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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. A case for judicial federalism

Introduction

- The doctrine of separation of powers implies that each pillar of democracy – the executive, legislature and the judiciary – perform separate functions and act as separate entities. The executive is vested with the power to make policy decisions and implement laws. The legislature is empowered to issue enactments. The judiciary is responsible for adjudicating disputes.
- The Judiciary in comparison to the other two organs of the State has restricted powers to bring changes on the Socioeconomic front.

Limitations

- Courts cannot build better health infrastructure or directly supply oxygen; neither are they functionally bound to.
- Courts often lack the expertise and resources to decide social rights issues.

What Judiciary can do?

- It can ask tough questions to the executive and hold the executive accountable in various aspects of healthcare allocation.

Parmanand Katara v. Union of India (1989)

- The Supreme Court underlined the value of human lives and said that the right to emergency medical treatment is part of the citizen's fundamental rights.
- Protection of life was held to be a sacred duty of the State.
- It held that the right to health forms an indispensable part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21.

Judiciary's role during Pandemic

- In the face of the COVID-19 health emergency, the High Courts of Delhi, Gujarat, Madras and Bombay, among others, have questioned and issued directives to the executive.

Examples:

- The Gujarat High Court issued a series of directions, including for laboratory testing and procurement of oxygen.
- The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court was constrained to hold night sittings to consider the issue of oxygen supply. It directed immediate restoration of oxygen supply that had been reduced from the Bhilai steel plant in Chhattisgarh.
- The Delhi High Court directed the Central government to ensure adequate measures for the supply of oxygen. It cautioned that we might lose thousands of lives due to lack of oxygen.

Transfer of cases

139A. Transfer of certain cases

- Where cases involving the same or substantially the same questions of law are pending before the Supreme Court and one or more High Courts or before two or more High Courts and the Supreme Court is satisfied on its own motion or an application made by the Attorney General of India or by a party to any such case that such questions are substantial questions of general importance, the Supreme Court may withdraw the case or cases pending before the High Court or the High Courts and dispose of all the cases.

Issues with the transfer in the current scenario

- One, the court has been unmoved to the actions and inactions of the executive even in cases where interference was warranted, such as the Internet ban in Kashmir.
- Two, where effective remedies were sought, when activists and journalists were arrested and detained, the court categorically stayed aloof. It acted as if its hands were tied.
- Three, in the top court the judges sit in Benches of two or more. The objective is to increase the discussions and deliberations between the judges to ensure deliberative justice.
 - In recent years, a pattern has been unfolding which depicts a lack of dissent in multiple cases amongst the judges and judgments are passed without disagreement.
 - The judgments passed were issues that had serious political ramifications.

These features, coupled with the unhealthy characteristics of an executive judiciary, makes the court's indication for a takeover disturbing.

Judicial federalism in India

- Many from different High Court Bar Associations spoke up against the move to transfer the cases from the High Courts to the Supreme Court. It underlines the re-emergence of internal democracy within the Bar.
- According to the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, public health and hospitals come under the State List as Item No. 6. There could be related subjects coming under the Union List or Concurrent List. Also, there may be areas of inter-State conflicts. But as of now, the respective High Courts have been dealing with specific challenges at the regional level, the resolution of which does not warrant the top court's interference.
- In **Chandra Kumar v. Union of India (1997)**, the Supreme Court itself said that the High Courts are "institutions endowed with glorious judicial traditions" since they "had been in existence since the 19th century and were possessed of a hoary past enabling them to win the confidence of the people".
- The power of the High Court under Article 226 is wider than the Supreme Court's under Article 32, for, in the former, a writ can be issued not only in cases of violation of fundamental rights but also "for any other purpose". This position was reiterated by the court in **State of Orissa v. Madan Gopal Rungta (1951)**.

Conclusion

- The need for a uniform judicial order across India is warranted only when it is unavoidable – for example, in cases of an apparent conflict of laws or judgments on legal interpretation.
- Otherwise, autonomy, not uniformity, is the rule. Decentralisation, not centrism, is the principle.
- In the COVID-19-related cases, High Courts across the country have acted with an immense sense of judicial responsibility. This is a legal landscape that deserves to be encouraged. To do this, the Supreme Court must simply stay away.

