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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. A multipolarity, scripted by the middle powers

Context:

- The article analyzes the critical role that the middle powers- Japan, Iran, Turkey and India could play in the **evolving global geopolitical scenario**.

Background:

U.S. China Cold War like situation:

- S. views China as its principal adversary on the world stage.
- The new Cold War like situation between China and the U.S. gained a concrete shape during the Trump presidency. The U.S. has been trying to build an alliance of likeminded countries **to try and curb China's growth, reduce its influence in international institutions**.
- The U.S. has been trying to use the **Quad to challenge China in the Indo-Pacific**, possibly as part of a "new Cold War".

U.S. Russia hostility:

- Russia's war with Ukraine and the **occupation of Crimea in 2014**, followed by allegations of **Russian cyber-interference in the U.S. presidential elections of 2016** has raised the hostility between U.S. and Russia.

China-Russia partnership:

- S. animosity has encouraged China and Russia to solidify their relations.
- Besides significantly expanding their bilateral ties, the two countries have agreed to harmonise their visions under the **Eurasian Economic Union sponsored by Russia and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**. This idea has now been subsumed under the '**Greater Eurasian Partnership**' to which both the countries are committed.
- The new Cold War is now being reflected in a **new geopolitical binary – the Indo-Pacific versus Eurasia**.

Details:

- The article analyzes the relation between China, Russia and U.S. with the **middle power nations of India, Iran, Turkey and Japan.**

Evolving alignments:

- The alignments between the rival power groups and the middle powers seem to be crystallizing.
 - **Japan and India are deeply entrenched in the Quad** and have substantial security ties with the U.S.
 - **Iran**, facing a sanction regime from western powers led by the U.S. has found **strategic comfort with the Sino-Russian alliance**. Iran and China recently concluded an economic pact.
 - **Turkey, a NATO member**, has found its interests better-served by Russia and China rather than the U.S. and its European allies.

The role of middle powers:

- Japan, Iran, Turkey and India are well set to shape the emerging world order. The “middle powers”, have the capacity to **project power regionally, build alliances**, and support (or disrupt) the strategies of international powers pursuing their interests in the region.

Reluctant allies:

- Despite the allure of joining the rival super power groupings led by the U.S. or China and Russia, the four nations are not yet prepared to join the power alliances.

Japan:

- Though, Japan has an ongoing territorial dispute with China relating to the **Senkaku islands in the East China Sea**, **Japan has a strong economic linkage with China.**
 - In 2019, 24% of Japanese imports came from China, while 19% of its exports went to China.
- **Japan’s \$200 billion ‘Partnership for Quality Infrastructure’ initiative** that funds infrastructure projects in Asia and Africa, is willing to work on BRI projects on a selective basis.
- Japan has the security treaty of 1951 with the U.S. making it dependant on the U.S. for much of its security concerns.
 - Notably, Japan has been trying to reduce its security-dependence on the U.S. and pursue an independent role in the Indo-Pacific.

India:

- As the threats from China at the border and intrusions in its South Asian neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean became sharper, India has moved closer to the U.S. India- U.S. relationship has been on the upswing, marked by **expanding defence ties with the U.S., including defence purchases and agreements on inter-operability and intelligence-sharing and frequent military exercises.**
- Through the border stand-off at Ladakh, China is perhaps indicating to India that its security interests demand close engagement with China rather than a deepening alignment with the U.S.
- The recent Freedom of navigation exercise carried out by the U.S. in India's EEZ without its consent would undermine India U.S. bilateral relationship
- India will need to manage its ties with China largely through its own efforts, while retaining Russia as its defence partner.

Iran:

- Given the strategic culture of Iran that eschews long-term security alignments, it is very likely that the Islamic Republic of Iran will seek to redefine its strategic space and exercise independent options rather than joining either power groups.

Turkey:

- Turkey has been witnessing a steady distancing from its western partners and increasing geopolitical, military and economic alignment with Russia and China.
- However, Turkey still wishes to keep its ties with the U.S. intact, and retain the freedom to make choices. Its **"New Asia" initiative**, involves strengthening of east-west logistical and economic connectivity backed by western powers and China.

Conclusion:

- The four middle powers, seem to be vying for **"strategic autonomy" – defined by flexible partnerships, with freedom to shape alliances to suit specific interests at different times.**
- These four middle powers will thus make **multipolarity**, rather than a new Cold War, the **defining characteristic of the emerging global order.**

2. U.S. imposes new sanctions on Russia

Context:

The **United States** has announced fresh sanctions against Russia.

