**



## Context:

In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (2) of Article 124 of the Constitution, President Ram Nath Kovind appointed Justice N.V. Ramana as the 48th Chief Justice of India with effect from April 24, 2021.

## Appointment of the Chief Justice of India:

- The Constitution of India does not have any provision for criteria and procedure for appointing the CJI.
- Article 124(1) of the Indian Constitution says there “shall be a Supreme Court of India consisting of a Chief Justice of India”.
- The closest mention is in Article 126, which deals with the appointment of an acting CJI.
- In the absence of a constitutional provision, the procedure relies on custom and convention.

## What is the convention?

- When the incumbent CJI retires (all Supreme Court judges retire at the age of 65), the senior-most judge in the SC becomes the CJI.
- Seniority, here, is not defined by age, but by the number of years an individual has been serving as a judge of the apex court.
- In an instance where two judges have served for the exact same time, because they were appointed as SC judges on the same day, other factors are considered to determine the seniority of the judges, like which judge has more years of experience in the high court and if either of them were nominated from the bar directly.
- A similar situation had arisen ahead of the appointment of Dipak Misra, as both Justice Misra and Justice Chelameswar were sworn in on the same day as judges of the SC on October 10, 2011. Despite being four months younger, Justice Misra was anointed as the CJI in August 2017.

## What is the procedure?

The procedure to appoint the next CJI is laid out in the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) between the government and the judiciary:

- The procedure is initiated by the Law Minister seeking the recommendation of the outgoing CJI at the ‘appropriate time’, which is near to the date of retirement of the incumbent CJI.
- The CJI sends his recommendation to the Law Ministry; and in the case of any qualms, the CJI can consult the collegium regarding the fitness of an SC judge to be elevated to the post.



- After receiving recommendation from the CJI, the law minister forwards it to the Prime Minister who then advises the President on the same.
- The President administers the oath of office to the new CJI.

### **Does the government get a say?**

- Except for the law minister seeking the recommendation from the incumbent CJI, and forwarding it to the Prime Minister, the government has no say in the appointment of the CJI.
- Vis-à-vis the appointment of the CJI and the appointment of SC judges, the key difference is that in the former, the government cannot send the recommendation of the CJI (or the collegium) back to them for reconsideration; while in the latter, the government can do so.
- However, if the collegium reiterates those names, then the government cannot object any further.
- The Memorandum of Procedure does not have any provision for the eventuality of the government disagreeing with the incumbent CJI's recommendation on the new one.

### **Have there been exceptions to the aforementioned procedure?**

- Since the establishment of the Supreme Court in 1950, there have been 46 CJIs.
- In all cases, the convention and the procedure were duly followed, except for two – Justice AN Ray and Justice MH Beg. Both exceptions took place when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister.
- Justice AN Ray was appointed as CJI in 1973 despite being fourth in terms of seniority after Justices JM Shelat, KL Hegde and AN Grover.
- The reason was the involvement of these three judges in the landmark Kesavananda Bharati case, which had held that Parliament cannot make amendments to the Constitution that would alter its “basic structure”.
- Similarly, Justice MH Beg was appointed as the CJI in 1977 despite Justice HR Khanna being senior. This was because of Justice Khanna's minority judgment in the ADM Jabalpur case.
- Justice Khanna had pronounced that he did not agree with the government's argument that detention of persons during the Emergency cannot be questioned, even if mala fide and without the authority of law.

## **7. Vigilance officers to be transferred every 3 years**

### **Context:**

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has modified the guidelines pertaining to the transfer and posting of officials in the vigilance units of government organisations.

**Details:**

- In order to emphasise the importance of the issue and to ensure transparency, objectivity and uniformity in approach, the Commission has decided to modify its earlier guidelines.
- The CVC has restricted the tenure of officials in the vigilance units of government organisations to three years in one place.
- The tenure may be extended to three more years, albeit at a different place of posting.
- It reasoned that the undue long stay of an official in a vigilance department had the potential of developing vested interests, apart from giving rise to unnecessary complaints or allegations.

**Note:**

- In case someone has served at one place for over three years, his tenure at the next place would be curtailed to ensure that the combined tenure was limited to six years.
- Those having completed over five years at one place are to be shifted on a top priority basis.

## 8. Ukraine urges NATO to speed up membership

### What's in News?

Ukrainian President urged NATO to speed up the country's membership in the alliance.