2. U.S. to allow India access to vaccine raw materials

Context:

The U.S. will immediately deploy supplies and other assistance to India, including raw materials for the COVID-19 vaccine Covishield.

The US Defense Production Act:

- The act was passed in 1950 in response to the Korean War.
- The act grants emergency powers that allow the U.S. government to control private-sector production decisions.
- As a consequence of the U.S.'s Defense Production Act, federal government purchase orders have to be prioritised over foreign orders.
- The DPA is regularly used by the Defense Department to acquire critical military capabilities.

3. What happened to Armenians in 1915?

Context:

U.S. President Joe Biden has officially recognised the mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks in 1915-16 as an act of genocide.

Was it a genocide?

- According to Article II of the **UN Convention on Genocide of 1948**, genocide has been described as **carrying out acts intended "to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group"**.

Details:

- **Before the First World War** broke out in 1914, there were **2 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire**.
- Armenians were largely living in the **eastern fringes of the Empire**. The Ottoman Turks released the **Turkish and Kurdish militias upon them**.
- Hundreds of thousands of Armenians were **deported from eastern Anatolia** (today's Turkey) to concentration camps in the Syrian steppe.
- **Up to 1.5 million Armenians are estimated to have been killed in the early stage of the First World War** within the territories of the Ottoman Empire.

Background:

- In a way, the **Armenians were victims of the great power contests of the late 19th and early 20th centuries**.
- When the Ottoman Empire was in decline on its fringes by the last quarter of the 19th century, Armenians were seen by the rulers in Constantinople as a **fifth column**.
- The **resentment started building up after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78** in which the **Turks lost territories**.

- In the **Treaty of Berlin**, big powers dictated terms to the Ottomans, including **putting pressure on the Sultan** to initiate **reforms in the provinces inhabited by Armenians**, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds.
 - The Sultan saw this as a sign of strengthening ties between the Armenians and other rival countries, especially Russia.
- In 1908, the **Young Turks wrested control** from the Sultan and promised to restore imperial glory. Under the Turks when the administration was run by the famous “Three Pashas”, the **empire became more Turkic** and persecution against the ethnic minorities picked up.
- In October **1914, Turkey joined the First World War on the side of Germany**.
 - In the Caucasus, they fought the Russians, their primary geopolitical rival.
 - But the Ottomans suffered a catastrophic defeat in the Battle of Sarikamish by the Russians in January 1915.
- The Turks blamed the defeat on Armenian treachery and **Armenians in the Ottoman Army were executed**.
- On April 24, the Ottoman government arrested about 250 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders. Most of them were later executed. (April 24 is the Remembrance Day).
- After the fall of the empire, **many Ottoman officials** were tried and executed for the atrocities committed against Armenians.
- The Three Pashas fled the country and took refuge in Germany.
 - But Armenian resistance fighters under the banner of **Operation Nemesis** continued to hunt down Ottoman officials.
 - In 1921 the **Grand Vizier and key architect of the atrocities was assassinated** on the street of Berlin by an Armenian student.

Turkey's response:

- **Turkey has acknowledged that atrocities** were committed against Armenians but **denies it was a genocide** and challenges the estimates that 1.5 million were killed.
- Biden's announcement on the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day could **infuriate Turkey**, America's NATO ally.

4. What Israel wants in Syria

Background:

Syrian Civil War

'Wait and watch' approach of Israel

- When the Syrian crisis unfolded in 2011-12, Israel took a cautious approach, primarily because it preferred a stable regime in Syria as it did not want chaos in the region – despite the absence of a formal peace treaty between them.
- But when Iran deployed militias and military assets in Syria in defence of Mr. Assad, it changed Israel's calculus.

Role of Hezbollah

- Across Israel's northern border, Hezbollah has already established a formidable presence.
- Both Israel's 1982-2000 occupation of southern Lebanon and the 2006 war on Lebanon were resisted by Hezbollah.
- Israel would not like to have more Iran-backed Shia militias across the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War and which has been the de facto border between the two countries ever since.

Israel tactics

- It first started helping anti-Assad rebels in the Golan region by reportedly providing cash and medical aid.
- The plan was to create a buffer between the Golan Heights and the rest of Syria so that the pro-Iran militias could be stopped from coming face-to-face with Israeli troops.