Details:

- In an executive order, Mr. Biden widened restrictions on U.S. banks trading in Russian government debt, expelled 10 diplomats who include alleged spies, and blacklisted 32 individuals accused of meddling in the 2020 presidential election.
- The sanctions were announced in retaliation for Kremlin's U.S. election interference, a massive cyberattack and other hostile activity.
 - Cyberattack refers to the massive so-called SolarWinds hack of U.S. government computer systems.
- The order sends a signal that the U.S. will impose costs in a strategic and economically impactful manner on Russia if it continues or escalates its destabilising international action.
- Department of Treasury, together with the EU, Australia, Britain and Canada, sanctioned eight individuals and entities associated with Russia's occupation of Crimea in Ukraine.

Concerns:

- The development comes in the same week as President Joe Biden offered to meet President Vladimir Putin for their first summit.
 - Sanctions would not help build momentum for a summit.
- The latest tension comes amid worries both in the U.S. and its European allies over Russia's recent troop build-up on the border of Ukraine.
- Russia swiftly denounced the actions and warned of retaliation.
- The sanctions are certain to further deteriorate an already tense relationship between the U.S. and Russia.

Note:

- The actions represent second major round of sanctions imposed by the Biden administration against Russia.
- Earlier, the U.S. sanctioned seven Russian officials, along with more than a dozen government entities, over Russia's attempts to kill opposition figure Alexey Navalny with a nerve agent and his subsequent jailing.

3. UNFPA's population report launched

Context:

United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) flagship State of World Population Report 2021 titled 'My Body is My Own' has been launched.

State of World Population Report

- State of World Population Report is an annual flagship report of UNFPA
- Each edition covers and analyses developments and trends in world population and demographics, as well as shedding a light on specific regions, countries and population groups and the unique challenges they face.

Details:

- The report turns the **spotlight on bodily autonomy**.
- This is the **first time a United Nations report has focused on bodily autonomy**.
 - Bodily autonomy is defined as the power and agency to make choices about your body without the fear of violence or having someone else decide for you.
- Some examples of violation of bodily autonomy include, child marriage, female genital mutilation, a lack of contraceptive choices leading to unplanned pregnancy, unwanted sex exchanged for a home and food or when people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities cannot walk down a street without fearing assault or humiliation.
- Under its ambit also fall people with disabilities stripped of their rights to self-determination, to be free from violence and to enjoy a safe and satisfying sexual life.

Findings:

- **Nearly half the women from 57 developing countries do not have the right to make decisions regarding their bodies**, including using contraception, seeking healthcare or even on their sexuality.
- In countries where data is available, **only 55% of women are fully empowered to make choices** over healthcare, contraception and the ability to say yes or no to sex.
- It also highlights that **only 75% of countries legally ensure full and equal access to contraception**.

4. Sri Lanka Opposition challenges Bill on Chinese-backed Port City

Context:

Opposition parties, civil society groups, and labour unions have **challenged a recently-gazetted Bill on the Chinese-backed Port City** in capital Colombo, in Sri Lanka's Supreme Court.

Issue:

- The ruling Rajapaksa administration tabled a Bill, titled '**Colombo Port City Economic Commission**', in Parliament, **outlining proposed laws for the \$1.4 billion-Port City** being built on reclaimed land at Colombo's seafront.
- It is **touted** by the government as an **investment hub for foreign capital**.
- However, opposition argues that it directly **affects Sri Lanka's sovereignty**.
 - They have **challenged the constitutional validity** of the proposed legislation for the Port City.
 - The clauses **prohibit investment in the Port City in Sri Lankan rupees**, which will keep out Sri Lankans.
- In addition to the legal challenge, the government also faces sharp criticism from some of its backers, including sections of Sri Lanka's influential Buddhist clergy.
- They fiercely opposed Indian involvement at the East Container Terminal at the Colombo Port.
 - Sri Lanka then **backed out of an agreement with India and Japan** to develop the **East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port**.

Note:

- The **Port City was launched** by President Xi Jinping during his state visit to the island nation in September **2014**.
- The successor government, led by President Maithripala Sirisena vowed to develop the site into an **Indian Ocean financial hub, despite an election promise to scrap it**, and amid protests from environmentalists and fisherfolk.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. Bond yield spikes as RBI's purchase disappoints

Context:

The **benchmark 10-year bond yield elevated to its highest level (6.20 per cent)** in a week as the outcome of the first tranche of the Reserve Bank of India's bond-purchase programme disappointed traders while inflation concerns also weighed.

Background:

- The Reserve Bank of India recently announced the introduction of the **G-sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP 1.0)**.

Why is a rise in bond yields a concern for everyone?

- A **rise in bond yields** denotes **higher interest rates** in the economy.
 - Higher interest rates **push up the cost of loans** taken by companies and makes it harder for them to borrow additional money to invest.
 - This ultimately affects their profits and hence the returns of shareholders.
- **Rising bond yields** imply a **rise in the risk-free interest rate** and hence **lower equity valuations**.

