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GS 1 : Heritage and culture ,Geography of the World and Society

1. Yaas may become a very severe cyclonic storm: IMD

Context:

- Cyclone Yaas developing in the Bay of Bengal

Background:

- Given India's location in the North Indian Ocean, it continues to remain vulnerable to tropical cyclones both on the east and west coast.
- The **North Indian Ocean cyclone season** occurs between April and November, with peaks in **late April to May and October to November**.
- The current pre monsoon cyclonic season of April-May had the **cyclone Tauktae** make landfall on the western coast of India.

Details:

- A **low pressure area** has formed over the east-central Bay of Bengal and the adjoining north Andaman Sea.
- As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), this low pressure area is very likely to concentrate into a **depression** and further intensify into a **cyclonic storm** and **very severe cyclonic storm** in the days to come.
- The cyclone is very likely to move north-north-westwards and make **landfall on the Odisha and West Bengal coasts**.

Measures being taken:

- Odisha and West Bengal are reviewing the **disaster management preparedness for the impending Yaas cyclone** and taking the following measures to mitigate the impact.
 - Fishermen have been advised to return from the seas
 - Early evacuation from coastal & riverine areas to rescue shelters including cyclone & flood shelters are being undertaken
 - Deployment of State and National Disaster Response Force is taking place
 - Stocking and preparing for the relief and rehabilitation operations is being ensured

- 24×7 control rooms have been set up for assistance to the citizens

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

2. Call for action to protect Odisha tribes

Context:

- More than 100 tribals among 10 out of 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the state of Odisha have been affected by COVID-19.

Details:

- Amid the concerns over rising COVID-19 positive cases among PVTGs, activists and writers have urged the Odisha government to take immediate steps to prevent loss of lives among the PVTGs like the Dongria Kondh and Bonda due to COVID-19.

Challenges:

- There is a **heightened sense of hesitancy among the tribal** to use allopathic medicines. The tribals have been reluctant to even undergo the RT-PCR tests.
- The measures announced to contain the spread of COVID-19 like **home quarantine would not work among the tribals** as privacy and isolation hardly exist within the tribal culture.

Recommendations:

- **Door to door surveys** must be undertaken by a team of trained local volunteers for regular monitoring of symptoms, and reporting of any suspected cases.
- The government should set up **quarantine centres** exclusively for tribals within 2 km of their settlements.
- **Health kits** consisting of three layered masks, necessary medicines and vitamins must be distributed among the tribal communities.
- The government must ensure **upgradation of all primary health centres** located in tribal areas and also ensure adequate provisioning of manpower, medical equipment, medicines and other infrastructure in these PHCs.

- The vulnerable tribals must be provided with a **special livelihood relief package** as compensation for their agriculture and minor forest produce (MFP) which have come to a standstill.

3. BRICS Astronomy Working Group moots networking of existing telescopes

- Under the **science, technology and innovation track of the BRICS 2021** calendar, India recently hosted the seventh meeting of **BRICS Astronomy Working Group (BAWG)**.
 - **India assumed the BRICS Presidency from January 2021** and has been organizing events, including ministerial level meetings, senior official meetings, and sectorial meetings or conferences.
- The BRICS Astronomy Working Group has recommended **networking of telescopes in member countries and creating a regional data network**.
- There was also a proposal to develop a collaborative flagship project in the area of astronomy. This could involve building a network of intelligent telescopes and regional data network, study of transient astronomical phenomena in the universe, and the use of big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning applications to process the data generated by astronomical observations.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. A jobs crisis in the second wave of COVID-19

Background:

- The **second wave of COVID-19 pandemic** and the localised lockdowns across several States, have resulted in restrictions on movement of people and goods and thus has led to **restrained economic activity in India**.

Details:

- The restrained economic activity has resulted in **large scale job losses** in India.
 - According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the **unemployment rate has shot up** to 8% in April 2021 as several States started imposing lockdowns. The month of May has seen the rates rise further.