Three goals

Israel had three key goals:

- Disrupt Iranian supplies for Hezbollah and other Shia militias;
- Stop the militias advancing towards the de facto border; and
- By continuously targeting them, weaken Iran's presence in Syria.

Syria is Israel and Iran's battleground

- For the Syrian government, support from Iran was a lifeline.
- While Russia provided air power in the civil war, Iran supplied ground troops.
- So, Mr. Assad did nothing to prevent the sprawling Iranian influence in his country despite Israeli attacks.

- And Iran's response to Israeli attacks has been only to deepen its footprints. As a result, Syria has emerged as a new theatre in the Israel-Iran geopolitical contest in West Asia, which could outlive the Syrian civil war.

Conclusion

- With Israel determined to contain Iran's growing influence in the region, at a time when the U.S. and other Western powers are reaching out to Iran to revive the 2015 nuclear deal which could leave it more powerful economically, the Israel-Iran contest is set to intensify further.

5. The road ahead in India's augmented vaccination drive

Vaccine pricing

- The decision to keep the 18 to 44-year age bracket under the 'other than Government of India channel' may discourage the socially and economically disadvantaged people such as labourers and daily wage workers from seeking vaccination, as they may not be able to procure the vaccines at determined prices.
- The differential pricing regime announced by the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech for the supply of their vaccines to the central government and state governments and the private sector is, however, a matter of concern. A rethink of the pricing strategies of these companies is called for.

Onus on the State Governments

- State governments can take a call on providing the vaccine to this age group free of cost.
- This may perhaps be a financial strain on cash-strapped State governments.

Way forward

- Flattening the COVID-19-curve and its downward trajectory rests on judicious vaccination deployment plans and the pace of vaccination.

principle of benefit maximization

- The principle of benefit maximization holds that we should take that course of action which will maximize the benefit sought.
- More generally, it requires us to do that which will make everyone, on average, as well off as possible.

- One of the traditional formulations of this principle is the social philosophy known as utilitarianism, which holds that our most general moral obligation is to act in a manner that produces the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

principle of equal respect

The principle of equal respect requires that our actions respect the equal worth of moral agents. We must regard human beings as intrinsically worthwhile and treat them accordingly. The essence of this idea is perhaps best expressed in the Golden Rule. We have a duty to accord others the same kind of treatment that we expect them to accord us. The principle of equal respect can be seen as involving three subsidiary ideas.

- First, it requires us to treat people as ends in themselves, rather than as means to further our own goals. We must respect their goals as well.
- Second, when we are considering what it means to treat people as ends rather than as means, we must regard as central the fact that people are free and rational moral agents.
 - This means that, above all, we must respect their freedom of choice. And we must respect the choices that people make even when we do not agree.
- Third, no matter how people differ, they are of equal value as moral agents. This does not mean that we must see people as equal in abilities or capacities. Nor does it mean that we cannot take relevant differences between people into account when deciding how to treat them. It is not, for example, a violation of equal respect to give one student a higher grade than another because that student works harder and does better.
 - That people are of equal value as moral agents does mean, however, that they are entitled to the same basic rights and that their interests are of equal value.
 - Everyone, regardless of native ability, is entitled to equal opportunity. No one is entitled to act as though his or her happiness counted for more than the happiness of others. As persons, everyone has equal worth.

6. PM CARES to fund 551 oxygen plants in hospitals

What's in News?

The PM CARES Fund has approved the allocation of funds for setting up 551 Pressure Swing Adsorption medical oxygen generation plants at public health facilities across the country.

Pressure swing adsorption (PSA):

- Pressure swing adsorption (PSA) is a technology used to separate some gas species from a mixture of gases under pressure.
- PSA operates at near-ambient temperatures (temperature relating to the immediate surroundings) and differs significantly from cryogenic distillation techniques of gas separation.
- Cryogenic separation is a commercial process that takes place at very low temperature.

PM CARES Fund:

- The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) was created on 28 March 2020, following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It will be used for relief efforts against the coronavirus outbreak and similar pandemic like situations in the future.
- The Chairman of the PM-CARES fund is the Prime Minister of India.
- The Prime Minister has the power to nominate members. The other members of the PM CARES Fund are the Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

7. A green partnership

Context

- U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership initiative to combat climate change.

