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**MAY**

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# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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

**1. G7 seeks common front on China**

Context:

The Group of Seven wealthy democracies discussed **how to form a common front towards an increasingly assertive China** at the Foreign Ministers' first in-person talks in two years.

Key Areas of Discussion:

- The focus was on the **nuclear programmes of Iran and North Korea**.
- The G7 also discussed **China, whose growing military and economic clout and willingness to exert its influence at home and abroad have increasingly unnerved Western democracies**.
- The U.S secretary of state pledged robust cooperation with Britain in pressuring China over the **Xinjiang region** and over a **clampdown against civil rights in Hong Kong**.
  - The **nations of the G7** which also include Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan mostly share **concerns about China** but some have different approaches.
  - **Japan has historic tensions with China** but has held off on joining Western nations with sanctions, **cautious about inflaming relations with its trading partner**.
- The Ministers also discussed the **spiralling crisis in Myanmar** and **climate change** among other topics.

**G7**

- The G7 or the Group of 7 is a group of the seven most advanced economies as per the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- The seven countries are **Canada, the USA, UK, France, Germany, Japan and Italy**.

## 2. Supply oxygen or face contempt: HC to Centre

### Context:

The Delhi High Court has directed the Centre to show cause why contempt should not be initiated against it for failing to comply with orders to supply oxygen to Delhi for COVID-19 patients.

### Background:

In the backdrop of the oxygen crisis and other COVID-19 related issues that Delhi was grappling with, a **Supreme Court order directed the Centre to supply 700 MT oxygen daily to Delhi**, followed by a **direction by the Delhi High Court**.

### Details:

The Delhi High Court has asserted that the **Centre would face contempt if its orders are not followed**.

### Contempt of court

- Contempt of court is a concept that seeks **to protect judicial institutions from motivated attacks and unwarranted criticism**, and as a **legal mechanism to punish those who lower its authority**.
- Being impolite to legal authorities in the courtroom, or rebelliously failing to follow a court order may draw Contempt of Court proceedings.

### What are the kinds of contempt of court?

- The law codifying contempt classifies it as **civil and criminal**.
- **Civil contempt** is committed when **someone wilfully disobeys a court order, or wilfully breaches an undertaking given to court**.
- **Criminal contempt** consists of three forms:
  - Words, written or spoken, signs and actions that **scandalise or tend to scandalise or lower or tends to lower the authority of any court**.
  - **Prejudices or interferes with any judicial proceeding**.
  - **Interferes with or obstructs the administration of justice**.

### What is the statutory basis for contempt of court?

- When the Constitution was adopted, contempt of court was made one of the **restrictions on freedom of speech and expression**.

- Separately, **Article 129** of the Constitution conferred on the **Supreme Court the power to punish contempt of itself**. **Article 215** conferred a corresponding power on the **High Courts**.
- The **Contempt of Courts Act, 1971**, gives **statutory backing** to the idea.

### 3. An issue of lives versus livelihoods

#### Context:

In the backdrop of a surge in the number of COVID-19 cases in India, **strict to moderate lockdowns are being imposed** yet again.

#### Concerns:

- **Curfews and lockdowns have led to large scale termination of informal workers** in many establishments and exodus of workers back to their villages.
- The conditions faced by these workers include the **immediate termination of their livelihoods in terms of jobs, loss of accommodation and near insolvency**.
- Of those employed in the informal category, large numbers include migrants who face a bleak future, with a **lack of sustainable income and savings to ensure food, transportation back to villages or any other emergency**.
- With multiple issues of serious sufferings on account of COVID-19 related distress, the country has less time to discuss the fate of migrants on their path of reverse migration.

#### Issues:

- The **presence of the rural migrants benefited the urban economy** by providing **cheap labour** to manufacturing units and cheap services to households. However, these jobs provided **did not entail further obligations on the part of the employers or the state**, given that the footloose migrants never had any legal status as a working population.
- There have been no attempts to have an official estimate of the flow of migrant workers either incoming or reverse.
- No **solid measures** have been taken to **redress the miseries** that await the returning migrants.
  - The recent official announcement of free ration of 5 kg cereals to 80 crore families is the only sop visible.