- There have been a mammoth 73.5 lakh job losses in April alone.
- As of May 21, the 30-day moving average for overall unemployment was 10.3%, with the relevant figures for urban and rural areas at 12.2% and 9.4%, respectively.
- The salaried class has also witnessed significant loss of jobs since the pandemic began.
- Even states with traditionally low unemployment rates like Gujarat have also witnessed increases in unemployment rates.
- There has been a **steady fall in the number of employees (both salaried and non-salaried) for the third straight month.**
- This is a clear indication that the **jobs scenario is weakening**

Economic consequences of rising unemployment:

- Job losses have a **depressing impact on incomes.**
 - Almost 90% of Indian families have seen their incomes shrink over the course of the past 13 months.
- The job losses **dampen consumer sentiment and lowers discretionary spending, economic demand** and subsequently consumption expenditure which is so very vital for a developing economy like India.
 - The RBI's monthly bulletin also acknowledges this demand shock which has been a character of the economic impact of the second wave of the pandemic.
 - The contraction in e-way bills of GST might be indicative of such a contraction in demand for goods.
- The reduction in demand for goods would invariably lead to **lower GST collections** in the coming months. This would severely impede public expenditure by the government which is so very important for economic revival.
- The reduced income levels would have a detrimental **impact on the food security of the poor and vulnerable.** This could have a debilitating impact on the health and productivity of the workforce.
 - Several reports have highlighted the problem of the low-income population cutting back on food intake due to income losses.
- **The high levels of unemployment will push the economy into a vicious cycle of low economic growth.**

Economic concerns associated with second wave:

Long term impact of the pandemic:

- The poor have been forced to cope with this economic shock by borrowing, largely from informal sources or by selling their assets.

- Surveys have shown that the poorest households having taken the largest loans relative to their earnings.
- Experts have noted that the affected people will indulge in building back the depleted savings or will try and pay back the incurred debt by curtailing future consumption and investment.
- This means that **even after a lockdown is lifted the consumer spending may remain muted**. Hence the **economic revival would take longer**, thus belying hopes of an economic revival in the aftermath of the first wave of the pandemic.

Impact on agricultural sector:

- Unlike during the first wave when the agricultural sector witnessed positive growth rates and also increased employment opportunities, it is not so during the second one.
 - The rural hinterland has been far more affected by the pandemic in the second wave as compared with the first wave.
- **The agricultural sector has also been witnessing job losses in the second wave**. In April 2021, agriculture shed 6 million jobs just in a month's time.

Disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable:

- **Women** face a double challenge in the form of lower labour participation and a higher unemployment rate for females compared with males (for ages above 15).
- The vulnerable population like the **daily wage labourers and small traders** have witnessed a loss of employment

High degree of uncertainty:

- Also notably, **the labour participation rate (LPR) for April 2021, at 40%, remained lower than the levels seen before last year's lockdown**. This is indicative of the high uncertainty associated with the second wave.
 - The labour force participation rate is a measure of the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work; it provides an indication of the size of the supply of labour available to engage in the production of goods and services, relative to the population at working age

Governmental measures taken:

- The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee** scheme has been broadened to cater to the increased demand for work in rural areas as reverse migration of labour picked up. The
- The Central government's decision to distribute 5 kg of rice and wheat for free to ration card holders across the country will help limit the impact of job losses on nutritional security of the poor and vulnerable.
- The state governments have also taken several measures to mitigate the impact of job losses on the general populace.
 - Bihar has announced that it would issue an equal measure to the Centre's distribution from the State's resources for free distribution via the Public Distribution System.
 - Tamil Nadu has announced Rs 4,000 handout per ration card.
 - Kerala has undertaken distribution of free food kits for vulnerable families
 - Karnataka has announced a Rs. 1,250-crore relief package, for vulnerable sections like farmers, auto and taxi drivers, construction workers and other informal sector workers.

