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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. A 'One Health' approach that targets people, animals

The article analyses how the battle against COVID-19 could be used as an opportunity to meet India's 'One Health' targets.

The 'One Health' approach:

- The World Veterinary Day (April 24) discussions focused on acknowledging the **interconnectedness of animals, humans, and the environment, an approach referred to as "One Health"**.
- In 1856, the father of modern pathology, Rudolf Virchow, emphasised that **there are mostly no dividing lines between animal and human medicine**.
- The concept of 'One Health' becomes more relevant as the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The transboundary impact of viral outbreaks in recent years such as the **Nipah virus, Ebola, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Avian Influenza** has further reinforced the need for us to **consistently document the linkages between the environment, animals, and human health**.

Diseases spreading across the species barrier:

- Studies indicate that **more than two-thirds of existing and emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic**.
 - Zoonotic diseases are those which can be transferred between animals and humans, and vice versa.
 - The pathogen in question **originates in any life form but circumvents the species barrier**.
- Another category of diseases, **anthropozoonotic infections get transferred from humans to animals**.

India's framework, plans:

- India's 'One Health' vision derives its **blueprint from the agreement between the tripartite-plus alliance** comprising the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – a global initiative supported by

the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank under the overarching goal of contributing to 'One World, One Health'.

- India established a **National Standing Committee on Zoonoses** as far back as the 1980s, for keeping with the long-term objectives.
- In 2021, funds were sanctioned for setting up a '**Centre for One Health**' at Nagpur.
- The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD) has launched several schemes to mitigate the prevalence of animal diseases since 2015, with a funding pattern along the lines of 60:40 (Centre: State); 90:10 for the Northeastern States, and 100% funding for Union Territories.
- DAHD will also establish a '**One Health**' unit within the Ministry.
- **13,343 crore** have been sanctioned for **Foot and Mouth disease and Brucellosis control**, under the **National Animal Disease Control Programme**.
- The government is also working to **revamp programmes that focus on capacity building for veterinarians**.
- It is **upgrading the animal health diagnostic system** such as **Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases (ASCAD)**.
- There is **increased focus on vaccination against livestock diseases and backyard poultry**.
- DAHD has partnered with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the National Action Plan for **Eliminating Dog Mediated Rabies**. This initiative is for sustained **mass dog vaccinations** and public education to render the country free of rabies.

Challenges in achieving targets under 'One Health' vision:

- Veterinary manpower shortages.
- Lack of information sharing between human and animal health institutions.
- Inadequate coordination on food safety at slaughter, distribution, and retail facilities.

Way Forward:

- WHO estimates that rabies (a zoonotic disease) costs the global economy approximately \$6 billion, annually. Considering that **97% of human rabies cases in India are attributed to dogs**, interventions for disease management in dogs are considered crucial.
- Scientists have observed that **many of the 1.7 million viruses circulating in wildlife are zoonotic**.
 - This implies that unless there is timely detection, India risks facing many more pandemics in times to come.

- There is a need for consolidating existing animal health and disease surveillance systems such as the **Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health** and the **National Animal Disease Reporting System**.
- **Best-practice guidelines for informal market and slaughterhouse operation** and creating **mechanisms to operationalise 'One Health'** at every stage down to the village level must be developed.
- **Awareness generation and increased investments toward meeting 'One Health' targets** is the need of the hour.

2. The nuclear challenge

Context:

The President of America – Joe Biden, in his first address to Congress, called **North Korea and Iran's nuclear programs a serious threat to America's security and world security**, in response, **North Korea has accused U.S. President Joe Biden** of pursuing a **hostile policy** and has warned of a response.

Issue:

- The recent developments suggest that **both countries are headed towards a diplomatic showdown**.
- Biden's administration has completed a **review of the U.S.'s North Korea policy**. He is likely to steer between Barack Obama's strategic patience and Donald Trump's top-level summitry in dealing with the North Korean nuclear challenge.

Details:

- North Korea has remained a **foreign policy puzzle for all post-war American presidents**.
- In recent times, U.S. presidents have shown a willingness to diplomatically engage with Pyongyang.
 - The **Clinton administration** had signed a **framework agreement with North Korea to halt its nuclear programme**.
 - **Obama had initiated talks in 2012, which collapsed** after Pyongyang launched a satellite. He then adopted a wait-and-watch approach, which came to be called "**strategic patience**".
 - While Mr. Trump reached out to the regime and met its leader, Kim Jong-un thrice, there was no breakthrough. In theory, the Trump administration and North Korea had agreed to a complete de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but failed to agree on its formula.