**Details:**

- There is an increase in clashes and Russian military movements on the border, which has raised fears of an escalation of the separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine.
- Ukrainian President asserted that NATO membership was the only way to end fighting with pro-Russia separatists.
- Ukraine has been trying to join NATO after cancelling its non-aligned status in 2014.

- Ukraine changed its constitution in 2019 to enshrine its aspiration for NATO membership. The move was met with criticism in Russia.

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

### **9. Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA)**

- COBRA is a special operation unit of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) of India proficient in guerrilla tactics and jungle warfare.
  - It's one of the few Indian Special Forces, that's exclusively trained in guerrilla warfare.
- Originally established to counter the Naxalite problem, COBRA is deployed to address insurgent groups engaging in asymmetrical warfare.

### **10. Reworking net-zero for climate justice**

#### **Issue:**

- Global transformation is affecting the planet. However, there is no uniform transformation across the world.
- The global temperature increased sharply only after 1981 with little contribution from the developing countries.
  - Their industrialisation and urbanisation was yet to begin.

#### **India's Concern:**

- When the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 was adopted at the Paris Conference, the Prime Minister of India stressed a reframing of climate change to climate justice.
- He argued that just when countries such as India were becoming major industrial and middle-class nations, they should not pay the price for the pollution caused by the West.
- The Paris Agreement, explicitly recognises that peaking will take longer for such countries and is to be achieved in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.
- This balance is now being upset for a common target and timetable.

#### **Treaty's inequity:**

The pressure arises from the way the agenda has been set.

- First, inequity is built into the Climate Treaty.

- Annual emissions make India the fourth largest emitter, even though climate is impacted by cumulative emissions, with India contributing a mere 3% compared with 26% for the United States and 13% for China.
- According to the United Nations, while the richest 1% of the global population emits more than two times the emissions of the bottom 50%, India has just half its population in the middle class and per capita emissions are an eighth of those in the U.S. and less than a third of those of China.
- The diplomatic history of climate negotiations shows that longer-term goals without the strategy to achieve them solve a political problem and not the problem itself. Eg: As in the case of finance and technology transfer.
  - The current framework considers symptoms, emissions of carbon dioxide, and was forced onto developing countries to keep the discussion away from the causes of the problem – the earlier excessive use of energy for high levels of well-being.
- Models on which global policy recommendations for developing countries are based consider achieving ‘reasonable’, not ‘comparable’ levels of well-being to show that early capping of energy use will not affect their growth ignoring costs on the poor.
  - The rising prosperity of the world’s poor does not endanger the planet. The challenge is to change wasteful behaviour in the West.

### **Role of infrastructure:**

- Infrastructure has a defining role because of the services it provides outside the market and the way it shapes demand distinct from production and consumption.
- The vaguely worded ‘net zero’ emissions, balancing emissions and removals, could be disastrous for development latecomers like India.
  - It fails to recognise that more than half the global cumulative emissions arose from infrastructure, essential for urban well-being.
- For developed countries, the peaking of emissions came some 20 years after infrastructure saturation levels were reached and net-zero emissions are being considered some two decades even later to take advantage of ageing populations and technology.
- Because of its young population and late development, much of the future emissions in India will come from infrastructure, buildings and industry, and the trajectory cannot be shifted to reach comparable levels of well-being with major economies.

### **Way Forward:**

*New framework:*

- A global goal-shaping national strategy requires a new understanding.
- India must highlight unique national circumstances with respect to the food, energy and transportation systems that have to change.
  - Eg: consumption of meat contributes to a third of global emissions. Indians consume much less meat a year compared with European Union and the U.S.
- Transport emissions account for a quarter of global emissions, are the fastest-growing emissions worldwide and have surpassed emissions from the generation of electricity in the U.S., but are not on the global agenda.

#### *Coal use:*

- Coal accounts for a quarter of global energy use.
- Rising Asia uses three-quarters of it as coal drives industry and supports the renewable energy push into cities.
- India with abundant reserves and per-capita electricity use that is a tenth that of the U.S. is under pressure to stop using coal, even though the U.S. currently uses more coal.
- India wants to eliminate the use of oil instead with renewable energy and hydrogen as a fuel for electrification, whose acceleration requires international cooperation around technology development and transfer.

#### **Conclusion:**

- In the Paris Agreement, climate justice was downgraded to the preamble as a political, not policy, statement.
- There is a need for a reframing of the global concern in terms of sustainable development for countries with per capita emissions below the global average, in line with the Paris Agreement.
- The verifiable measure should be well-being within ecological limits.
- International cooperation should centre on sharing technology of electric vehicles and hydrogen as a fuel, as they are the most effective response to climate change.