5. Identifying mutants

Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia:

- The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG) is an advisory group to the Central government.
- It is a **national multi agency consortium of ten laboratories** of Department of Biotechnology, CSIR, ICMR and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- It has helped **undertake the whole genome sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 virus** across the nation in a more co-ordinated way. Thus it keeps a tab on the variants found in India. This **continuous genomic surveillance and epidemiological surveillance** will help the INSACOG flag potential virus variants of concern.
 - As per the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) around 20,000 samples have been sequenced till now and about 3,900 variants have been identified.
 - This included foreign variants like the B.1.1.7 (first identified in the United Kingdom), the B.1.351 (first found in South Africa) and a small number of P2 variants (from Brazil).
 - **The B.1.617 variant also known as the 'double mutant' variant** has also been flagged by it. In March, it was linked to a spurt in cases in Maharashtra.

Significance of genome sequencing:

- The genome sequencing and correlating them with disease intensity **helps flag variants of concern**. Timely measures to limit the spread of variants of concern help limit the spread of the pandemic.
- Genome sequencing **helps understand the role of certain mutations in increasing the virus's infectivity** and this will help in the refabrication of existing vaccines if need be.
 - Some mutations have also been linked to immune escape, or the virus's ability to evade antibodies, which could have a huge impact on the efficacy of existing vaccines.

Challenges for INSACOG:

- INSACOG has not been able to achieve its target of sequencing at least 5% of the samples in India. It has been only around 1%. The **shortage of funds and materials** to scale up the process has been the major challenge to test more samples.
- The sharing of datasets, even within constituent groups of the INSACOG has been less than ideal. This robs the initiative of the potential benefits that a more co-ordinated approach would bring, like more accurate and informed warnings and also a more responsive structure.
- **The INSACOG is only an advisory group to the Central government and its advice has not been given due weightage**. Warnings about emerging variants were not made public with sufficient urgency.

6. How whiteflies came, saw and conquered India's crops

Context:

- Concerns over the spread of the whiteflies in India.

Details:

- The invasive whitefly is now distributed throughout India except Jammu & Kashmir.
 - Most of the **whitefly species are native to the Caribbean islands or Central America**.

Concerns:

Rising number of invasive species:

- The increasing import of plants and **increasing globalization and movement of people** has aided the spread of exotic varieties and their subsequent growth into invasive species.

Damage to crops:

- Whitefly **reduce the yield and also damage crops.**
- These invasive whiteflies have been found to have expanded their host range on valuable plants species like coconut, banana, mango, sapota, guava, cashew, oil palm, and important medicinal plants.

Nature of whiteflies:

- A recent study has noted that the host range of all of the invasive whiteflies has been increasing due to their **polyphagous nature (ability to feed on various kinds of food) and prolific breeding.**

Ineffectiveness of available insecticides:

- Whiteflies have been **difficult to control by using available synthetic insecticides.**

Recommendations:

Continuous monitoring:

- The administration should ensure continuous monitoring of the occurrence of invasive species, their host plants and geographical expansion is needed.

Phytosanitary regulations:

- Given the threat of invasive species, the state should ensure stricter phytosanitary measures at relevant places to reduce the chances of incoming exotic species.

Awareness among the citizens:

- The state should also work towards increasing the awareness among the general populace about the threat posed by exotic species. This will help **reduce the chances of general populace indulging in illegal or unintentional import of exotic species.**

Use of biological control methods:

- Given the fact that whiteflies are difficult to control by using synthetic insecticides, **naturally occurring insect predators, parasitoids and entomopathogenic fungi** (fungi that can kill insects) could be used as novel biological control of the invasive whiteflies.
 - Entomopathogenic fungi specific to whiteflies are isolated, purified, grown in the lab or mass-produced can be applied into the whitefly infested field in combination with the release of lab-reared potential predators and parasitoids.
- Biological control based methods are **not just environmentally friendly but also economically feasible**.