- The prevalent pieces of legislation do not provide any evidence of addressing the issue, especially in the current crisis.
- The **Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970** conferred **legal status on casual labour by providing a mechanism for registration of contractors engaging 20 or more workers.**
- While it was never effective, the **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020** has replaced all such Acts. Seeking to regulate the health and safety conditions of workers in establishments with 10 or more workers, the Code **has replaced 13 prevailing labour laws.** However, this has been ineffective to a large extent.

#### Way Forward:

- It is necessary to **draft and ensure legal safeguards for the migrant workers.**
- The situation must not be justified as a step to save lives when it does not work for large sections of migrant people who also experience a loss of their livelihoods at the same time.
- The present situation demands **administrative oversight and execution of laws and policies that could provide basic safeguards to migrant workers.**

#### **4. A COVID blot on India's foreign policy canvas**

The article talks about how COVID-19 could impact India's great power/leading power aspirations.

#### Details:

- The second wave of COVID-19 has **prompted India to accept foreign aid after a gap of 17 years.** This is bound to have **far-reaching strategic implications for India.**
- The direct consequence of the pandemic is that it could **affect India's global image, its leadership and claim to regional primacy.**
- As a consequence, India's leading power aspirations could be dented, and its domestic political contestations accentuated. These in turn would have an impact on the content and conduct of India's foreign policy in the years to come.

#### Regional primacy:

- COVID 2.0 has quickened the demise of India's regional primacy.

- The country's geopolitical decline is likely to begin in the **neighbourhood** itself – a strategic space which India has been forced to cede to China over the past decade or so.
  - **South Asian states are likely to favour China**, if they haven't already.
- While the Indo-Pacific is geopolitically keen and ready to engage with India, the pandemic could **adversely impact India's ability and desire to contribute to the Indo-Pacific and the Quad**.
  - Eventually, the **Indo-Pacific balance of power could turn** in Beijing's favour.
- For instance, COVID-19 will prevent any ambitious military spending or modernisation plans and limit the country's attention on global diplomacy and regional geopolitics, be it Afghanistan or Sri Lanka or the Indo-Pacific.
- **With reduced military spending and lesser diplomatic attention to regional geopolitics**, New Delhi's ability to project power and contribute to the growth of the Quad will be uncertain.
- India's traditional primacy in the region was built on a mix of **material aid, political influence and historical ties**. Its ability to materially help the neighbourhood could shrink in the wake of COVID-19, and its historical ties alone may not be enough to hold on to a region hungry for development assistance and political autonomy.
- While the outpouring of global aid to India shows that the world realises India is too important to fail, the international community might also reach the conclusion that post-COVID-19 India is too fragile to lead and be a 'leading power'.

### **Domestic politics:**

- Domestic political contestations in the wake of COVID-19 could also **limit India's strategic ambitions**.
- **General economic distress, a fall in foreign direct investment and industrial production, and a rise in unemployment** have affected the country.
- **Upcoming elections** could fan **communal tensions in the country**, triggering more political violence.
- A depressed economy, politically volatile domestic space combined with a lack of elite consensus on strategic matters would hardly inspire confidence in the international system about India.

### **India-China equations:**

- From competing with China's vaccine diplomacy a few months ago, India today is forced to seek help from the international community.

- The pandemic also **waters down the claims that India could compete with China as a global investment and manufacturing destination.**
- The rise of China and India's COVID-19-related troubles could prompt the U.S to move closer to Beijing.
- The world, **despite its anti-China rhetoric, will continue to do business with Beijing.**

#### Depressed foreign policy:

- Post-COVID-19, India's diplomatic bandwidth for expansive foreign policy goals would be limited.
- **Less aggression could potentially translate into more accommodation, reconciliation and cooperation** especially in the neighbourhood, with Pakistan on the one hand and within the broader South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) framework on the other.
- These developments could **moderate the sharp edges of India's pre-existing geopolitical articulations.**

#### Strategic autonomy:

- Finally, the pandemic at the very least **indirectly impacts India's policy of maintaining strategic autonomy.**
- The strategic consequences of the pandemic are bound to shape and structure India's foreign policy choices as well as constrain the foreign policy agency.