- However, Trump-Kim summits created a diplomatic momentum for engagement.
- After Mr. Biden assumed office, North Korea had conducted short-range missile tests, which the U.S. saw as a provocation.

Way forward:

- The U.S.'s key goal in northeastern Asia is the de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.
- Military strike on North Korea is not an option as the country is a nuclear power.
- Despite its threats to expand its nuclear programme, North Korea sticks to the self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range ballistic missile tests.
- As acknowledged by Mr. Kim, the country is going through a tough economic crisis and is open to talks. Mr. Biden should seize this opportunity.
- The focus of the Biden administration's new North Korean strategy should be to reach a common ground that addresses both North Korea's economic worries and the U.S.'s nuclear concerns.
- The only practical way to achieve this is through diplomacy.

3. Myanmar ethnic guerrillas say they shot down helicopter

Context:

An ethnic rebel group (Kachin Independence Army) in northern Myanmar said it shot down a government military helicopter during heavy fighting over a strategic position.

Details:

- The Kachin are one of several ethnic minorities who have allied themselves with the nationwide protest movement against the military's ouster of the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains in detention.
- It would be the first aircraft shot down during recent hostilities between the government and ethnic guerrilla armies.
- Government offensive is underway against the **Kachin and the Karen (another ethnic minority in eastern Myanmar) that maintains its own armed force and also has been the target of airstrikes.**
- The fighting in Kachin and Karen states has displaced more than 45,000 villagers.

4.7 Myanmar refugees can approach UNHCR: HC

Context:

The **High Court of Manipur** allowed **seven Myanmar nationals**, who entered India secretly following the military coup in the country, to travel to New Delhi **to seek protection from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**.

Details:

- Though **India is not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions**, the court observed that the country is a party to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948** and the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966**.
- It noted that the far-reaching and multitude **protection afforded by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution encompasses the right of non-refoulement**.
 - **Non-refoulement** is the principle under international law that **a person fleeing from persecution from his own country should not be forced to return**.

Note:

- Thousands of other Myanmar nationals are taking shelter in the bordering villages of Manipur without any support and protection apart from the hospitality and warmth of the poor villagers.
- **India and Myanmar share a 1,643-km border** and people on either side have familial ties.
- People including policemen and women from Myanmar have fled to India, following a military crackdown.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. Small Savings Instruments

Why in News

Recently, the central government withdrew its orders of reducing the rates on all **small savings instruments/schemes**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Small savings instruments **help individuals achieve their financial goals over a particular period.**
 - They are the **major source of household savings** in India.
 - The small savings instrument basket **comprises 12 instruments.**
 - Collections from all small savings instruments are credited to the **National Small Savings Fund (NSSF).**
- **Classification:** Small savings instruments can be classified under three heads:
 - **Postal Deposits:** (comprising savings account, recurring deposits, time deposits of varying maturities and monthly income scheme).
 - **Savings Certificates:** National Small Savings Certificate (NSC) and Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP).
 - **Social Security Schemes:** **Sukanya Samriddhi Scheme**, Public Provident Fund (PPF) and Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme (SCSS).
- **Rates of Small Saving Instruments:**
 - The rates for small saving instruments are **announced quarterly.**
 - Theoretically, the **rate changes is based on yields of government securities of corresponding maturity.** However, political factors also influence the rate change.
 - The **Shyamala Gopinath panel (2010)** constituted on the Small Saving Scheme had suggested a **market-linked interest rate system** for small savings schemes.

National Small Savings Fund

- **Establishment:**
 - National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) in the Public Account of India was **established in 1999.**
- **Administration:**
 - The Fund is administered by the Government of India, **Ministry of Finance** (Department of Economic Affairs) under National Small Savings Fund (Custody and Investment) Rules, 2001, framed by the President under Article 283 (1) of the Constitution.
- **Objective:**
 - To **de-link small savings transactions from the Consolidated Fund of India** and ensure their operation in a transparent and self-sustaining manner.
 - Since NSSF operates in the public account, its transactions do not impact the fiscal deficit of the Centre directly.