7. Weather fluctuations may trigger pest attack on sugarcane crops in U.P.

Context:

- Concerns of **pest attack on sugarcane crop** in Uttar Pradesh.

Background:

- **Uttar Pradesh has the maximum area under sugarcane cultivation.** However, the **highest sugar recovery can be obtained in Maharashtra.**
- Uttar Pradesh is India's largest producer of sugarcane, accounting for 51 per cent of the total cultivated area, 50 per cent of the crop and 38 percent of sugar production

Details:

- The frequent fluctuations in weather conditions in recent times have raised the risk of pest attacks for the sugarcane crop in Uttar Pradesh.
 - The **excess moisture in the atmosphere and day-to-day fluctuations in the weather** has aided the spurt in the population of various pests such as **pyrilla, grasshopper, fall armyworm and black bug**. These pests mainly infest the sugarcane crop.
 - These insects by feeding on the leaves of sugarcane plants **impacts sugarcane growth and decreases yield and sugar content.**
- The state government has issued an advisory to make relevant arrangements for prevention of insects and pests attacks and has also advised field inspections to gauge the extent of the threat.
- The department officials have been asked to destroy the affected plants and not to use them as cane seeds for sowing.
 - Black bug is mostly found in the **ratoon plant.**

- Ratoon is a new shoot or sprout springing from the base of a crop plant, especially sugar cane, after cropping.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund For Sportspersons:

Context:

The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) has approved an amount of Rs 2 Lakh for Karnataka's V Tejaswini Bai, who won the Arjuna Award in 2011 and was a member of the Women's Kabaddi team that won gold medals at the 2010 and 2014 Asian Games respectively.

- The financial assistance has been approved from **the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund for the Sportspersons (PDUNWFS)**.

About the Fund:

- Set up in March, 1982 with a view to assisting outstanding Sportspersons of yesteryear, living in indigent circumstances who had brought glory to the Country in sports.
- The scheme was revised in May, 2016 to provide for lump sum ex-gratia assistance to outstanding Sportspersons of yesteryears.
- **Provision of pension has been done away with** as there is already a Scheme of Pension for Meritorious Sportspersons.

The Fund shall be utilized for the following objectives:

1. To provide suitable assistance to outstanding sports persons now living in indigent sportspersons.
2. To provide suitable assistance to outstanding sports persons injured during the period of their training for competitions and also during the competitions, depending on the nature of the injury.
3. To provide suitable assistance to outstanding sports persons who bring glory to the country in the international field and who are disabled as an after effect

of their strenuous training or otherwise and to provide them assistance for medical treatment.

4. To administrator and apply the funds of the Fund to promote the welfare of the sports persons generally in order to alleviate distress among them and their dependents in indigent circumstances.
5. To administer and apply the funds of the Fund for active sports persons individually or collectively as a group.
6. To do all other things which are incidental to the above objectives.

2. After black fungus, white fungus cases reported in Bihar amid COVID-19

As central government asks states to notify black fungus or mucormycosis an epidemic, an infection called white fungus has also been found to affect some people.

New cases of white fungus have been found in Patna, Bihar, and this infection is more dangerous than black fungus.

White Fungus or Candidiasis:

- White Fungus is a fungal infection where there is **formation of whitish membranes or discharge** caused by **candida group of organisms**.
- White fungus is a fungal infection called **candidiasis**.
- It can be caused by the **unsterile use of oxygen cylinders** or the overuse of steroids.
- It attacks body parts such as **lungs, skin, nail, brain, kidney, mouth** etc.
- Besides adults, young children are prone to White Fungus infection too.
- This fungus turns to be more dangerous if it is systemic. If it affects the lungs or blood then the **chances of survival are less** compared to if it affects other parts of the body.

What causes white fungus?

- This infection can be caused due to low immunity, or if people come in contact with things that contain these moulds like water, etc.