#### Way Forward and Conclusion:

- COVID-19 would also **open up new regional opportunities for cooperation especially under the ambit of SAARC.**
- India might do well to get the region's collective focus on 'regional health multilateralism' to promote mutual assistance and joint action on health emergencies such as this.
- Classical geopolitics should be brought on a par with health diplomacy, environmental concerns and regional connectivity in South Asia. COVID-19 has opened such an opportunity.

## 5. U.S. sanctions may spur Adani to exit Myanmar

### What's in News?

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. said that **it could abandon a Myanmar container terminal project** if it is found to be **in violation of sanctions imposed by the U.S.**

- It has said that in a scenario **wherein Myanmar is classified as a sanctioned country** under OFAC or if OFAC opines that the project violates the current sanctions, Adani Ports plans to abandon the project and write down the investments.
- Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is a **part of the U.S. Treasury Department** that **administers and enforces economic and trade sanctions based on the country's foreign policy.**
- A military coup in Myanmar on February 1 and an ensuing crackdown on mass protests have drawn sanctions on military-controlled entities.

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

## 6. Govt. gives nod for 5G trials

### **Trials for 5G technology**

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Tuesday gave permission **to Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)** to conduct trials for the use and application of 5G technology.
- The applicant TSPs include Bharti Airtel Ltd., Reliance JioInfocomm Ltd., Vodafone Idea Ltd. and MTNL.
- **These TSPs have tied up with original equipment manufacturers** and technology providers which are Ericsson, Nokia, Samsung and C-DOT.
- Each TSP will have to conduct trials in rural and semi-urban settings also in addition to urban settings so that the **benefit of 5G technology proliferates across the country.**
- This formally **leaves out Chinese companies** like Huawei and ZTE from the 5G race in India.



## About 5Gi technology

- TSPs are encouraged to conduct trials using **5Gi technology** in addition to the already known 5G technology.
- 5Gi technology was advocated by India, as it facilitates **much larger reach of the 5G towers** and radio networks.
- The 5Gi technology has been **developed by** the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M), Centre of Excellence in Wireless Technology (CEWiT) and IIT Hyderabad.

## 7. Scientists see flaws in SUTRA's approach to modelling pandemic

### What's in News?

With close to 4,00,000 cases being added every day, questions are being raised on whether **SUTRA - a government-backed model, to forecast the rise and ebb of the COVID-19 pandemic**, may have had a role in creating the perception that a catastrophic second wave of the pandemic was unlikely in India.

- SUTRA stands for **Susceptible, Undetected, Tested (positive), and Removed Approach**.
- The Covid 'supermodel' was commissioned by the Government of India.

### Issues:

- Unlike many epidemiological models that extrapolated cases based on the existing number of cases, the behaviour of the virus and manner of spread, the **SUTRA model chose a data-centric approach**.
- **Too many parameters, a constant that was inaccurate and calibration errors** may have led to predictions that did not signal the catastrophic second wave.
- A rapid acceleration of cases couldn't be predicted in advance.

## 8. Purchasing Managers' Index

### Why in News

The seasonally adjusted **IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)** was at 55.5 in April 2021, little changed from March's reading of 55.4.

## Key Points

- It is a **survey-based measure** that asks the respondents about changes in their perception about key business variables as compared with the previous month.
- The **purpose** of the PMI is to provide information about current and future business conditions to company decision makers, analysts, and investors.
- It is **calculated separately** for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a **composite index** is also constructed.
- The PMI is a number **from 0 to 100**.
  - A print **above 50 means expansion**, while a score below that denotes contraction.
  - **A reading at 50** indicates no change.
- If **PMI of the previous month is higher** than the PMI of the current month, it represents that the economy is contracting.
- It is **usually released at the start of every month**. It is, therefore, considered a good leading indicator of economic activity.
- PMI is **compiled by IHS Markit for more than 40 economies** worldwide.
  - **IHS Markit is a global leader** in information, analytics and solutions for the major industries and markets that drive economies worldwide.
- As the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth comes much later, PMI helps to make informed decisions at an earlier stage.
- It is **different from the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**, which also gauges the level of activity in the economy.
  - IIP covers the broader industrial sector compared to PMI.
  - However, PMI is more dynamic compared to a standard industrial production index.