Way Forward:

- RBI has tried very hard to keep the **yields below 6 per cent** in this fiscal (2021-22) to **enable the government to borrow cheaply**.
- The **implications of a bond market strike** can be quite **negative for the economy**.
- **RBI intervention in the debt markets** could **bring down bond yields** and return stocks to their bullish trajectory.

6. Lessons from the first wave

Context:

- **Second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
 - Given the fact that India's second COVID-19 wave is more virulent than the first, many States have restarted enforcing shutdowns of various scales.

Details:

- The article analyzes the social and economic impact of the first wave of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown that were imposed. It also suggests suitable actions to be taken in the face of the ongoing second wave of the pandemic.

Socio-economic impact of the pandemic:

Uneven impact and recovery:

- Even though India's overall economic trajectory had been on the upswing after the first phase of the pandemic, **the growth during these times has not been inclusive.**
 - While sectors, including the **technological, pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors, saw record growth**, sectors including **travel and tourism and wellness and hospitality receded to historic lows.** While the wealth of India's billionaires increased by 35% even during COVID-19 times, the pandemic decimated the informal and MSME sector and **pushed 75 million Indians into poverty.**
 - While the migrant workers faced innumerable miseries during the lockdown workers in white collar sectors like IT, consulting and financial services, were minimally affected. COVID-19 has affected the least affluent the most.
- The economic experts have noted that India's revival from the COVID-19-induced downturn would be a '**K-shaped**' curve where only a segment of our population recovers.

Concerns with regard to new lockdown:

- Introducing even partial lockdowns again will constrain the movement of goods and labourers. It will significantly bring down our industrial productivity and create avenues that will **widen our economic and social inequalities.**

Recommendations:

Regulation:

- Stringent **health and safety regulations** should be formulated and implemented. Non-essential gatherings should be restricted or banned.

Ensuring economic activity:

- Industries should be allowed to function at maximum possible capacity in multiple shifts.

Preventing distress:

- Given the fact that demand contraction has been the biggest contributor towards the economic downturn during the pandemic, governments can focus on ensuring **cash stimulus packages at both individual and institutional levels.** This will boost consumption and investments. Government must emphasize **direct cash transfer and employment guarantee schemes.**

- The government will have to focus on industries and sectors most affected by the pandemic.

Vaccine roll-out:

- India will have to accelerate vaccine production, procurement and distribution. Vaccination should be opened up for all age groups.

Conclusion:

- Given the fact that introducing even partial lockdowns again will widen economic and social inequalities, **India should work towards saving lives without compromising on our population's livelihood**, or without letting people fall into poverty.

7. RBI sets up authority to review regulations

What's in News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up the **Regulations Review Authority 2.0**.

Details:

- Considering the developments in regulatory functions of the Reserve Bank over the past two decades, it is proposed to undertake a **review of the Reserve Bank's regulations and compliance procedures** with a view to **streamlining/rationalising** them and making them **more effective**.
- The authority will **review regulatory prescriptions internally** as well as by **seeking suggestions from RBI-regulated entities** for simplification and ease of implementation.
- **Deputy Governor Rajeshwar Rao** has been **appointed as the Regulations Review Authority**.
- The authority would have validity for a period of **one year from May 1, 2021**.

Note:

- The RBI had set up a **similar authority in 1999** for reviewing regulations, circulars, reporting systems.
- The recommendations enabled streamlining and increasing the effectiveness of several procedures, paving the way for issuance of master circular and reducing reporting burden on regulated entities.

8. National task force to combat air pollution, monitor remedial steps

What's in News?

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has constituted an eight-member National Task Force to combat air pollution and monitor remedial steps to improve air quality.

- The NTF will comprise senior officials from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Ministries of Housing and Urban Affairs, Petroleum, Transport, Power, Agriculture, Health and the Central Pollution Control Board.
- The NTF may also **monitor enforcement of laid down air quality standards beyond non-attainment cities** in other identified air polluted areas where air quality is poor and above.
- The Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories will continue to monitor progress in execution of action plans at the State-level with the assistance of monitoring cells in their offices and the Air Quality Monitoring Committee.

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. EatSmart Cities Challenge and Transport 4 All Challenge

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the **EatSmart Cities Challenge** and **Transport 4 All Challenge**.

- The challenges aim at creating an **environment of right food practices and habits** and to make **public transport safe, affordable, comfortable, and reliable**.