Symptoms of white fungus:

- Covid-like symptoms but **test negative**; the infection can be **diagnosed through CT-Scan or X-ray**
- White fungus can affect not just the **lungs but also other parts of the body** including nails, skin, stomach, kidney, brain, private parts and mouth.

Why are COVID patients prone to white fungus?

- COVID-19 patients are more prone to white fungus as it **affects the lungs and similar symptoms** are created like that of coronavirus.
- Patients having weak immunity like diabetes, cancer patients, and those who are taking steroids for a long period of time must take special care as they are more at risk.
- Coronavirus patients who are on oxygen support.

3. Weberian Bureaucracy and its challenges

Context: Despite its efforts, bureaucracy has emerged as a major concern for the ineffective response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Present Model

- **Weberian bureaucracy** prefers a generalist over a specialist. Specialists in every government department have to remain subordinate to the generalist officers
- The justification is that the generalist provides a broader perspective compared to the specialist.
- A generalist officer (IAS and State civil service officials) is deemed an expert and as a result, superior, even if the officer works in one department or ministry today and in another tomorrow.
- **Pandemic Situation:** Healthcare professionals who are specialists have been made to work under generalist officers and the policy options have been left to the generalists when they should be in the hands of the specialists.

Issues

- Weberian bureaucracy prefers **leadership based on position**.
- Traditional bureaucracy is still stuck with the leadership of position over leadership of function
- Bureaucracy has become **an end in itself** rather than a means to an end.
- The **rigid adherence to rules** has resulted in the rejection of innovation
- Administrative reform movement promotes **privatisation and managerial techniques** of the private sector as an effective tool to seek improvements in public service delivery and governance. But this isn't a viable solution, not the least in India where there is social inequality and regional variations in development.

Way Forward – Collaborative Governance

- Collaborative governance is a model in which the public sector, private players and civil society, especially NGOs, work together for effective public service delivery.
- There is no domination of public bureaucracy as the sole agency in policy formulation and implementation.
- As part of new public governance, a network of social actors and private players would take responsibility in various aspects of governance with public bureaucracy steering the ship rather than rowing it.
- During the pandemic, we see civil society playing a major role in saving lives. As part of new public governance, this role has to be institutionalised.

4. Kalakshetra:

- Kalakshetra, as the name suggests, is a centre for artistic endeavour.
- It is an arts and cultural academy dedicated to the preservation of traditional values in Indian art and crafts, especially in the field of **Bharatanatyam dance and Gandharvaveda music**.
- Founded in 1936 by the vibrant visionary **Rukmini Devi Arundale**.
- The Institution stands testimony to her dream of creating a space where the essence of Indian thought would find expression through artistic education.
- Located in Chennai, **the Kalakshetra Foundation**, as it is known today, is a vital centre for the study and performance of fine arts.
- In 1994, an Act of the Parliament of India recognised the Kalakshetra Foundation as an **“Institute of National Importance.”**

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

5. Inflation, Unemployment and Inequality

Issues

- The labour force participation rate in India has fallen for three consecutive months, and was barely 40% in April.
- the unemployment rate has gone up to 8% as per CMIE
- Poverty ratio went up by 15% in rural areas and 20% in urban areas during March to October 2020 as per survey conducted by Azim Premji University.
- On the other hand, the stock market is bestowing increasing wealth and capital gains on rich thus increasing inequality.
- Wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation for April is now above 10%. Of this, the fuel sub-component was at 20%.
- The informal sector, consisting of small and medium enterprises, is still struggling.

Solution

- The best way to tackle this double challenge of inflation and loss of incomes is through direct fiscal support to hard-hit households.
- Cash injections of ₹5,000 per month to all those covered by the public distribution system (PDS) would be advisable for at least three months.
- An extension of higher grain provisions for food security, as carried out last year, is also necessary.
- The immediate priority is to attend to our health crisis, for which we need universal and free vaccination as quickly as possible.