A look at facts

- India ranks third in emissions, behind the U.S. and China, although its per capita CO₂ emissions are less than 60% of the global average.

Details

- The Partnership envisages bilateral cooperation on strong actions in the current decade to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement by cutting greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Under the Paris agreement, each country has to set its own emission-reduction targets, known as National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the pact's goal is to limit global warming to well below two degrees Celsius.
- Both India and the United States have set ambitious 2030 targets for climate action and clean energy.
- In its new nationally determined contribution, the **United States** has set an economy-wide target of reducing its net greenhouse gas emissions by 50-52 percent below 2005 levels in 2030.
- As part of its climate mitigation efforts, **India** has set a target of installing 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030.
- Through the Partnership, India and the United States are firmly committed to working together in achieving their ambitious climate and clean energy targets and to strengthening bilateral collaboration across climate and clean energy.

Significance

The Partnership will aim to:

- mobilize finance and speed clean energy deployment;
- Demonstrate and scale innovative clean technologies needed to decarbonize sectors including industry, transportation, power, and buildings; and
- Build capacity to measure, manage, and adapt to the risks of climate-related impacts.

India's Climate Change Policy

- India has traditionally approached climate change as a diplomatic issue, insisting that the developed world – because of their disproportionate role in causing the problem – should lead the way in reducing emissions, and provide the developing world with the finance and technology to do so.
- But many developed countries tend to view India's reluctance to commit to a net-zero emissions target as recalcitrance.
- India has however conveyed that the climate change crisis originated not here but in the industrialised world, which has used up much of the world's carbon space.

Way forward

- A forward-looking policy, therefore, should envision a new green development plan, provide funding and green technologies as compensation for the emissions space lost by poorer countries.
- For the India-U.S. agreement to yield results, Mr. Biden would have to persuade industry and research institutions at home to share knowledge and subsidise the transfer of technologies.

Conclusion

- This would be a win-win game, since it would aid sustainable development, boost employment, clean up the environment and, crucially, help all countries emerge healthier from the pandemic.

8. 'No volunteer list under cyber scheme'

Context:

The Union Home Ministry has said it does not maintain a centralised list of volunteers enrolled under the cybercrime volunteer programme since the **police is a State subject under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.**

Cyber Volunteer Programme:

- The MHA through its **cybercrime grievance portal** aims to raise a **group of cybercrime volunteers** to flag unlawful content on the Internet.
- The programme is expected to include 500 volunteers, 200 cyber awareness promoters and 50 cyber experts.
- The Cybercrime Volunteer Framework has been rolled out as a part of **cyber hygiene promotion** to bring together citizens to contribute to the fight against cybercrime in the country and assist State/UT LEAs in their endeavour to curb cybercrimes.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. To implement developmental agenda, civil servants must have stake, independence

Background of the PSU's

- In the 1950s and '60s, the private sector had neither the capability to raise capital to take the country on the path of industrialisation.
- The state had to take on the role of industrialising the country by establishing PSUs.
- The civil services became the natural choice for establishing and managing these units.
- They delivered substantially, if not fully.
- Even after privatisation, the bureaucracy would be required for the transition of PSUs from the public to the private sector.

Need for structural transformation agenda

- The goal of **making India a \$5-trillion economy** needs a coherent structural transformation agenda and extraordinary implementation capacity.

1) Dealing with crony capitalisms

- Since Independence, the political survival of Indian regimes has required pleasing a powerful land-owning class and a highly concentrated set of industrial capitalists.
- The elites of business houses and land owners share no all-encompassing development agenda.
- Can the present regime find a way out of this conundrum?

2) Implementing the development agenda

- While the agenda is an outcome of political choices, the thinking goes that **market mechanisms** should be used as far as possible to make economic choices.
- This argument is **at the heart of the privatisation of state assets.**

- However, markets operate well only when they are supported by other kinds of social networks, which include non-contractual elements like trust.
- Particularly in industrial transformation, there must be an essential **complementarity of state structures and market exchange**.
- Only a competent bureaucracy can provide this.
- It is for this reason that Max Weber argued that the operation of large-scale capitalist enterprise depended upon the kind of order that only a modern bureaucratic state can provide.