Key Points

- **EatSmart Cities Challenge:**
 - **About:**
 - The EatSmart Cities Challenge is envisioned as a competition among cities to recognize their efforts in adopting and scaling up various initiatives under **Eat Right India**.
 - The challenge is open to all **Smart Cities**, capital cities of States /UTs, and cities with a population of more than 5 lakh.
 - **Objective:**
 - It aims to motivate Smart Cities to develop a plan that supports a healthy, safe and sustainable food environment supported by institutional, physical, social, and economic infrastructure along with the application of 'smart' solutions to combat food related issues.
 - **Significance**
 - The challenge has a potential to create social and behavioural change towards food safety, hygiene and nutrition.
- **Other Related initiatives:**
 - **Limit TFA:** Recently, the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has capped the amount of trans fatty acids (TFA) in oils and fats to 3% for 2021 and 2% by 2022 from the current permissible limit of 5% through an amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulations 2011.

- **'Raman 1.0'**: A new-age, hand-held battery operated device to perform rapid detection (in less than 1 minute) of economically driven adulteration in edible oils, fats and ghee.
- **Food Safety Magic Box**: This do-it-yourself food testing kit comprises a manual and equipment to check for food adulterants, which school children can use in their classroom laboratories.
- **Food Safety Mitra scheme**: It aims to support **small and medium-scale food businesses** so as to comply with the **food safety laws** and will facilitate them with the licensing and registration process, hygiene ratings and training programme.
- **Eat Right Mela**: It is an outreach activity for citizens to nudge them towards eating right. It is organised to make citizens aware of the health and nutrition benefits of different types of food.
- **Transport 4 All Challenge**:
 - **About**:
 - The initiative has been launched in collaboration with **The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)** and aims to bring together cities, citizen groups, and start-ups to develop solutions that improve public transport.
 - ITDP is a non-governmental non-profit organization that focuses on developing bus rapid transit systems, promoting biking, walking, and non-motorized transport, and improving private bus operators margins.
 - **Objective**:
 - The Transport 4 All Digital Innovation Challenge Aims to develop digital solutions that will make public transport safe, affordable, comfortable, and reliable for all.
 - **Significance**
 - COVID-19 has brought the entire world to a halt with transport being one of the worst-hit sectors. Transport 4 All Digital Innovation Challenge has the potential to support cities to recover from this mobility crisis.
 - It will support the cities and start-ups all over the country to move towards digital transformation in urban mobility.
 - **Initiatives to Address Urban Transport Issues**:
 - **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP)**: The plan aims to achieve national fuel security by promoting hybrid and electric vehicles in the country
 - **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric vehicles in India (FAME India)**: This scheme supports hybrid/electric vehicles market development and manufacturing ecosystem.
 - **Mass Rapid Transit/ Transport Systems (MRTS)**: In 2017, the government introduced the new Metro Policy which aims to improve

collaborations, standardising norms, financing and creating a procurement mechanism so that the projects can be implemented effectively.

- **Personal Rapid Transit System (PRT):** It is a transport mode combining small automated vehicles, known as pods, operating on a network of specially built guideways.
- **Green Urban Mobility Initiative:** The Indian government launched the Green Urban Mobility Initiative (GUMI) to boost green and sustainable alternatives under the Smart Cities Mission.

2. Monkeydactyl: Pterosaur Species

Why in News

The new pterosaur fossil was discovered in the Tiaojishan Formation of Liaoning, China, and is thought to be 160 million years old.

- It has been named **Kunpengopterus antipollicatus**, also dubbed “Monkeydactyl”.

Tiaojishan Formation

- Geographically, the Tiaojishan Formation is **widely distributed in western Liaoning Province and the neighboring northern Hebei Province (China)**.
- This formation is lithologically composed of intermediate lava and pyroclastic rocks, interlayered with basic volcanic rocks and sedimentary deposits.
- It **contains abundant and well-preserved fossil plants**, including leaves, seeds and fruits, permineralized rhizomes and wood.

Key Points

- **About Pterosaurs:**
 - The pterosaur species were **reptiles**, close cousins of dinosaurs and the **first animals after insects to evolve powered flight**.
 - They evolved into **various species**, while some were as large as an F-16 fighter jet, others were as small as paper airplanes.
 - They **flourished** during all periods (**Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous**) of the **Mesozoic Era** (252.2 million to 66 million years ago).
- **About the Monkeydactyl Fossil (Kunpengopterus antipollicatus):**
 - “**Antipollicatus**” in ancient Greek means “**opposite thumbs**”, and it was attached to the name because the researchers’ findings **could be the first discovery of a pterosaur with an opposed thumb**.
 - It could **likely be the earliest-known instance of the limb**.
 - It is **far older than the one identified in 2019**.