6. 'OPEC share slid as India's oil imports shrank 11.8%'

What's in News?

OPEC's share of India's oil imports fell to the lowest in at least two decades in the year to the end of March 2021.

- **Overall purchases by India fell to a six-year low.**
- Total crude imports by the **world's third-biggest oil importer (India)** fell by 11.8% from a year earlier.
- **India bought more U.S. and Canadian oil** at the expense of that from Africa and West Asia, reducing purchases from members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) squeezing the group's share of imports to 72% from about 80% previously.
 - That is the lowest share since at least FY02, before which crude import data is not available.
- The **U.S. emerged as the fifth-biggest supplier**, up to two places from FY20.

7. Lack of Fire Safety in India

Why in News

Over the past year, there have been deadly fires in hospital buildings, including those treating **Covid-19** patients.

- The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** says 330 people died in commercial building fires in 2019, while fatalities for residential or dwelling buildings were much higher at 6,329.

Key Points

- **Leading Cause:**
 - **Electrical faults** are cited as the leading cause of fires but **State governments are widely criticised for being lax with building safety laws** and for failing to equip public buildings with modern technology.
 - **Hospital ICUs (intensive care units) are a great fire risk** because they are oxygen-suffused, and need to meet high standards.
- **Provisions in India Related to Fire Safety:**
 - **Constitutional Provision:**

- The **Fire Services** is a **State subject** and has been **included as a Municipal function** in the **XIIth Schedule** of the Constitution of India under **Article 243 (W)**.
- **The National Building Code (NBC) of India, 2016:**
 - **Part 4 of the NBC** is titled '**Fire and Life Safety**'.
 - **NBC, published by the Bureau of Indian Standards**, is a “**recommendatory document**”, and States have been asked to incorporate it into their local building bylaws, making the recommendations a mandatory requirement.
 - All **existing and new buildings are classified by nature of use**, such as residential, educational, institutional, assembly (like cinemas and auditoria), business, mercantile, industrial, storage and hazardous.
 - **The code broadly covers the following areas:**
 - **Fire Prevention:** This covers aspects of fire prevention pertaining to the design and construction of buildings. It also describes the various types of buildings materials and their fire rating.
 - **Life Safety:** This covers life safety provisions in the event of fire and similar emergencies, also addressing construction and occupancy features that are necessary to minimise danger to life from fire, smoke, fumes or panic.
- **The Model Building Bye Laws, 2016:**
 - The **Ministry of Urban Development** has devised a circular called “**Model Building By Laws 2016**” which states the regulatory mechanism and engineering parameters to keep in mind before starting any construction project in India.
 - Point-specific responsibility for all fire-related clearance rests with the **Chief Fire Officer**.
 - The concerned Development Authority shall refer the building plans to the Chief Fire Officer for obtaining clearance in respect of buildings.
- **Guidelines by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA):**
 - It has also stipulated **requirements for fire safety in public buildings, including hospitals**, which incorporate elements of the NBC, besides design guidelines on maintaining minimum open safety space, protected exit mechanisms, dedicated staircases, and crucial drills to carry out evacuations.
- The Central Government has also circulated '**Model Bill on Maintenance of Fire & Emergency Services 2019**'.
- **Concerns:**

- **Lack of unified fire services** in some of the states as unified fire services provide all the necessary guidelines and instruction in fire fighting.
- Proper **organisational structure, training and career progression of its personnel lacking** in most of the fire departments in India.
- **Inadequate modern equipment** and their scaling, authorization & standardization.
- Appropriate and adequate **funding is not available**, which inhibits technological progression for fire fighting.
- **Unavailability of training institutions** impinges real-time environmental understanding.
- **Lack of infrastructural facilities** - fire stations and accommodation of personnel etc.
- **Vulnerability analysis** is mostly not done.
- Lack of Public awareness (DOs & DON'Ts), and **regular mock exercises and evacuation drills are not conducted**.
- **Lack of Uniform fire safety legislation**.
 - Recently few states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala were found not complying with the NBC.