6. New rules notified under the Insurance Act

In news

- As per the new rules notified under the Insurance Act, Indian promoters of insurance joint ventures with foreign partners will no longer be able to nominate a majority of the board members.

Key takeaways

- This follows the recent amendments to enhance the **foreign direct investment (FDI) limit in the insurance sector from 49% to 74%**
- However, a majority of board members, key management persons (KMP) need to be resident Indian citizens.
- Also, at least one of the three top positions – the chairperson of the board, the MD and CEO – need to be resident Indian citizens.
- This new norm will apply to all insurers, irrespective of the stake held by the foreign partner.
- Further conditions have also been specified on the composition of the board for firms where foreign investors' stake exceeds 49%.

7. Govt vs WhatsApp on privacy policy:

Context:

Communication between the IT Ministry and WhatsApp on the issue of **the updated privacy policy** has been going on since January this year.

- The Ministry has recently warned WhatsApp once again to roll back its latest update in privacy policy. This time, the Ministry has also warned of legal action if it does not get a satisfactory reply by May 25.

Key Features of the Privacy Policy:

Information Sharing with Third Party Services: When users rely on third-party services or other Facebook Company Products that are integrated with our Services, those third-party services may receive information about what you or others share with them.

Hardware Information: WhatsApp collects information from devices such as battery level, signal strength, app version, browser information, mobile network, connection information (including phone number, mobile operator or ISP) among others.

Deleting the Account: If someone only deletes the WhatsApp app from their device without using the in-app delete my account feature, then that user's information will remain stored with the platform.

Data Storage: WhatsApp mentions that it uses Facebook's global infrastructure and data centers including those in the United States to store user data. It also states that

the data in some cases will be transferred to the United States or other parts where Facebook's affiliate companies are based.

Location: Even if a user does not use their location-relation features, Whatsapp collects IP addresses and other information like phone number area codes to estimate your general location (city, country).

Payment Services: WhatsApp says that if anyone uses their payments services they will process additional information about you, including payment account and transaction information.

What are the concerns and why is the policy being criticised?

The Ministry has reiterated that the changes to WhatsApp's privacy policy and the manner of introducing them undermine the sacrosanct values of informational privacy, data security and user choice for Indian users.

- The new Whatsapp policy contradicts the recommendations of **the Srikrishna Committee report**, which forms the basis of the Data Protection Bill 2019.
- The principle of **Data Localisation**, which aims to put curbs on the transfer of personal data outside the country, may come in conflict with WhatsApp's new privacy policy.
- With the updated privacy policy, WhatsApp can now share one's **metadata**, essentially everything beyond the conversation's actual text.
- If users disagree with the messaging platform's updated privacy policy, they will have to quit WhatsApp when the new terms of service are set to come into effect.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which of the following is/are correctly matched?

1. Chipko Movement – Uttarakhand
2. Appiko Movement – Andhra Pradesh
3. Save Silent Valley Movement – Kerala
4. Jungle Bachao Andolan – Bihar

Choose the correct option:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Chipko Movement took place in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.
- Inspired by the Chipko movement, Appiko Movement was organized in the state of Karnataka.
- Save Silent Valley movement was an environmental movement organized to protest against the hydroelectric project in the Silent Valley Forest in Kerala.
- Jungle Bachao Andolan was organized by the tribals in Bihar's Singhbhum district.

2. Which of the following heritage cities is located along the banks of Vegavathi River in Tamilnadu?

- a. Tanjore
- b. Chidambaram
- c. Kanchipuram
- d. Kumbakonam

Answer : c

Kanchipuram Temples

- Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu is synonymous with spirituality, serenity, and silk.
- It is dotted with ancient temples that are architectural marvels and a visual treat.
- The city is situated on the banks of River Vegavathi, this historical city once had 1,000 temples, of which only 126 (108 Shaiva and 18 Vaishnava) now remain.
- Its rich legacy has been the endowment of the Pallava dynasty, which made the region its capital between the 6th and 7th centuries and lavished upon its architectural gems that are a fine example of Dravidian styles.
- Recently temples of Kanchipuram are added into the UNESCO tentative list of World Heritage Sites.