## THE INDIAN EXPRESS

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

#### 1. India-UK Virtual Summit

##### Why in News

Recently, the Prime Ministers of **India and the United Kingdom (UK)** held a bilateral virtual summit.

- India thanked the UK for the prompt medical assistance provided by it in the wake of the **severe second wave of Covid-19** in India.

##### Key Points

- **Adopted 'Roadmap 2030':**
  - It will **elevate bilateral ties to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership"**.
  - It will provide a **framework for UK-India relations** across health, climate, trade, education, science and technology, and defence.
    - This will expand the UK-India health partnership to **enhance global health security and pandemic resilience**.
    - This includes **firming up international supply chains to ensure critical medicines, vaccines and other medical products** reach those who need them most.
    - Agreed to **expand the existing UK-India vaccines partnership**.
- **Launched Enhanced Trade Partnership:**
  - It envisages **facilitating market access in specific sectors**. It will see **Britain open up its fisheries sector** to more Indian players, facilitate more **opportunities for nurses, recognise Indian seafarers' certificates** and enter into a **joint dialogue on a social security agreement**.
  - In return, **India lifted restrictions to enable British fruit producers** to export their produce to the country and improved access for medical devices.
  - They will also work towards reciprocal **opening up of legal services**.
  - Announced their intent to negotiate a comprehensive **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, including consideration of an interim trade agreement to deliver early gains.

- Set an ambitious **target of more than doubling bilateral trade by 2030.**
- **Announcement of a new India-UK 'Global Innovation Partnership':**
  - The **UK is India's second largest partner** in research and innovation collaborations.
  - The new partnership **aims to support the transfer of inclusive Indian innovations to select developing countries, starting with Africa.**
- **Security & Defence:**
  - **Cooperation on Maritime Domain Awareness:**
    - This includes new agreements on maritime information sharing, an **invitation to the UK to join India's Information Fusion Centre in Gurgaon** and an ambitious exercise programme which includes joint trilateral exercises.
  - **UK's Carrier Strike Group:**
    - The **UK's Carrier Strike Group will visit India later this year to boost ties with Indian navies and air forces**, undertaking joint training exercises to enable future cooperation on operations in the Western Indian Ocean (**UK's Indo-Pacific Tilt**).
  - **Light Combat Aircraft Mark 2:**
    - To support India's indigenous development of the **Light Combat Aircraft Mark 2.**
  - **Potential Collaborations:**
    - Discussed the potential for further **industrial collaboration in areas such as maritime propulsion, space and cyber**, marking the start of a promising **new era of UK-India research**, capability and industrial collaboration on **Indian combat air** and beyond.
- **Migration:**
  - Enhance their migration relationship, to **make it easier for British and Indian nationals to live and work in each other's countries.**
  - Welcomed the signing of the **India-UK Migration and Mobility Partnership (MMP)** that is **aimed at reducing illegal immigration into the UK.**
    - The issue of illegal immigration had been a sticking point between both sides for years. However it is understood that **MMP will help genuine immigrants and students and will reduce immigration-related crimes.**
- **Climate Change:**
  - Agreed to work together to ensure an ambitious outcome at **Conference of the Parties (COP) 26** and expand the UK-India partnership on tackling **climate change**, including by accelerating the **development of clean energy and transport and new technology, protecting nature and biodiversity and helping developing countries adapt to the impact of climate change.**

## Bilateral Military Exercises

- Air Force Exercise 'Indradhanush'.
- Navy Exercise Konkan.
- Army Exercise 'Ajeya Warrior'

## Way Forward

- India will elevate to a 21<sup>st</sup> century superpower. It will soon be 'one of the biggest influences on the world'. It is looking for new partners in the global race. This **represents a great opportunity for the UK**. The **UK has much to offer India in education, research, civil society and the creative sector**.
- Further, India's skilled labour, technological assistance and the vibrant market will open a lot of avenues for Britain which has recently parted ways with the European Union.

## 2. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

### Why in News

More than 28.68 crore loans for an amount of **Rs. 14.96 lakh crore** have been sanctioned by banks, NBFCs and MFIs since the launch of **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**.