Way Forward

- Although in December 2020, the **Supreme Court** directed all States to carry out **fire safety audits** of dedicated Covid-19 hospitals, it has become evident that State forces lack the manpower to inspect and ensure compliance with safety codes, including the NBC, where it is mandatory.
- Therefore one option is to **make heavy fire liability insurance compulsory for all public buildings**, which would offer protection to occupants and visitors and bring about external inspection of safety.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Improving unsteady Indo-Brit ties

Need to tap potential for bilateral strategic cooperation

- The long-scheduled summit between Prime Ministers of India and UK will take place with a digital conversation scheduled for Tuesday.
- India and the UK must tap into the enormous potential for **bilateral strategic cooperation** in the health sector and contributions to **the global war on the virus**.
- Foreign ministers of **India, Japan and Australia** would also join this meeting to set the stage for the “**Group of Seven Plus Three**” physical summit next month hosted by the British Prime Minister.

Challenges in forming a sustainable partnership with Britain

- Few Western powers are as deeply connected to India as Britain.
- While India’s relations with countries as different as the US and France have dramatically improved in recent years, **ties with Britain have lagged**.
- One reason for this failure has been the **colonial prism** that has distorted mutual perceptions.
- The bitter **legacies of the Partition** and Britain’s perceived tilt to Pakistan have long complicated the engagement between Delhi and London.
- Also, the large South Asian diaspora in the UK transmits the **internal and intra-regional conflicts** in the subcontinent into Britain’s domestic politics.

Finding fresh basis for bilateral relationship

- The two leaders are expected to announce a **10-year roadmap** to transform the bilateral relationship that will cover a range of areas.
- Both countries are on the **rebound from their respective regional blocs**.
- Britain has walked out of the **European Union** and India has refused to join the China-centred Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.
- Although both will continue to trade with their regional partners, they are eager to build new global economic partnerships.
- While remaining a security actor in Europe, **Britain is tilting to the Indo-Pacific**, where India is a natural ally.

- India needs as wide a coalition as possible to restore a semblance of **regional balance**.
- Britain could also contribute to the **strengthening of India's domestic defence** industrial base.
- The two sides could also expand India's regional reach through sharing of logistical facilities.
- Both countries are said to be exploring an agreement on "**migration and mobility**" to facilitate the legal movement of Indians into Britain.
- Both sides are committed to finding **common ground on climate change**.

Conclusion

If leaders of both the countries succeed in laying down mutually beneficial terms of endearment, future governments might be less tempted to undermine the partnership.

2. Operation Samudra Setu-II

Why in News

Indian Navy has launched **Operation Samudra Setu-II** for shipment of **Oxygen-filled containers to India**.

- **Operation Samudra Setu** was launched in **May 2020** as part of the national effort to **repatriate Indian citizens from overseas** during the **Covid-19** pandemic.

Key Points

- **Operation Samudra Setu-II:**
 - Seven Indian Naval ships viz. **Kolkata, Kochi, Talwar, Tabar, Trikand, Jalashwa and Airavat** have been deployed for shipment of liquid medical **oxygen-filled cryogenic containers** and associated **medical equipment** from various countries.
 - Two ships, the **INS Kolkata and INS Talwar**, have entered the Port of **Manama, Bahrain**, to carry back **40 tonnes of liquid oxygen to Mumbai**.
 - The **INS Jalashwa** is enroute to Bangkok while the **INS Airavat** is on its way to **Singapore on similar missions**
- **Operation Samudra Setu:**
 - It was **launched along with Vande Bharat Mission (VBM)**.

- VBM is the **biggest civilian evacuation exercise** to bring back Indian citizens stranded abroad amidst the **coronavirus**-induced travel restrictions.
- It has **surpassed the large-scale airlift of 1,77,000 people in 1990** at the onset of the Gulf War.
- Indian Naval Ships **Jalashwa and Airavat, Shardul and Magar** participated in this operation.
- **Around 4000 Indian citizens** stranded in neighbouring countries, amidst **Covid-19** outbreak, were successfully repatriated back to India.
- **Indian Navy** has previously undertaken similar evacuation operations as part of **Operation Sukoon in 2006 (Beirut) and Operation Rahat in 2015 (Yemen)**.

3. Participation of Women & Youth in State Assemblies

Why in News

Recent data from the **three new state assemblies**, which are West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, show **less numbers of women and youth Member of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs)**.