Vegavathi River

- Kanchipuram is a Tamil word formed by combining two words "Kanchi" and "-puram" meaning "Brahma" and "residential place" respectively and located on the banks of the Vegavathy river.
- Vegavathy River runs 26 km long within Kanchipuram city, it originates from nearby streams and mixes in the Paalar near Thimmarajampet.
- This river should not be confused with the Vegavathi River that originates in the Pachipenta hills in Eastern Ghats. (Which is a tributary to Suvarnamukhi, and River Nagavali)

3. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

Viruses can infect

1. bacteria
2. fungi
3. plants

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

Viruses can infect all types of life forms including bacteria, fungi, plants, animals and other micro-organisms.

4. “Bao-dhaan” recently in News is:

- a. A medium-grain rice, grown in Bhutan and the eastern Himalayas.
- b. Red parboiled rice variety grown in Palakkad district of Kerala.
- c. A GI-tagged variety of rice known for its strong aroma that is widely used in traditional Bengali cuisine.
- d. Iron rich red rice grown in Brahmaputra valley of Assam.

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Bao Dhaan is the Iron-rich ‘red rice’ grown in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam.
- This variety is grown without the use of chemical fertilizers.

5. Consider the following statements regarding BRICS:

1. Brazil was the last country to join the BRICS.
2. BRICS exists only as an annual summit and not as an organisation.
3. The New Development Bank is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS nations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer :B

Explanation

- BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world’s leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

- In 2001, the British Economist Jim O'Neill coined the term BRIC to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
 - The grouping was formalised during the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers' in 2006.
 - **South Africa was invited to join BRIC in December 2010**, after which the group adopted the acronym BRICS (and not Brazil). Hence, **statement 1 is not correct.**
- BRICS does not exist in the form of organization, but it is an annual summit between the supreme leaders of five nations. Hence, **statement 2 is correct.**
 - The Chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
- Various agreements have been concluded among the BRICS states in the areas of Economic and Trade Cooperation; Innovation Cooperation, Customs Cooperation; strategic cooperation between the BRICS Business Council, Contingent Reserve Agreement and the **New Development Bank.**
 - The **New Development Bank**, formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a **multilateral development bank established by the BRICS states.** Hence, **statement 3 is correct.**

6. Consider the following statements regarding Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Regime:

1. Fertilizers are provided to the farmers at the subsidized rates based on the nutrients contained in it.
2. It is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.

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

- Under the **Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Regime**, fertilizers are provided to the farmers at the subsidized rates based on the nutrients (N, P, K & S) contained in these fertilizers. Hence, **statement 1 is correct.**

- Also, the fertilizers which are fortified with secondary and micronutrients such as molybdenum (Mo) and zinc are given additional subsidy.
- NBS policy intends to increase the consumption of P&K fertilizers so that optimum balance (N:P:K= 4:2:1) of NPK fertilization is achieved.
- This would improve soil health and as a result the yield from the crops would increase, resulting in enhanced income to the farmers.
- Also, as the government expects rational use of fertilizers, this would also ease off the burden of fertilizer subsidy.
- It is being implemented from April 2010 by the **Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers**. Hence, **statement 2 is not correct**.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. What is ASAT? Examine its strategic importance and issues associated with it. (250 words)

Approach

- Describe ASAT in brief.
- Describe its strategic importance.
- Immediate and long term issues associated with ASAT.

2Q. Who is a fugitive economic offender in India? Examine the steps taken by the government in this regard. (250 words)

Approach

- Give introduction by providing need of FEO act and definition of FEOs as given in FEO 2018 Act.
- Enumerate the steps taken by the government for tackling FEOs.
- Highlight criticism of FEO Act 2018.