3) Removing the constraints on the bureaucracy

- The **political and permanent executives** had to work as a team through mutual respect for each other's roles as defined in the Constitution.
- Every deviation from these ideals has lowered the capacity of the state to deliver.
- This is the result of **electoral politics** where the essence of the state action is the exchange relationships between the incumbent governments and its supporters.
- All this is achieved by **undermining the impartiality of the bureaucracy** in implementing rules and giving opinions frankly.
- The **power to transfer is weaponised** to bring the bureaucrats to heel and it works because authority sits with the position not the person.
- The pressure on officials to behave contrary to the ostensible purpose of the department **undermines to a great extent the ability of the state to promote development**.
- If privatisation is to work, then the **corruption-transfer mechanism and its effects on the bureaucracy has to go**.

4) Corporate coherence

- Corporate coherence is the ability of the bureaucracy internally to resist the invisible hands of **personal maximisation** by undercutting the formal organisational structure through informal networks.
- If this goes too far, then everything becomes open to sale and the state becomes predatory.

Conclusion

We need to fight the increasing tendency to grab public resources and restore to the bureaucracy its autonomy of action as envisaged in the Constitution by de-weaponising transfers.

2. Amid concerns in India and Brazil, the unused vaccine stockpile in US

Issue of diverting the vaccine stock to India

- Epidemiologists to industry leaders are urging the Biden administration to release the reserve to countries like India and Brazil, given the assertion that the doses won't be used in the US.
- According to Brown University School of Public Health Ashish Jha, the US is "sitting on 35-40 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine Americans will never use".
- In early April, US chief medical adviser Anthony Fauci said the US **will likely not need the AstraZeneca shot.**
- The AstraZeneca vaccine **has not been granted Emergency Use Authorization** by the US Federal Drug Administration (FDA).
- With documented cases of blood clots in younger women in Europe correlated with the vaccine, FDA authorisation may be further delayed.

What has the US said in response

- Co-ordinator of the US Covid-19 taskforce that the Quad partnership and team is providing assistance across government to the country.
- He also stated that as their confidence around our supply increases, we will explore the option of exporting the vaccines.

Vaccine inequality

- According to Bloomberg's **Vaccine Tracker**, highest-income countries are vaccinating at a **pace 25 times faster than the lowest ones.**
- The US has **22.9% of the world's vaccines** but only **4.3% of the world's population.**
- China has 21.9% and 18.2% respectively, and India 13.8% and 17.7%, according to the tracker.
- Almost **half of all vaccines have gone to 16% of the world's population.**
- The Washington Post reported that the world's poorest 92 countries may not be able to vaccinate even 60% of their population for another three years.
- **India has vaccinated 8% per cent of the population** with one dose and 1% with two. Brazil has vaccinated less than 12% with one.

Impact on vaccination in African nations

- India's stalled vaccine exports have domino effects on the rollouts in **African nations and other developing countries**, as Serum's productions were fuelling efforts globally before India's second wave.

3. Reasons for Rising Covid-19 Infections: Second Wave

Why in News

The ongoing second wave of **Covid-19 infections** has shaken the country and is more devastating than the first wave.

- The **rise in case numbers has been exponential** in the second wave.

Key Points

- **Protocol Fatigue:**
 - When cases started declining, people just broke out of the protocol of **wearing a face mask, washing hands regularly and maintaining social-physical distance.**
 - Gatherings began becoming large particularly January 2021 onwards.
 - **Rules** were relaxed. **Penalties** were not enforced. The pattern was seen across the country allowing the novel coronavirus to create a second and possibly stronger wave.
- **Mixed Signal from Government:**
 - The queues outside polling booths and **gatherings at the election rallies of all the parties defied Covid-19 protocol.** This sent a confusing message to the public and also the grassroots-level functionaries of the government. It weakened the vigil against the pandemic.
- **Urban Mobility:**
 - India has recorded over 1.2 crore cases of Covid-19 yet the pandemic is still mostly concentrated around cities, especially the bigger cities. These **cities have greater mobility giving more opportunities for the virus to spread** from one person to another when the guard is lowered.
- **Containment Zones:**
 - In the current wave, the **marking of the containment zone has been less strict.** In cities, the government has asked civil authorities to adopt **micro-containment**, with perhaps just a floor or a house defined as a containment zone.
 - Earlier, an entire apartment or area would be made a containment zone, reducing the chances of transmission of the virus.
- **Mutations:**
 - Besides the human factors, the **evolution of coronavirus is among the major reasons for the second wave.** Scientists have detected numerous

mutations in the SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes Covid-19. Some of these mutations have produced what they call is **Variants of Concern (VOCs)**.