- The **data of the 2019 lok sabha elections** also show that the participation of women is low. According to a list compiled by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union** in 2019, India ranks **153 out of 190 nations** in the percentage of women in the lower house of world parliaments.
- India is young. Its leaders are not. The country's median age is 29. The average parliamentarian is 55.

Key Points

- **Reasons for Less Number of Women MLAs:**
 - **Illiteracy** - It is one of the main hurdles in making women politically empowered.
 - **Work and Family** - Uneven distribution of household work between men and women is also one of the important factors in this regard.
 - **Lack of Political Networks** - The lack of openness in political decision-making and undemocratic internal processes pose a challenge for all newcomers, but particularly for women as they tend to lack insider knowledge or political networks.
 - **Lack of Resources** - Because of their low proportion in the inner political party structure of India, women fail to gather resources and support for nurturing their political constituencies.

- **Lack of Financial Support** - Women do not get adequate financial support from the political parties to contest the elections.
- **Societal and Cultural Norms** - These norms imposed on women bar them from entering politics.
- **Unfriendly Environment** - Overall political parties' environment too is not women-friendly, they have to struggle hard and face multi-dimensional issues to create space for them in the party.
- **Reasons for Less Number of Youth MLAs:**
 - **False Believe** - Political parties believe that the youth, having not seen enough of life, are unprepared for the demands of top-flight politics.
 - **Youth will not be taken seriously** - Political parties fear that Indian electors who respect older politicians will not take young candidates seriously.
 - **Veterans not leaving** - Key party decision makers, typically veterans, do not want to yield space.
 - **Muscle power politics** - Politicians use muscle and money power to prevent entry of good people to enter politics.
 - **Less chance of success** - The chances of failure are high and very few people become successful.
 - **Good people avoid politics** - General perception of a common man about a politician is someone who is deceptive and corrupt. So people from well to do fields tend to avoid themselves being listed in categories of politicians.
 - **Unethical practices** - Many fail to enter due to dirty politics and due to fear of harm to good image. Unethical practices have become the norm in politics.
 - **Nepotism** - It plays a major role and many youth who become successful politicians belong to influential political families.
 - **Other reasons** - Rising campaign spending and rotational reservation in municipal, panchayat and mayoral elections have created barriers to upward movement for aspiring young politicians.
- **Related Initiatives:**
 - **The Women's Reservation Bill 2008:**
 - It proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 1/3rd of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women.
 - **Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions:**
 - **Clause (3) of Article 243D of the Constitution** ensures participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions by mandating not less than one- third reservation for women out of total number of seats to be filled by direct election and number of offices of chairpersons of Panchayats.
 - **National Youth Parliament Festival:**

- It is organised by **National Service Scheme (NSS)** and **Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)** under the aegis of Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to:
 - **Hear the voice of youth in this age bracket of 18-25** who are allowed to vote but cannot contest in elections.
 - **Encourage the youth to engage with public issues**, understand the common man's point of view, form their opinion and express these in an articulate manner.
- **National Youth Parliament Scheme:**
 - The **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs** has been implementing the Youth Parliament programme **since 1966**.
 - To **strengthen the roots of democracy**, inculcate healthy habits of discipline, tolerance of the view of others and to enable the student community to know about practices and procedures of the Parliament.

Way Forward

- It is the **need of the hour** in a country like India to have **equal participation of all the sections of society in mainstream political activity** therefore necessary steps should be taken to promote it.
- Considering **legally-backed youth and women quotas** which could be in the form of either seats exclusively (and rotationally) reserved for youth and women or a specified proportion of young candidates all registered parties contesting an election must field.
- **Municipal and panchayat polls should give rise to leaders** who have experience at the ground level. Such leaders, after some experience, should be able to run for state and eventually the central legislative seats.
- **Promoting Inner party democracy**, where in a democratic political party the various positions like president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer etc are filled by the election process.

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

4. Financial Sector & Climate Change

Why in News

Recently, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** joined the **Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS)**.

- The RBI expects to benefit from the membership of NGFS by learning from and contributing to global efforts on **climate finance**, which has assumed significance in the context of **climate change**.

The Network for Greening the Financial System

- It is a **global network of central banks and supervisory authorities** advocating a more sustainable financial system.
- It **aims to analyse the consequences of climate change for the financial system** and to redirect global financial flows in order to enable low-carbon economic growth.
- It was created at the **Paris One Planet Summit in December 2017** and its secretariat is hosted by the Banque de France.