### Key Points

- **About Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):**
  - **Launch and Aim:**
    - It was **launched by the government in 2015** for providing loans up to **Rs. 10 lakh** to the **non-corporate, non-farm small/micro-enterprises**.
  - **Funding Provision:**
    - **MUDRA**, which stands for **Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Ltd.**, is a financial institution set up by the Government.
    - It **provides funding** to the non-corporate small business sector **through various last-mile financial institutions** like Banks, **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** and **Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs)**.
    - **MUDRA does not lend directly to micro-entrepreneurs/individuals.**
  - **Three Products:**

- MUDRA has created three products i.e. 'Shishu', 'Kishore' and 'Tarun' as per the stage of growth and funding needs of the beneficiary micro unit.
  - **Shishu:** Covering loans up to Rs. 50,000.
  - **Kishore:** Covering loans above Rs. 50,000 and up to Rs. 5 lakh.
  - **Tarun:** Covering loans above Rs. 5 lakh and up to Rs. 10 lakh.
- Loans under this scheme are **collateral-free loans**.
- **Achievements:**
  - Loans have been given to **disadvantaged sections of society such as women entrepreneurs, SC/ST/OBC borrowers, Minority community borrowers, etc.** The focus has also been on **new entrepreneurs**.
  - As per a survey conducted by Ministry of Labour and Employment, PMMY helped in **generation of 1.12 crore net additional employment from 2015 to 2018**.
    - Out of the **1.12 crore** of estimated increase in employment, **women accounted for 69 lakh (62%)**.

### 3. World Press Freedom Day 2021

#### Why in News

The **World Press Freedom Day (WPF)** is an annual celebration of press freedom, observed on **3<sup>rd</sup> May** every year.

- The main celebration is organized by the **UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**.
- The **theme for WPF 2021** is "**Information as a Public Good**".

#### Key Points

- **Background:**
  - The day was proclaimed by the **UN General Assembly** in 1993, following the recommendation of **UNESCO's General Conference** in 1991.
  - The day also **marks the 1991 Windhoek Declaration** (adopted by UNESCO).
    - It aimed towards the 'development of a free, independent and pluralistic press'.
- **Three Key Highlights of WPF 2021:**
  - Steps to ensure the **economic viability of news media**.

- Mechanisms for ensuring **transparency of Internet companies**.
- **Enhanced Media and Information Literacy (MIL) capacities** that enable people to recognize and value, as well as defend and demand, journalism as a vital part of information as a public good.
- **World Press Conference 2021:**
  - The 2021 Global Conference was **hosted by UNESCO** and the Government of **Namibia**.
  - It called for **urgent attention to the threat of extinction faced by local news media** around the world, a crisis worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - It **put forward ideas** to tackle the challenges of our online media environment, push for more transparency of internet companies, strengthen safety of journalists, and improve their working conditions.

### Freedom of Press in India

- Freedom of press is **not expressly protected by Indian legal system** but it is **impliedly protected under article 19(1) (a) of the constitution**, which states - "All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression".
- In **1950**, the Supreme Court in **Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras** observed that freedom of the press lay at the foundation of all democratic organisations.
- However, **Freedom of press is also not absolute**. It faces **certain restrictions under Article 19(2)**, which are as follows-
  - Matters related to interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
- **Related Rankings/Findings:**
  - India has been **ranked 142<sup>nd</sup> out of 180 nations** in the **World Press Freedom Index, 2021**, published by Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) or Reporters Without Borders.
  - Reports such as '**Freedom in the World 2021** (Freedom House, US)', '**2020 Human Rights Report** (US State Department)', '**Autocratisation Goes Viral** (V-Dem Institute, Sweden)' have all highlighted **intimidation of journalists in India**.

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

### 4.Covid-19: India's Leading Cause of Death

#### Why in News

According to the most recent estimates by the **Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)**, the **Covid-19 pandemic has emerged the biggest cause of death in India.**

- IHME is an independent global health research centre at the University of Washington, US.