- India has reported such VOCs from several states including the worst-impacted ones by the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.
- The L452R mutation found in the **variant B1.671**, first detected in India, too has been associated with increased infectivity.

Variants of Concern

- These are variants for which there is evidence of an increase in transmissibility, more severe disease (increased hospitalizations or deaths), significant reduction in neutralization by antibodies generated during previous infection or vaccination, reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failures.
- **Increased Testing:**
 - Increased testing is another reason why **India is detecting more cases in the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic**.
 - The **sero-surveys** have shown that India had greater Covid-19 exposure than revealed through confirmed cases of coronavirus infection on the basis of laboratory tests.
 - Earlier people were reluctant to go for Covid-19 tests but now easier availability of Covid-19 testing, improved disease-management in hospitals and rollout of Covid-19 vaccination programme has made people more confident about opting for the test.
- **Asymptomatic Persons:**
 - Asymptomatic (showing no symptoms) person, who carries the virus, would have spread the infection. In India, **80-85% of the population are asymptomatic**.
- **Inadequate Health Infrastructure:**
 - India also failed to seize the opportunity to augment its healthcare infrastructure and vaccinate aggressively.
 - **For Example:** Oxygen shortage and lack of beds in Hospitals.

Way Forward

- There are only two ways of getting immunity from the virus, one is getting infected, and the other is via a vaccine therefore it is important to **fast track the vaccine programme** across the country, but testing is equally important.
- The number of tests must go up again and **contact tracing**, ideally 20 persons for every case, should be taken up intently.

- There is a need for a **renewed emphasis on following safety protocols**. Draconian total lockdowns are no longer necessary. However, there is also **need to formulate District Action Plans with a focus on mapping of cases**, reviewing of ward/block wise indicators, 24x7 emergency operations centre, incident command system area specific rapid response team and timely sharing of information.

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

4. Exercise VARUNA 2021

Why in News

The 19th edition of the Indian and French Navy bilateral exercise 'VARUNA-2021' is being conducted in the Arabian Sea.

- Earlier this year, the Indian Navy took part for the first time in the France-led naval exercise "La Pérouse" with the navies of the US, Australia and Japan.

Key Points

- **About the Exercise:**
 - **Background:**
 - The Indian and French Navies have been conducting bilateral maritime **exercises since 1993**. **Since 2001**, these exercises have been called 'VARUNA'.
 - These interactions further underscore the shared values as partner navies, in **ensuring freedom of seas and commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and a rules-based international order**.
 - **2021 Exercise:**
 - This is the **first time that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is participating** in the Varuna maritime exercise.
 - The 'Varuna' joint exercise is **part of the French carrier strike group's 'CLEMENCEAU 21' deployment**, which the French Navy is conducting in the **eastern Mediterranean, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean (Arabian Sea)**.
 - Its goal is **to contribute to the stabilization of these strategic zones** and strengthening cooperation with the

navies of partner countries, in particular India for the Indian Ocean component.

- As part of this deployment, the **Carrier Strike Group is also taking part in anti-ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) operations.**
- The exercise will see **high tempo-naval operations at sea**, including **advanced air defence and anti-submarine exercises**, tactical manoeuvres, underway replenishment and other maritime security operations.
- **Other Indo-French Joint Exercises:**
 - **Desert Knight-21 and Garuda** (Air exercise)
 - **Varuna** (Naval exercise)
 - **Shakti** (Army exercise)

5. #FOSS4GOV Innovation Challenge

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)** has announced **#FOSS4GOV Innovation Challenge to accelerate adoption of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) in Government.**

Key Points

- **Free and Open Source Software (FOSS):**
 - It **doesn't** mean software is **free of cost**.
 - The **term "free"** indicates that the **software does not have constraints on copyrights**.
 - It means that **source code of the software is open for all** and anyone is free to use, study and modify the code.
 - It **allows other people also to contribute to the development and improvement of the software** like a community.
 - The Free and Open Source Software may also be referred to as **Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS) or Free/Open Source Software (F/OSS)**.
 - **Examples** of FOSS include MySQL, Firefox, Linux, etc.
 - Another category of software is '**Closed Source Software**'.
 - The software which uses the proprietary and closely guarded code.
 - Only the original authors have the authority to access, copy, and alter that software.