### **11. Redefining combatants**

The article talks about how recent cyberattacks point to the need to rethink what constitutes a force and what a justified response can be.

#### **Context:**

- A report in The New York Times on the breakdown of the Mumbai power distribution system pointed a finger at Chinese cyber hackers.
- This gives rise to a few questions, as the definition of combat and combatants undergoes fast mutation.
  - Under what conditions, would a non-kinetic strike be considered an attack on the state?
  - Under international rules of self-defence, what response would be considered legal?
  - Would only a cyber counter-attack be justifiable or a kinetic response also be acceptable?
  - Would a pre-emptive strike be allowed?

### **Changing definitions:**

- The universally accepted Lieber Code of 1863 defines a combatant. It says, soon as a man is armed by a sovereign and takes the soldier's oath of fidelity, he is a belligerent; all others are non-combatants.
- The 1899 Hague Convention brings in further clarity of what constitutes a regular force.
  - The force should be commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates.
  - It must have a distinctive emblem recognisable at a distance.
  - It must carry arms openly.
  - It must conduct operations in accordance with laws and customs of war.

### **Need to redefine combatant:**

- Those who conducted the (yet unproven) Mumbai 'cyberattack' or the 2007 attack on Estonia's banking system did not meet any of the four conditions of being called combatants, but still wreaked havoc.
- A combatant needs to be redefined due to three reasons.
  - A cyber army need not be uniformed and may consist of civilians.
  - Cyber 'warriors' do not carry arms openly. Their arms are malicious software that is invisible.
  - And finally, the source of the attack could be a lone software nerd who does not have a leader and is up to dirty tricks for money, blackmail or simply some fun.

### **Issue:**

- None of these meets the requirements of The Hague Convention but the actions of these non-combatants fall squarely in the realm of national security.



- This raises two very basic inquiries that need deliberation.
  - Would the nation employing civilians in computer network attacks not be in violation of the laws of war?
  - If these people are considered as combatants, would the target country have the right to respond in self-defence?
- A response would be reactive after the attacker has conducted his operation; hence, as a right of self-defence, would an act of pre-emption be in order?
  - This argument may appear far-fetched now but needs to be examined as India seems to have a new view on the concept of the right to self-defence.

### Way Forward:

- Cyberattacks done by faceless persons who are non-combatants as per international law opens up an avenue that requires careful examination; cyberattacks may not kill directly but the downstream effects can cause great destruction.
- International actions against hackers have been generally limited to sanctioning of foreign nationals by target nations.
- In 2014, for the first time, a nation (the U.S.) initiated criminal actions against foreign nationals (five Chinese operatives of Unit 61398 of the People's Liberation Army) for computer hacking and economic espionage.
- India seems to have made its intentions clear at the UN meet, but, if not regulated globally, it could lead to a wild-west situation.



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

**1. AI Portal SUPACE**

**Why in News**

Recently, the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** launched an **Artificial Intelligence (AI) based portal 'SUPACE'** in the judicial system aimed at assisting judges with legal research.

- **SUPACE** is short for **Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court's Efficiency**.
- Earlier, the **E-Courts Project** was conceptualised on the basis of "**National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary - 2005**" submitted by the **e-Committee of the Supreme Court**.

**Key Points**

- **About SUPACE:**
  - It is a tool that collects relevant facts and laws and makes them available to a judge.
  - It is not designed to take decisions, but only to process facts and to make them available to judges looking for an input for a decision.
  - Initially, it will be used on an experimental basis by the judges of **Bombay and Delhi High Courts** who deal with criminal matters.
- **Significance:**
  - It will produce results customized to the need of the case and the way the judge thinks.
  - This will be **time saving**. It will help the judiciary and the court in **reducing delays and pendency of cases**.
  - **AI** will present a **more streamlined, cost effective and time bound** means to the **fundamental right of access to justice**.
  - It will make the **service delivery mechanism transparent and cost-efficient**.
- **Challenge:**
  - **Redundancy of certain posts** after introduction of SUPACE.

- Since it is intended to do what the human mind can do, but much more efficiently and methodically, there is apprehension in the generation of unemployment.