- Paleontologists had identified that species as a **pterosaur that lived over 77 million years ago** in what is **Western Canada** today.
- Named **Cryodrakon boreas**, it was believed to be one of the largest flying animals, which “flew over the heads of dinosaurs”, with a wingspan of **over 10 metres**.
- **Opposability of the Thumb:**
 - **About:**
 - Opposability of the thumb is defined as being able to “**simultaneously flex, abduct and medially rotate the thumb**” in a way that one is able to bring the tip of the thumb to touch the tips of the other fingers.
 - Along with humans, some ancient monkeys and apes also had opposable thumbs.
 - Humans, however, have a **relatively longer and distally placed thumb**, and larger **thumb muscles**.
 - This means that humans’ tip-to-tip precision grip when holding smaller objects is superior to non-human primates. This is the reason that humans are able to **hold a pen, unscrew an earring stopper, or put a thread through a needle hole**.
 - **Monkeydactyl and Opposability of the Thumb:**
 - The research team scanned the fossil of *K. antipollicatus* using micro-computed tomography (micro-CT), a technique making use of X-ray to image an object.
 - By studying its forelimb morphology and musculature, they suggest that *K. antipollicatus* could have used its hand for grasping, which is likely an adaptation for **arboreal life** (living in trees).
 - The grasping hands of primates developed as a result of their life in the trees – an opposable thumb made it easier for the common ancestor of all primates to cling on to tree branches.

3. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana

Why in News

Recently, alumni meets were organized across the country under **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)** to commemorate 75 years of Independence.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** announced it on **Antyodaya Diwas in 2014**.
 - It is a demand-driven placement linked skill training initiative working under the **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**.
 - It **uses skill training and placement in wage employment as a tool** to diversify income and enable sustained upward movement out of poverty.
- **Beneficiaries:**
 - DDU-GKY is uniquely focused on rural youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years from poor families.
- **Objective:**
 - Adding **diversity to the incomes** of rural poor families
 - Cater to the **career aspirations of rural youth**.
- **Alumni Meet:**
 - Alumni meet is an **important component of the scheme**.
 - The Alumni meets **provide healthy ground for experience sharing by the former trainees with their present counterparts** on topics like placements, career goals, challenges they faced in finding employment before undertaking the training and the benefits they reaped after.
 - Some of the **former trainees are also felicitated** at the events for their exemplary performances at their workplaces.
- **Coverage:**
 - The program is currently being implemented in **27 States and 3 Union Territories** and has over **2198 Training Centres in 1822 projects**, in partnership with **839 Project Implementing Agencies** conducting **training across 56 sectors, and over 600 job-roles**.
- **Achievements:**
 - Since inception of the scheme, a total **10.81 lakh candidates have been trained in 56 sectors and 600 Trades and 6.92 lakh placed**.
- **Significance:**
 - DDU-GKY and integrated farming initiatives for rural development across the country are important for greater success in **skilling** and placing the rural youth.
 - DDU-GKY has played a significant role in the context of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** through skilling.
 - As a part of the **Skill India campaign**, it plays an instrumental role in supporting the social and economic programs.
- **Some Other Initiatives Related to Skill Development:**
 - **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0:**
 - It was launched in 2021 in a bid to empower India's youth with employable skills by making over 300 skill courses available to them.

- It was launched by the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**.
- **Atmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping (ASEEM):**
 - Launched in 2020 (by MSDE), it is a portal to help skilled people find sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- **Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS):**
 - The scheme is to provide industry apprenticeship opportunities to the general graduates exiting in April 2019 through the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS). It was launched by the **Ministry of Education**.
- **Kaushal Acharya Awards:**
 - Launched (by MSDE) to recognize the contribution made by skill trainers and to motivate more trainers to join the Skill India Mission.
- **Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana (Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan):**
 - Launched in the year 2016 (by MSDE), it aims at creating an enabling ecosystem for Entrepreneurship development through Entrepreneurship education and training; Advocacy and easy access to entrepreneurship support network and Promoting social enterprises for inclusive growth.

Antyodaya Diwas

- Every year, **25th September is observed as Antyodaya Diwas** to mark the birth anniversary of **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya**, one of the great thinkers and philosophers of the nationalist movement of the country.
- The Government of India announced it for the first time in 2014 along with the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana** .
- Antyodaya means "**uplifting the poorest of the poor**" and the day aims to reach the person in the last mile.

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

4. Initiatives of National Internet Exchange of India

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has inaugurated **three new initiatives/services** of **National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI)**.

- **IP Guru, NIXI Academy, NIXI-IP-INDEX** have been launched to facilitate adoption of IPv6 and create an environment to ensure smooth transition from IPv4 to IPv6.