Climate Finance

- **Climate Finance** refers to **local, national or transnational financing** – drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing.
- It **seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions** that will address climate change.

Key Points

- **Risks to Financial Stability due to Climate Change:**
 - Climate change poses risks to financial stability in the form of:
 - **Physical risks:** Caused by **extreme and slow onset weather events**.
 - **Transition risks:** Caused by **changes in policy**, legal and regulatory frameworks, consumer preferences and technological development while transitioning to a low-carbon economy.
 - **Example:**
 - Under many climate projections, **climate change leads to a further rise in sea levels and increase in storm surge**.

- These effects, in turn, lead to **increased inundation of coastal land parcels**, which could either damage existing structures on those parcels, or **require investment and adaptation for their continued productive use**.
 - As this inundation occurs, **the expected value of coastal real estate may decrease** – which may, in turn, **pose risks to real estate loans, mortgage-backed securities, the profitability of firms using the inundated property, and the finances of state and local governments** facing declining property tax revenues and rising remediation costs.
- - The **World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Global Risks Report 2021** noted **climate action failure and infectious diseases as the highest risks** (risks with greatest impact and likelihood).
 - **India’s Situation:**
 - A World Bank report estimates that **losses to India’s Gross Domestic Product by 2050 due to climate change could be USD 1,178 billion**.
 - The RBI has noted the importance of **climate-related financial disclosures and private green finance as necessary to generate the enormous amounts of investments** required to combat climate change and bring about a transformation towards sustainable and low carbon development.
 - A study by non-profit Shakti Foundation found that an assessment of **BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange) 100 companies** showcases that most of the **Indian companies are lagging in the climate change disclosure space due to lack of relevant expertise; limited access to relevant tools and methodologies; and limited subject knowledge**.
 - **Related Initiatives:**
 - **Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD):**
 - TCFD was **created in 2015** by the **Financial Stability Board (FSB)** to develop consistent climate-related financial risk disclosures for use by companies, banks, and investors in providing information to stakeholders.
 - To make the private sector contribute to climate positive action and become resilient to climate risks are the **recommendations of the TCFD**.
 - Its recommendations are now **widely recognised as the gold standard for global business sustainability reporting frameworks**, providing standardised and comprehensive guidelines for corporate climate disclosures.

- About **32 Indian organisations** have signed up for TFCD, including the Mahindra Group, Wipro etc.
- Recently, **New Zealand** became the first country to announce a law that will require financial firms to disclose climate-related risks and opportunities.

Way Forward

- The only way forward is to **fully integrate climate-aligned structural change with economic recovery needing a fundamental shift in the entire finance system with a massive increase in private finance to get from “billions to trillions”**.
- The **Indian government** needs to introduce guidelines and regulations to standardise and mandate climate-related disclosures in all financial statements and push private companies and financial institutions to manage their exposure to climate risks in their portfolios and operations.
- This would help not only in increasing resilience of Indian companies to face physical and transition risks of climate change but also in **facilitating greater climate finance flows while minimising ‘greenwashing’**.

5. Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI)

In news

- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has launched an online portal for **‘Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry’** (PLISFPI).

Key takeaways

- Government of India has approved a new Central Sector Scheme namely ‘Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry’ for implementation during 2021-22 to 2026-27 with an outlay of Rs. 10,900 crore.
- **Objective:** To support creation of global food manufacturing champions commensurate with India’s natural resource endowment and support Indian brands of food products in the international markets.
- Ministry of Food Processing Industries is inviting applications for availing sales based incentives and grants for undertaking Branding & Marketing activities abroad under the scheme from three categories of Applicants:
- **Category-I:** Applicant under this category could undertake Branding & Marketing activities abroad also and apply for grant under the scheme with a common application.

- **Category-II:** SMEs Applicants manufacturing innovative/ organic products who apply for PLI Incentive based on Sales.
- **Category-III:** Applicants applying solely for grant for undertaking Branding & Marketing activities abroad

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements:

1. Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve is listed on UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
2. Agasthya hill is located within the Periyar National Park.