## E-Courts Project

- **About:**
  - It was conceptualized with a vision to **transform the Indian Judiciary by ICT (Information and Communication Technology) enablement of Courts.**
  - It is a **pan-India Project**, monitored and funded by the **Department of Justice**, Ministry of Law and Justice, **for the District Courts** across the country.
- **Objectives of the Project:**
  - To provide efficient & time-bound citizen-centric services delivery.
  - To develop, install & implement decision support systems in courts.
  - To automate the processes to provide transparency and accessibility of information to its stakeholders.
  - To enhance judicial productivity, both qualitatively & quantitatively, to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost-effective, predictable, reliable and transparent.

## 2. Integrated Health Information Platform

### Why in News

The **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** has launched the **Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP)**, that is the next generation highly refined version of the presently used **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)**

- IHIP is an **advanced disease surveillance system.**

### Key Points

- **About:**
  - It will **track 33 diseases (as compared to the earlier 18 diseases)** and will ensure near-real-time data in digital mode.
  - It will **provide a health information system** developed for real time, case-based information, integrated analytics, advanced visualization capability.
  - Data will be provided in real time through:
    - **Grassroots healthcare workers** through their gadgets (tablets);

- **Doctors at the PHC** (Primary Healthcare Centre)/CHC (Community Health Centre)/DH (District Hospital) when the citizens seek healthcare; and
- **Diagnostic labs** which will provide data on the tests carried out.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Real time data reporting** (along through mobile application); **accessible at all levels** (from villages, states and central level).
  - Advanced data modelling & analytical tools.
  - **Geographic Information System (GIS) enabled Graphical representation of data** into integrated dashboard.
  - Role & hierarchy-based feedback & alert mechanisms.
  - **Geo-tagging** of reporting health facilities.
  - Scope for data integration with other health programs.
- **Significance:**
  - The **collection of authentic data will become easy** as it comes directly from the village/block level; the last mile from the country.
  - This digital platform for scouting the earliest signs of disease spread in the smallest of villages and blocks in the country **will immensely help in nipping in the bud any potential outbreak or epidemic.**
  - It is in sync with the **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)**.
    - NDHM aims to develop the backbone necessary to support the integrated digital health infrastructure of the country.
  - India's **information system for precision public health** is essential for delivering 'the right intervention at the right time, every time to the right population.'
    - In recent years, the use of technology to enhance precision in public health, including the use of pathogen genomics, enhanced surveillance and informatics, and targeted interventions has steadily gone up.
  - With its implementation, India is marching towards **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in healthcare through use of technology.
  - This refined digital surveillance platform will help to provide and connect data and move towards '**One Health' approach.**
    - One Health is an approach to designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes.

### **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme**

- The Integrated Disease Surveillance Project (IDSP) was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in assistance with the **World Bank**, in 2004.

- It continued as the **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)** during 12<sup>th</sup> Plan (2012–17) under the **National Health Mission** with a domestic budget.
- Under it, a **Central Surveillance Unit (CSU)** at Delhi, **State Surveillance Units (SSU)** at all State/Union Territories (UTs) head quarters and **District Surveillance Units (DSU)** at all Districts have been established.
- **Objectives:**
  - To strengthen/maintain decentralized laboratory based and IT enabled disease surveillance systems for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends.
  - To detect and respond to outbreaks in the early rising phase through trained **Rapid Response Teams (RRTs)**.
- **Programme Components:**
  - Integration and decentralization of surveillance activities through **establishment of surveillance units** at Centre, State and District level.
  - **Human Resource Development** - Training of State Surveillance Officers (SSOs), District Surveillance Officers (DSOs), RRT and other medical and paramedical staff on principles of disease surveillance.
  - **Use of Information Communication Technology** for collection, collation, compilation, analysis and dissemination of data.
  - Strengthening of public health laboratories.
  - Inter sectoral Coordination for **zoonotic diseases**.

### 3. World Economic Outlook: IMF

#### Why in News

The latest edition of the **International Monetary Fund's (IMF) World Economic Outlook** has raised its **Financial Year (FY) 2021** growth forecast for India to 12.5% from **11.5% estimated earlier in January 2021**.