#### Key Points

- **Death due to Covid-19 Pandemic:**
  - India has recorded **more than 19 million cases of coronavirus**-second only to the US and has **confirmed more than 2,15,000 deaths.**
  - The **human toll of the pandemic is more than double the number of humans killed in over 320 natural disasters** during the recent two decades (2000-2019).
- **Other Top Causes of Deaths in India:**
  - Ischemic heart disease (second),
  - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (third),
  - Strokes (fourth),
  - **Diarrhoeal diseases** (fifth),
  - **Neonatal disorders** (sixth),
  - **Lower respiratory infections** (seventh),
  - **Tuberculosis** (eighth),
  - **Diabetes mellitus** (ninth) and
  - **Chronic liver diseases**, including cirrhosis (tenth).
- **Reasons for Covid-19 being the Leading Cause of Death:**
  - The '**double mutant**' **B.1.617** Indian variant of SARS-CoV-2 has heightened risk.
  - Lives have been lost due to the **lack of preparedness of governments, India's poor health infrastructure, lack of medical oxygen and even medicines.**
  - The **Centre and state governments have been accused and held responsible** by the **Supreme Court** and High Court for undermining the scale of crisis and failure to manage it.



- Experts have also been **unhappy with India's Covid-19 vaccine procurement and pricing policy**. States have to await their quota of vaccines.

### Way Forward

- The IHME advises governments **to impose strict physical distancing norms** for six weeks at least once deaths cross 8 per million.
- The Supreme Court advised both Centre as well as states **to resort to lockdowns** if needed but to also ensure livelihoods weren't impacted.

## 5. 5G Technology and Spectrum Trials

### In news

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India approved permissions to Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) for conducting trials for use and applications of **5G technology**.

### Key takeaways

- The applicant TSPs include Bharti Airtel Ltd., Reliance JioInfocomm Ltd., Vodafone Idea Ltd. and MTNL.
- The duration of the trials, at present, is for a period of 6 months.
- Each TSP will have to conduct trials in rural, semi-urban settings and urban settings so that the benefit of 5G Technology proliferates across the country.
- **Objective:** Testing 5G spectrum propagation characteristics especially in the Indian context; model tuning and evaluation of chosen equipment and vendors; testing of indigenous technology; testing of applications; and to test 5G phones and devices.
- 5G technology is expected to deliver improved user experience in terms of data download rates (expected to be 10 times that of 4G), up to three times greater spectrum efficiency, and ultra low latency to enable Industry 4.0.

### 5Gi technology

- The TSPs are encouraged to conduct trials using 5Gi technology in addition to the already known 5G Technology.
- International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has also approved the 5Gi technology as it facilitates much larger reach of the 5G towers and Radio networks.

- The 5G technology has been developed by IIT Madras, Centre of Excellence in Wireless Technology (CEWiT) and IIT Hyderabad.

## 6. Used Cooking Oil (UCO) Based Bio-Diesel

### In news

- Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas flagged off the first supply of UCO (Used Cooking Oil) based Biodiesel blended Diesel under the EOI Scheme from Indian Oil's Tikrikalan Terminal, Delhi.

### Key takeaways

- To create an eco-system for collection and conversion of UCO into Biodiesel, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas had initiated Expressions of Interest (EOI) for "Procurement of Bio-diesel produced from Used Cooking Oil" on the occasion of World Biofuel Day on 10th August 2019.
- It is a landmark in India's pursuance of Biofuels which will have a positive impact on the environment.

### Important value additions

- **Biodiesel** is an alternative fuel, similar to conventional or 'fossil' diesel.
- It can be produced from vegetable oils, animal fats, tallow and waste cooking oil.
- A significant advantage of Biodiesel is its carbon-neutrality, i.e. the oilseed absorbs the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> as is released when the fuel is combusted in a vehicle.
- Also, Biodiesel is rapidly biodegradable and completely non-toxic.

### Prelims Practice Questions

**1. Financial Stability Report is released by which of the following organisation?**

- a. International Monetary Fund
- b. World Bank
- c. Reserve Bank of India
- d. World Economic Forum

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- The Reserve Bank of India releases the Financial Stability Report (FSR).
- The FSR reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) on risks to financial stability, as also the resilience of the financial system.
- The Report also discusses issues relating to development and regulation of the financial sector

**2. Consider the following statements:**

1. Real GDP has steadily increased in the last decade.
2. GDP at current market prices has steadily increased in the last decade.