Key Points

- **About the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI):**
 - NIXI is a **not-for-profit organization** (section 8 of the Companies Act 2013) working since 2003 for spreading the internet infrastructure to the citizens of India through the following activities:
 - **Internet Exchanges** through which the internet data is exchanged amongst Internet Service Providers (ISP's), Data Centers and Content Delivery Network (CDNs).
 - **.IN Registry, managing and operation of .IN country code domain** and **.BHARAT IDN** (Internationalized Domain Name) domain for India.
 - **Indian Registry for Internet Names and Numbers (IRINN)**, managing and operating **Internet Protocol (IPv4/IPv6)**.
- **About the Three New Initiatives:**
 - **IPv6 Expert Panel (IP Guru):**
 - It is a **group to extend support to all the Indian entities** who are finding it technically challenging to **migrate and adopt IPv6**. It will be **offering its services free of cost**.
 - It's a joint effort of the Department of Telecom (**DOT**), **MeitY** and industry.
- **NIXI Academy:**
 - NIXI Academy is created **to educate technical/non-technical people** in India to learn and relearn technologies like IPv6 which are normally not taught in Educational Institutes.
 - Successful candidates (after passing examination) **can take a certificate from NIXI**, which will be useful to find/upgrade jobs in the Industry.
- **NIXI-IP-INDEX:**
 - NIXI has developed **an IPv6 index portal** for the Internet community.
 - NIXI-IP-INDEX portal will **showcase the IPv6 adoption rate in India and across the world**. It can be used to compare IPv6 Indian adoption rate with other economies in the world.
 - It will also include **details about web adoption in IPv6, IPv6 traffic etc.**

Transition from IPv4 to IPv6

- **IP:** 'IP' stands for 'Internet Protocol'. It is a **set of rules** that dictate how data should be delivered over the public network (Internet).
- **IPv4:**
 - IPv4 was the first major version of IP. It was deployed for production in the ARPANET in 1983.
 - It is the most widely used IP version. It is used to identify devices on a network using an addressing system.
 - The IPv4 **uses a 32-bit address scheme**. Till date, it is considered the primary Internet Protocol and carries 94% of Internet traffic.
 - It provides **an addressing capability of approximately 4.3 billion addresses**.
- **IPv6:**
 - It is the **most recent version of the Internet Protocol**. The Internet Engineer Task Force initiated it in early 1994. The design and development of that suite is now called IPv6.
 - This new IP address version is being deployed to fulfill the need for more Internet addresses.
 - IPv6 is **also called IPng (Internet Protocol next generation)**.
 - It has the **capability to provide an infinite number of addresses**.
 - With **128-bit address space**, it allows 340 undecillion unique address space. It can easily accommodate the growing number of networks worldwide and help solve the IP address exhaustion problem.
- **Benefit of Transitioning to IPv6:**
 - The most well-known benefit that IPv6 offers is the **exponential address space**, practically inexhaustible in the foreseeable future. Therefore, it allows **simple, seamless, and cost-effective connectivity** for service providers, enterprises and end-users.
 - It is considered especially important with the impending move to **5G**, which will massively increase the total number of devices connecting to the Internet.
 - The IPv6 operating systems **automatically create two IPv6 addresses**. One IPv6 with randomised MAC address in the suffix to hide the device identity and another IPv6 with real MAC address which is only used for end-to-end encrypted applications.
 - IPv6 has a **privacy protocol** to protect end-user privacy. The current internet (v4) lacks effective privacy and effective authentication mechanisms.
- **Importance for India:**
 - The sustainable development and evolution of internet infrastructure is **essential to the global cyberspace and digital economy**, and IPv6 root

server, which controls and manages the internet, can serve as a great tool.

- Creating such critical infrastructure at the national level is important. As a critical internet resource, the IPv6 root server system is **pivotal to manage the security and stability of the internet**.
- It will **contribute to in-country expertise building on critical information infrastructure** as well as promoting 'a major technological knowledge base within the country', and having a root server within the country would facilitate surveillance by Indian legal authorities.

5. Aahaar Kranti Mission

Why in News

The Government has launched 'Aahaar Kranti', a **mission dedicated to spread awareness about nutrition**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The initiative 'Aahaar Kranti' will focus on **addressing the problem of hunger and diseases in abundance** across India and the world.
 - The initiative will shine a light on the **richness and value of India's traditional diet**, the miracles of **local fruits and vegetables**, and the healing powers of a **balanced diet**.
 - **Organisations Involved:** Pravasi Bharatiya Academic and Scientific Sampark (PRABHASS), Global Indian Scientists and Technocrats' Forum (GIST), **Vijnana Bharati (Vibha)** and Vigyan Prasar (an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology) have come together to launch the mission 'Aahaar Kranti'.
 - The **motto** of the Mission is "**Uttam Aahaar- Uttam Vichaar or Good Diet-Good Cognition**".
- **Implementation Strategy:**
 - The messages **will be imparted through the curriculum** in the form of 'what's and 'why's of nutrition, or through the forms of games or as instructions such as 'how to'.
 - The content will be provided both online and offline, in all vernacular languages besides English and Hindi.
 - The programme **will focus on training teachers**, who, in turn, will pass on the message to the multitudes of students, and through them to their families and finally the society at large.
- **Significance:**