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

- **Agasthya hill** is a 1,868-metre tall peak **within Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary, in the Western Ghats of Kerala**. The peak lies on the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. This peak is a part of the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- The peak is named after Hindu sage Agastya, who is considered to be one of the seven rishis (Saptarishi) of Hindu Puranas. It is a pilgrimage centre for devotees.
- The Thamirabarani River is a perennial river which originates from the eastern side of the range and flows into the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.
- Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve is listed on **UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves (2016)**. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

2. Which of the following is/are not a member of the Group of Seven (G7) countries?

1. Russia
2. Canada
3. Japan
4. India
5. Australia

Select the correct option from below:

- a. 1, 2 and 4 only
- b. 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
- c. 1, 4 and 5 only
- d. 4 and 5 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

G-7 countries consist of the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Japan.

3. Consider the following statements regarding the Asian Development Bank (ADB):

1. India is a founding member of ADB.
2. India is the largest shareholder of ADB.
3. ADB is headquartered in Thailand.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : A

Explanation

- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** is a regional development bank established in 1966.
- It has 68 members. **India is a founding member. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
 - 49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- It aims to promote social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific.
- As of 31st December 2019, ADB's **five largest shareholders** are Japan and the United States (each with 15.6% of total shares), the People's Republic of China (6.4%), India (6.3%), and Australia (5.8%). **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- It is headquartered in Manila, **Philippines. Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**

4. Karen and Kachin state, recently seen in the news, is related to:

- a. Afghanistan
- b. Armenia
- c. Iran
- d. Myanmar

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Karen and Kachin states are both located in Myanmar.
- Kachin is bordered by China to the north and east; India to the west.

5. Consider the following statements:

1. The north pole has shifted in a new eastward direction since the 1990s.
2. The unsustainable consumption of groundwater is one of the causes behind polar drift.

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

- Since the 1990s, climate change has caused billions of tonnes of glacial ice to melt into oceans. This has caused the Earth's poles to move in new directions.
- The **north pole has shifted in a new eastward direction since the 1990s**, because of changes in the hydrosphere (meaning the way in which water is stored on Earth). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- From 1995 to 2020, the average speed of drift was 17 times faster than from 1981 to 1995.
- Also, in the last four decades, the poles moved by about 4 metres in distance.
 - The calculations were based on satellite data from NASA's **Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE)** mission.
- **Causes of Polar Drift:**
 - **Ice Melting:** The faster ice melting under global warming was the most likely cause of the directional change of the polar drift in the 1990s.
 - As glaciers melt, water mass redistributes, causing shifts in the planet's axis.
 - **Change in Non-Glacial Regions (Terrestrial Water Storage):** Due to climate change and unsustainable consumption of groundwater for irrigation and other anthropogenic activities.
 - **Groundwater Depletion:** As millions of tonnes of water from below the land is pumped out every year for drinking, industries or agriculture, most of it eventually joins the sea, thus redistributing the planet's mass. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

6. With reference to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), consider the following statements:

1. IIP is compiled and published quarterly by the National Statistical Office (NSO).
2. Base Year for IIP is 2011-2012.

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

- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** is an indicator that measures the changes in the volume of production of industrial products during a given period.
- It is **compiled and published monthly** by the National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- It is a composite indicator that measures the growth rate of industry groups classified under:
 - Broad sectors, namely, Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity.
 - Use-based sectors, namely Basic Goods, Capital Goods, and Intermediate Goods.
- **Base Year** for IIP is 2011-2012. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Significance of IIP:
 - It is used by government agencies including the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, etc, for policy-making purposes.
 - IIP remains extremely relevant for the calculation of the quarterly and advance GDP (Gross Domestic Product) estimates.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Covid-19 crisis is an opportunity to pursue the goal of a self-reliant India. In the light of the statement, discuss how can India succeed in attracting manufacturing firms and jobs from China? (250 words)

Approach

- Briefly explain the opportunity for India to pursue its goal of self-reliance and attract manufacturing companies especially after-effects of Covid-19 pandemic.
- Discuss India's position in the manufacturing world and the issues with India's manufacturing sector.
- Give a way forward to overcome these issues.
- Conclude suitably on a positive note.

2Q. What do you understand by 'dust storms'? Discuss the reasons behind their formation and their impact. (150 words)

Approach

- Define dust storms
- Explain formation of sand storm
- State impacts