- In this case one does not purchase the software, but only pay to use it.
- **About the Challenge:**
 - It will harness the **innovation potential of the FOSS community** and start-ups **to solve critical issues in Government Technologies (GovTech)**.
 - It calls upon FOSS innovators to submit implementable open source product innovations in CRM and ERP with possible applications for Govtech in Health, Education, and Agriculture etc.
 - **CRM** stands for "**Customer Relationship Management**".
 - **ERP** stands for "**Enterprise Resource Planning**" and refers to software and systems used to plan and manage all the core supply chain, manufacturing, services, financial and other processes of an organization.
 - It is a key component of **GovTech 3.0**, which is about building secure and inclusive **Open Digital Ecosystems (ODEs)**.
 - The participants are eligible for incubation support, prize money, mentorship by domain experts, institutional support from eminent organizations for incubation of ideas and listing of solutions on **Government e Marketplace (GeM)**.
- **Significance:**
 - India is well positioned to become a vibrant hub for **Free and Open Source Software (FOSS)** innovations, due to the large number of 4G data subscribers in India.
 - **96%** of the subscribers access the digital world via open-source based mobile operating systems (primarily Android).
 - India's largest-government projects (including **Aadhaar**) and many technology start-ups have also been built using FOSS.
- **Other Related Initiatives:**
 - The Government of India had issued a **Policy on Adoption of Open Source Software in 2015**.
 - **Free and Open Source Software for Education (FOSSEE) Project:** It is a project **promoting the use of open source software in educational institutions**. It does that through instructional material, such as spoken tutorials, documentation, such as textbook companions, awareness programmes, such as conferences, training workshops, and internships.
 - The government **has also made the android version of the Aarogya Setu app open source**.

GovTech 3.0

- **GovTech1.0** was the era of "computerisation" of manual processes such as putting income tax forms online.

- **GovTech 2.0** was about building systems which digitised end-to-end processes, for example, the government's "**e-office**" file management system.
- GovTech 3.0 is **focussed on Open Digital Ecosystems (ODEs)**, the underlying philosophy suggests that the government should focus on creating the "digital commons".
 - It **envisages the government becoming a facilitator by creating digital infrastructure on which innovators can collaboratively build solutions** for the public good.
 - ODEs are: "open and secure digital platforms that enable a community of actors to unlock transformative solutions for society, based on a robust governance framework".
 - Several path-breaking ODEs are already in play in India: **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** in the financial services space; the National Digital Infrastructure for Teachers called **DIKSHA**; etc.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Freedom in the World 2021' Report

1. It is released by the United Nations Human Rights Council.
2. The report shows the declining trend of freedom in India since 2019.

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

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

Answer : A

Explanation

- The Freedom in the World report is published by the **USA based human rights watchdog Freedom House**, which is largely funded through USA government grants, has been tracking the course of democracy since 1941. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
 - Countries are declared as "free", "partly free" or "not free".

- Pointing to a decline in global democracy over the last 15 years, the Freedom in the World 2021 report said that nearly 75% of the world's population lived in a country that faced deterioration over the last year.
 - The most free countries in the world, with a score of 100, are Finland, Norway and Sweden, while the least free with a score of 1 are Tibet and Syria.
- The 2021 report has **downgraded India's status from 'Free' to 'Partly Free'**.
 - India's score was **67, a drop from 71/100** from last year (reflecting 2019 data) downgrading it from the free category last year (i.e., based on 2020 data). **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

2. With reference to the Special Frontier Force, consider the following statements:

1. It was raised to prevent Chinese occupation at LAC.
2. It falls under the purview of the Ministry of Defense.
3. It is also referred to as Vikas Battalion.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : C