- The United Nations (UN) has also declared **2021 as the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables**, which vibes very well with Aahaar Kranti.
- Further, it is in line with the **UN sustainable goal 3** that emphasizes human well-being.
- It will **help in applying the rich knowledge of Ayurveda-based nutrition** to practice.

Performance of India on Global Hunger Index 2020

- India has been **ranked at 94** among 107 countries in the **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020**.
 - With a score of 27.2, India has a level of hunger that is **“serious”**.
- **Performance on the Indicators:**
 - **Undernourishment:** 14% of India’s population is undernourished (2017-19). It was 16.3% during 2011-13.
 - **Child Wasting:** 17.3% (2015-19), it was 15.1% in 2010-14.
 - **Child Stunting:** 34.7%, it has improved significantly, from 54% in 2000 to less than 35% now.
 - **Child Mortality:** 3.7%, it was 5.2% in 2012.

6. How IBC is moving away from promotor averse approach

Introducing pre-packs for MSMEs

- IBC was amended last week, through an ordinance.
- The amendment sought to address a structural weakness in India’s resolution architecture by introducing **the concept of pre-packs** for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- The pre-packaged framework involves **a privately negotiated contract** between the promoters of a financially distressed firm and its financial creditors to restructure the company’s obligations.
- This contract is negotiated within the IBC architecture but before the commencement of insolvency proceedings.
- Once accepted by creditors, the plan must be presented to the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for approval**.

How this framework is different from the existing framework

- A firm’s promoters could have submitted a resolution plan even after it enters the insolvency proceedings, subject to restrictions imposed under Section 29A which clarifies all those who are ineligible for submitting the resolution plan.

- So, the difference in the new framework essentially boils down to the following.

1) Control of the firm

- Under the IBC, upon the initiation of insolvency proceedings, control of a firm is taken away from promoters, and a **resolution professional** is appointed.
- Now, during the restructuring, the promoter, through the pre-pack, **retains control over the firm.**
- So effectively, we have transitioned from a “creditor-in-control” model of resolution to a “**debtor-in-control**” model of restructuring.
- This amendment, which creates a framework for restructuring, without the promoter losing control over the firm, addresses a lacuna in the IBC.

2) Issue of price discovery

- In this arrangement, there is an absence of an open bidding process, such as during the resolution phase.
- This **might raise questions over price discovery**, especially if **value maximisation for creditors** is the yardstick to measure the efficacy of IBC.
- This marks a fundamental change in the IBC framework.

Why the changes were needed

- The IBC, while it has strengthened the position of the creditors, had swung to an extreme.
- The resolution architecture as it stood prior to this amendment was perceived as being **too creditor-centric.**
- Wresting control from the “errant” promoter, comes with its own set of consequences.
- The notion that all business failure is due to the connivance of promoters needs to be reconsidered.
- Firms may be unable to pay their obligations simply because the **economic cycle has turned.**
- Or projects have not materialised as expected.
- Of the 2,422 cases closed since IBC came into being, 46.5 per cent of the firms have gone into liquidation, while a resolution plan has been accepted in only 13.1 per cent of the cases.
- This indicates liquidation bias.
- At a time when there aren't enough buyers in the economy, the IBC process would lead to significant value destruction.

How it will benefit both creditor and promoters

- Promoters get to hold on to their firms, and exit the process with more manageable obligations, making this an attractive proposition.
- For creditors, considering the liquidation bias in IBC, as long as the value of the restructured obligation is greater than the liquidation value it makes sense to choose this option.
- Moreover, this entire process **remains outside the restructuring framework of the central bank.**
- **And, considering that the pre-packs encompass all financial creditors,** as opposed to RBI's restructuring schemes which deal only with banks.
- This takes into account the concerns of other financial creditors as well.