**Which of the above is/are correct statements?**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Real GDP (i.e. GDP at constant market prices) and Nominal GDP (i.e. GDP at current market prices) both have steadily increased in the last decade but the growth rate of Real GDP and Nominal GDP has fluctuated and has not increased steadily in the last decade.

### 3. Consider the following statements:

1. India is not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions.
2. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution encompasses the right of refugees from refoulement.

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

- Recently, the High Court of Manipur has ordered safe passage to seven Myanmar nationals, stranded at a border town in Manipur, to travel to the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** in New Delhi.
  - Although India has no clear refugee protection policy or framework, it does grant asylum to a large number of refugees from the neighbouring country.
  - India usually respects UNHCR's recognition of the status of such asylum seekers, mainly from Afghanistan and Myanmar.
- India is **not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions** but it is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Article 21 of the Constitution encompasses the right of non-refoulement.**
  - Non-refoulement is the principle under international law which states that a person fleeing persecution from his own country should not be forced to return to his own country. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

### 4. Consider the following statements

1. The National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) was established within the Consolidated Fund of India.
2. The rules to administer NSSF are framed by the President of India under Article 283 (1) of the Indian Constitution.

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 **National Small Savings Fund (NSSF)** within the **Public Account of India** was established in 1999. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
  - The objective of the creation of the NSSF was 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.
- 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 of India under Article 283 (1)** of the Indian Constitution. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

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

1. P-8I patrol aircraft is a long-range maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft.
2. The US has granted India the same access to defence technology as it grants to its NATO allies.

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**

- P-8I patrol aircraft is a **long-range maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
  - It is a variant of the P-8A Poseidon aircraft that Boeing company developed as a replacement for the US Navy's ageing P-3 fleet.
  - With a maximum speed of 907 kmph and an operating range of over 1,200 nautical miles, the P-8Is detect threats and neutralize them if required, far before they come anywhere near Indian shores.
  - Indian Navy became the first international customer for the P-8 aircraft in 2009.
- Defense purchases from the United States have been increasingly an integral part of growing ties between the two countries.
  - From near zero in 2008, India-US defence trade touched USD 20 billion in 2020, helped along by major policy upgrades.
- The US designating India a Major Defence Partner (in 2016) and then **granting it the same access to defence technology as NATO allies** and Australia, Japan and South Korea under Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA) in 2018. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

6. Lag B'omer Festival, sometimes seen in the news recently, is annually celebrated in?

- a. Egypt
- b. Israel
- c. Bhutan
- d. Turkey

Answer : b

- At least 44 people were crushed to death in a stampede as tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews gathered in northern Israel to celebrate the annual Lag B'Omer festival.

*Lag B'Omer festival*

- It is an annual Jewish festival observed during the Hebrew month of Iyar.
- It is celebrated on the 33rd day of the Omer, the 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot.
- Lag B'Omer is the only day during the 49-day period when celebration is permitted.
- Hence, it is common for Jews to schedule weddings on this day every year.

- Young boys, who have reached the age of three, are also traditionally brought here for their first hair cut.

## MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

**Q1. Peasant movements of the twentieth century in India were deeply influenced by the ongoing struggle for national freedom. Discuss the important features of these movements.**

### Approach

- Briefly explain the change in the characteristics of peasant movements in the 20th century as compared to earlier peasant movements.
- Discuss the features of peasant movements with respect to the development of national freedom struggle.
- Discuss the role of national leaders in the formation of peasant organisation and their influence on peasant movements.
- Highlight the nature of important peasant movements in twentieth-century across India.
- Conclude the answer by summarising the overall influence of the peasant movement.

**Q2. The Jurisdiction of the Supreme court under Article 142 supersedes the executive and the legislature. Discuss (150 words)**

### Approach

- Explain the provision of Article 142 highlighting the extent of jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under it.
- Discuss how this article enables judicial overreach citing some examples like verdicts in the Coal block case and the Supreme Court's intervention in the conservation of Taj Mahal.
- Briefly mention the pros and cons of Article 142 on the basis of the principle of check and balance.
- Conclude by highlighting the need to strike a balance between three pillars of government without encroaching on each other's area.