#### Key Points

- **Indian Economy:**
  - Indian economy is expected to grow by **12.5% in 2021 and 6.9% in 2022**.
    - In **2020**, India's economy witnessed **an estimated contraction of 8%**.
  - Growth rate for India in 2021 is **stronger than that of China**.
    - China was the **only major economy to have a positive growth rate of 2.3% in 2020**, and is expected to grow by 8.6% in 2021 and 5.6% in 2022.
- **Global Economy:**

- The IMF predicted stronger recovery in 2021 and 2022 with growth projected to be **6% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022**.
  - In **2020**, the global economy **contracted by 3.3%**
- The contraction for 2020 is 1.1% points smaller than previous projection, **reflecting**:
  - **Higher-than-expected growth outturns in the second half of the year** for most regions after **lockdowns** were eased and as economies adapted to new ways of working.
  - **Additional fiscal support in a few large economies** and the anticipated vaccine-powered recovery in the second half of the year.
- **Suggestions:**
  - **Health Care:**
    - The emphasis should be on escaping the health crisis by **prioritising health care spending, on vaccinations, treatments, and health care infrastructure**. Fiscal support should be well targeted to affected households and firms.
  - **Accommodative Monetary Policy:**
    - **Monetary policy** should remain **accommodative** (where **inflation** is well behaved), while proactively addressing financial stability risks using macroprudential tools.
  - **Tailored Approach:**
    - **Policymakers will need to continue supporting their economies** while dealing with more **limited policy space** and higher debt levels than prior to the pandemic.
    - This requires better **targeted measures to leave space for prolonged support if needed**. **With multi-speed recoveries, a tailored approach is necessary, with policies well-calibrated to the stage of the pandemic**, the strength of the economic recovery, and the structural characteristics of individual countries.
  - **Priorities:**
    - The priorities should include **green infrastructure investment** to help mitigate **climate change**, digital infrastructure investment to boost productive capacity and strengthening social assistance to arrest **rising inequality**.

## International Monetary Fund

- The IMF was set up along with the **World Bank** after the **Second World War** to assist in the **reconstruction of war-ravaged countries**.

- The two organisations were agreed to be set up at a conference in Bretton Woods in the US. Hence, they are known as the **Bretton Woods twins**.
- Created in 1945, the IMF is governed by and accountable to the 189 countries that make up its near-global membership. **India joined on 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1945.**
- The IMF's primary **purpose is to ensure the stability of the international monetary system** – the system of exchange rates and international payments that enables countries (and their citizens) to transact with each other.
  - The Fund's mandate was updated in 2012 to include all macroeconomic and financial sector issues that bear on global stability.
- **Reports by IMF:**
  - **Global Financial Stability Report**
  - **World Economic Outlook**

### World Economic Outlook

- It is a survey by the IMF that is usually **published twice a year** in the months of April and October.
- It **analyzes and predicts global economic developments** during the near and medium term.
- In response to the growing demand for more frequent forecast updates, the WEO Update is published in January and July between the two main WEO publications released usually in April and October.

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

### 4. A post-Covid fiscal framework for India

#### Issues with the FRBM Act

- Economic disruption caused by the COVID has prompted calls for a relook at the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM)**.
- The introduction of the FRBM in 2003 reflected the belief that setting **strict limits on fiscal deficits, both for the centre and the states, was the solution.**
- But this framework didn't work.
- Apart from the initial period, when growth was booming, the deficit targets were largely honoured in the breach, leaving the **primary balance** [Revenue-Non-interest expenditure] essentially unchanged (Figure 2, phase 2).



## Debt has increased to record levels

- **India's general government debt has soared.**
- It is now close to 90 per cent of GDP – **the highest independent India has ever seen.**
- The debt ratio will **come down naturally as GDP normalises.**
- Even so, on current policies, it is likely **to exceed 80 per cent** for the foreseeable future.

## Would such a high level of debt be sustainable?

- Briefly, **sustainability depends on two key factors:**
- 1) The primary balance (PB), revenue less non-interest expenditures.
- 2) The difference between the **cost of borrowing and the nominal growth rate (r-g)**. [interest-growth differential]
- Debt does not explode when the primary balance is greater than the **interest-growth differential.**
- In India's case, **PB has been negative** as the government has run primary deficits.
- But this has been counterbalanced over the past decade by **favourable differentials, as interest rates have been lower than growth.**
- Hence, the **broadly stable debt ratio.**
- This equilibrium has now been upset by the sudden increase in debt.
- If the **interest-growth differential** consequently turns unfavourable, as occurred during the previous period of high debt in the early 2000s (Figure 2, phase 1), then debt sustainability could only be preserved by **shifting the primary balance into surplus.**
- And this would not be easy.