Explanation

- The Special Frontier Force was established on 14th November 1962 in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 Sino-India war. It had been said to be instrumental in preventing Chinese occupation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It falls under the purview of the Cabinet Secretariat where it is headed by an Inspector General who is an Army officer of the rank of Major General. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
 - Though it is not part of the Army, they function under the operational control of the Army.
 - It had taken part in many operations conducted by Indian armed forces such as:
 - Operation Eagle (1971 war with Pakistan),
 - Operation Bluestar (clearing Amritsar's Golden Temple in 1984),
 - Operation Meghdoot (securing the Siachen glacier in 1984) and

- Operation Vijay (war with Pakistan at Kargil in 1999) and many counter-insurgency operations in the country.
- It was previously named Establishment-22 as it was raised by Major General Sujan Singh Uban, an Artillery officer who had commanded 22 Mountain Regiment.
 - Now it is referred to as Vikas Battalion. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

3. With reference to Similipal Biosphere Reserve, consider the following statements:

1. Some of its area lies in the Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve.
2. It is mainly inhabited by the Dongria Kond tribes.

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 : A

Explanation

- Recently, a massive fire broke out in the **Similipal Biosphere Reserve in Odisha**. The core area of the biosphere was untouched by the fire, however the fire is threatening damage to its rich biodiversity.
 - It is part of the Similipal-Kuldiha-Hadgarh Elephant Reserve popularly known as **Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve**, which includes 3 protected areas i.e. Similipal Tiger Reserve, Hadagarh Wildlife sanctuary and Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Two tribes, the **Erenga Kharias** and the **Mankirdias**, mainly inhabit the Similipal Biosphere Reserve's forests and practise traditional agricultural activities (the collection of seeds and timber). **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- The Dongria Kondh population is mainly concentrated in the southern hills of the Odisha state and the Mahanadi River basin, and some are also found in the adjoining districts of the neighboring Andhra Pradesh State.

4. Consider the following statements:

1. Volcanoes are generally found where tectonic plates diverge or converge.

- India's only active volcano is in Barren Island, in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

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

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: d

Explanation:

Both the statements are correct.

Both the statements are correct.

5. With reference to the conservation status of Gangetic Dolphin, consider the following statements:

- It is listed under the first schedule of Indian Wildlife (Protection), Act 1972.
- It is listed as critically endangered under the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : A

Explanation

Status of Conservation of Gangetic Dolphin:

- In the **First Schedule of the Indian Wildlife (Protection), Act 1972. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Endangered** by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- Appendix I (most endangered) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

- Appendix II (migratory species that need conservation and management or would significantly benefit from international co-operation) of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

6. With reference to Parliamentary Committees, consider the following statements:

1. The Constitution of India mentions the composition and tenure of parliamentary committees.
2. The house-keeping committee is a standing committee.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : B

Explanation

- The Constitution of India makes a mention of Parliamentary Committees at different places, but without making any specific provisions regarding their composition, tenure, functions, etc. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- Broadly, parliamentary committees are of two kinds – Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees.
- **Standing Committees:** Permanent (constituted every year or periodically) and work on a continuous basis. They can be categorized into following broad groups
 - Financial Committees
 - Departmental Standing Committees (24)
 - Committees to Inquire
 - Committees to Scrutinise and Control
 - Committees Relating to the Day-to-Day Business of the House
 - House-Keeping Committees or Service Committees
 - **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- **Ad Hoc Committees:** Temporary and cease to exist on completion of the task assigned.
 - Ad hoc committees can be divided into two categories, that is, Inquiry Committee and Advisory Committee.

- Examples of Ad Hoc Committees: Joint Committee on Bofors Contract, Joint Committee on Fertilizer Pricing etc.

Mains Practice Questions

1. PM-KISAN has the potential to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and the low income of farmers. Critically Discuss.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly mentioning the objective of PM-KISAN.
- Highlight how PM-KISAN can help farmers.
- Conclude Suitably.

2. Explain the term welfare state? Discuss to what extent Indian fulfills the criteria of being a welfare state?

Approach

- Explain the characteristics of the Welfare State precisely.
- Highlight the features of the Welfare State of India with suitable examples.
- Highlight a few challenges faced by India in becoming a Welfare State.
- Conclude Suitably.