Conclusion

- This approach will help clarify issues, bring about greater certainty to the process. And, once the creases are ironed out, it will create a permanent mechanism for restructuring debts.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements:

1. Adenoviruses are DNA viruses which induce many illnesses in humans like cold and respiratory infections.
2. Adenovirus is used as a tool to deliver genes or vaccine antigens to the target host tissue

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

- **Adenoviruses (ADVs)** are DNA viruses ranging from 70-90 nanometre in size, which induce many illnesses in humans like cold, respiratory infection etc. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Adenoviruses are preferred for vaccines because their DNA is double stranded which makes them genetically more stable and the chances of them changing after injection are lower.
- Rabies vaccine is an adenovirus vaccine.
- Adenovirus vaccines are a type of viral vector vaccine.
 - In this vaccine, adenovirus is used as a tool to deliver genes or vaccine antigens to the target host tissue. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- However, there are drawbacks of adenovirus vector vaccines like pre-existing immunity in humans, inflammatory responses etc.
 - Just as human bodies develop immune responses to most real viral infections, they also develop immunity to adenoviral vectors. Since adenoviral vectors are based on natural viruses that some humans might already have been exposed to, these vaccines might not work for everyone.

2. Consider the following statements with respect to International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR):

1. It is part of the International Bill of Human Rights, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
2. India is not a signatory to ICESR.

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

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The ICESCR is part of the International Bill of Human Rights, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- India is a signatory to ICESR.
- The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) was set up in 1985 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.
- It was constituted with an aim to monitor on its behalf the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR).

3. Which of the following journals is/are published by Dr. B R Ambedkar?

1. Mooknayak
2. Bahishkrit Bharat
3. Samatha

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer :D

Explanation

- Dr. Ambedkar was a social reformer, jurist, economist, author, polyglot (knowing or using several languages) orator, a scholar and thinker of comparative religions.
- The journals written by BR Ambedkar are:
 - **Mooknayak (1920)**
 - **Bahishkrit Bharat (1927)**
 - **Samatha (1929)**
 - Janata (1930)
- Books:
 - Annihilation of Caste
 - Buddha or Karl Marx
 - The Untouchable: Who are They and Why They Have Become Untouchables
 - Buddha and His Dhamma
 - The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women
- **Hence, option D is correct.**

4. Koundiya wildlife sanctuary is located in:

- a. Karnataka
- b. Tamil Nadu
- c. Kerala
- d. Andhra Pradesh

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary is a wildlife sanctuary and an elephant reserve situated in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is the only sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh with a population of Asian elephants, which migrated after 200 years from neighbouring regions.

5. The term 'Narrow-Line Seyfert 1 (NLS1)' recently seen in news related to?

- A New active galaxy
- B Near earth asteroid
- C Crater on Mars
- D Planet in Kuiper belt

Answer : A

Explanation

- Recently, Astronomers have discovered a **new active galaxy called Narrow-Line Seyfert 1 (NLS1)** which has been identified as the farthest gamma-ray emitting galaxy.
- Scientists from Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES) in collaboration with researchers from other institutions, studied around 25,000 luminous Active Galactic Nuclei (AGN) from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS).
 - They found a unique object that emits high-energy gamma rays located at a high redshift (more than 1)
 - It was identified as a gamma-ray emitting NLS1 galaxy, which is a rare entity in space.
 - The new gamma-ray emitting NLS1 was formed when the Universe was only about 4.7 billion years old as compared to its current age of about 13.8 billion years.
 - **Hence, option A is correct.**

6. Consider the following statements regarding the currency depreciation in India:

1. Currency depreciation increases the country's export activity.
2. Travel to India gets costly.
3. People receiving remittances from abroad are gainers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

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

Answer : C

Explanation

- **Currency depreciation** is a fall in the value of a currency in a floating exchange rate system.
 - In a floating exchange rate system, market forces (based on demand and supply of a currency) determine the value of a currency.

- Currency depreciation **increases a country's export activity as its products and services become cheaper to buy. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Foreign tourists are the gainers of currency depreciation, as travel to India gets **cheaper (not costly). Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- **Impact of Depreciating Rupee:**
 - **Losers:**
 - People Importing from outside.
 - People seeking foreign education.
 - People travelling abroad.
 - People investing abroad.
 - People seeking medical treatment abroad etc.
 - **Gainers:**
 - People exporting from India.
 - People receiving remittances from abroad or Non Resident Indian (NRI). **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. The suspension of cross-LoC trade in Jammu and Kashmir region, which was started as one of the main steps in confidence building measures, will impact in multiple ways, apart from controlling terror linked and illegal activities along the trade corridor. Discuss (250 words)

Approach:

- Briefly describe the recent decision of government of suspension of trade.
- Enlist and describe the impact of this decision.
- Give conclusion.

2Q. What do you understand by “Wuhan Spirit”? Examine the reset in India-China relations in the context of Wuhan spirit and Chennai Connect. (250 words)

Approach

- Explain ‘Wuhan Spirit’ and ‘Chennai Connect’ in the introduction.
- Examine the outcomes, shortcomings and challenges of India China relation in this context
- Conclude by signifying the importance of India China ties and how best India can work towards it,