## Why shifting primary balance into surplus is not easy

- Primary deficit of the Centre and states combined is typically about 3 per cent of GDP. [say PB is -3% of GDP]
- So, shifting the **primary balance into a modest surplus** [i.e. turning PB from -ve to +ve] would require an adjustment of **4 percentage points of GDP.**
- But **non-interest expenditure** is only roughly 20 per cent of GDP.
- If tax increases were ruled out, then a sudden adjustment would require **non-interest spending to be cut by no less than 20 per cent** (4 divided by 20 times 100). [20% of 20 is 4]
- Clearly, **this would be politically impossible.**
- But this would render India susceptible to panic and possibly even crises.
- The government needs to eliminate the tension, undertaking a **pre-emptive consolidation** to prevent the need for a sudden adjustment.



## Strategy based on 4 principles

- The government should start by defining a clear objective, based not on arbitrary targets but on sound first principles: **It should aim to ensure debt sustainability.**
- To this end, the government could adopt a strategy based on four principles.

### 1) Abandon multiple fiscal criteria

- The current FRBM sets targets for the **overall deficit, the revenue deficit and debt.**
- Such multiple criteria impede the objective of ensuring sustainability since the targets can conflict with each other,
- This creates confusion about which one to follow and thereby **obfuscating accountability.**

### 2) Don't get fixated on specific number

- Around the world, countries are realising that deficit targets of 3 per cent of GDP and debt targets of 60 per cent of GDP **lack proper economic grounding.**
- In India's case, they take no account of the country's **own fiscal arithmetic or its strong political will to repay its debt.**
- Any specific target, no matter how well-grounded, encouraging governments to transfer spending off-budget such as with the **"oil bonds" in the mid-2000s and subsidies more recently.**

### 3) Focus on one measure for guiding fiscal policy

- In this regard, Arvind Subramanian and Josh Felmanwe propose **targeting the primary balance.**
- This concept is new to India and will take time for the public to absorb and accept.
- But it is inherently simple and has the eminent virtue that it is closely linked to meeting the **overall objective of ensuring debt sustainability.**

### 4) Don't set yearly target for the primary balance

- The Centre should not set out yearly targets for the primary balance.
- Instead, it should announce a plan to improve the primary balance gradually, by say half a percentage point of GDP per year on average.
- Doing so will make it clear that it will accelerate consolidation when times are good, moderate it when times are less buoyant, and end it **when a small surplus has been achieved.**

- This strategy is simple and easy to communicate; it is gradual and hence feasible.

## Conclusion

- COVID has upended India's public finances. It is time to learn from past experience and adapt. Adopting a simple new fiscal framework based on the primary balance could be the way forward.

## 5. Chenab Bridge

### Why in News

Recently, **Indian Railways** completed the **arch closure** of the iconic **Chenab Bridge** in **Jammu & Kashmir**.

### Key Points

- **About Chenab Bridge:**
  - It is the **world's highest railway bridge** and is part of the **Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project (USBRL)**.
    - The Project was **declared as a Project of National Importance in March 2002**.
  - This bridge is **1,315-metre long** and is the highest railway bridge in the world being **359 metres above the river bed level**.
  - The completion of the steel arch is a major leap towards the completion of the **111 km long winding stretch from Katra to Banihal**.
    - It is arguably the **biggest civil-engineering challenge** faced by any railway project in India in recent history.
- **Unique Features of this Bridge:**
  - Bridge designed to **withstand high wind speed up to 266 Km/Hour**.
  - Bridge designed for **blast load in consultation with DRDO** for the first time in India.
  - Bridge designed to **bear earthquake forces of highest intensity zone-V** in India.
  - First time on Indian Railways, **Phased Array Ultrasonic Testing machine** used for testing of welds.
  - First time on Indian Railways, **National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accredited lab established at site for weld testing**.

- Extensive **health monitoring and warning systems** planned through state of art instrumentation.

### Chenab River

- **Source:** It rises in the upper Himalayas in the **Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh** state.
  - The river is **formed by the confluence of two rivers, Chandra and Bhaga**, at Tandi, 8 km southwest of Keylong, in the Lahaul and Spiti district.
    - The **Bhaga river originates from Surya taal lake**, which is situated a few kilometers west of the Bara-lacha la pass in Himachal Pradesh.
    - The **Chandra river originates from glaciers east of the same pass** (near Chandra Taal).
- **Flows Through:** It flows through the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir into the plains of Punjab, Pakistan, before flowing into the Indus River.
- Some of the **important projects/dams on Chenab:**
  - **Ratle Hydro Electric Project**
  - **Salal Dam- hydroelectric power project** near Reasi
  - **Dul Hasti Hydroelectric Plant-** power project in Kishtwar District
  - **Pakal Dul Dam (under construction)-** on a tributary **Marusadar River** in Kishtwar District.

### Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which of the following ideal/s in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution has/have been borrowed from the Russian Constitution?

1. Justice
2. Liberty
3. Equality
4. Fraternity

**Choose the correct option:**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” as an ideal has been borrowed from the French Revolution to the Indian Constitution.
- The ideal “justice” in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution has been borrowed from the Russian Constitution.

2. Consider the following statements:

1. Exercise Varuna is an Indo-French naval exercise.
2. All the QUAD members will also participate in Varuna exercise.
3. Varuna exercise will be conducted in the Indian Ocean Region.

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

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

**Answer : B**

**Explanation**

- Recently, Indian Navy Ships INS Satpura and INS Kiltan along with P8I Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft are participating, for the first time in multilateral maritime exercise La Pérouse, being conducted in the Eastern Indian Ocean Region from 5th to 7th April 2021.

- The first edition of La Pérouse joint exercise, initiated by France in 2019, included ships from Australia, Japan and the US.
  - India's participation in 2021 **completed the QUAD force representation** in the French led La Pérouse.
- Post conduct of La Perouse, the **Indo-French Naval exercise "Varuna" is scheduled in the Western Indian Ocean, wherein UAE too shall be participating. Hence, statement 1 and 3 are correct but statement 2 is not correct.**

**3. With reference to the "Sankalp se Siddhi"-Village and Digital Connect Drive, consider the following statements:**

1. It is launched by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).
2. It aims to activate the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) in the villages.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Answer : C**

#### **Explanation**

- The **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)**, under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, has launched **"Sankalp se Siddhi" - Village and Digital Connect Drive. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The main aim of this drive is to activate the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) in the villages. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
  - The drive will entail 150 teams (10 in each region from TRIFED and State Implementation Agencies/Mentoring Agencies/Partners) visiting ten villages each.
  - Thus, 100 villages in each region and 1500 villages in the country will be covered.
  - The visiting teams will also identify locations and shortlist potential Van Dhan Vikas Kendras for clustering as TRIFOOD, and SFURTI units as larger enterprises

**4. Consider the following statements:**

1. International Maritime Organization (IMO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
2. India is a member of IMO.

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**

- India is also a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- IMO is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN). **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It is a global standard-setting authority with responsibility to improve the safety and security of international shipping and prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.

**5. Shivalik Elephant Reserve is located in which of the following states?**

- a. Bihar
- b. Uttarakhand
- c. Uttar Pradesh
- d. None of the above

**Answer : b**

### **Explanation**

- The *Uttarakhand government* is considering denotifying the Shivalik Elephant Reserve.
- The matter, officials said, will be raised before the state Wildlife Advisory Board for discussion in its next meeting.
- If the board gives an in-principle approval, a detailed proposal will be taken up and the matter communicated to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF).
- The Shivalik Elephant Reserve which spreads over 5,000 sq km was notified in 2002.

6. “World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO): Trends” is published by

- A. World Economic Forum (WEF)
- B. International Labour Organization (ILO)
- C. World Bank (WB)
- D. International Monetary Fund (IMF)

**Answer : B**

### **Explanation**

Formerly entitled Global Employment Trends, the World Employment and Social Outlook- Trends (for e.g. 2015) includes a forecast of global unemployment levels and explains the factors behind this trend, including continuing inequality and falling wage shares. It looks at the drivers of the rising middle class in the developing world as well as the risk of social unrest, especially in areas of elevated youth unemployment.

The report addresses structural factors shaping the world of work, including an aging population and shifts in the skills sought by employers.



## **Mains Practice Questions**

**1Q. India is known to be the pharmacy of the world. However, the Indian pharma sector faces many issues that it needs to rectify. Comment.**

### **Approach**

- Start the answer by giving the context of India helping the world in the supply of generic medicines.
- Discuss the associated challenges of India's pharma sector
- Conclude suitably.

**2Q. Discuss the major reservations of India with respect to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT).**

### **Approach**

- Start the answer by briefly introducing the objectives of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty
- Discuss the issues why India considers the NPT as discriminatory and had refused to sign it.
- Conclude Suitably.