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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. State repression that breaches public peace

Context:

Telangana recently **banned 16 organisations** by invoking the **Telangana Public Security Act, 1992 (TPSA)**, declaring them as **'unlawful associations'** and **'new front organisations of the proscribed Communist Party of India (Maoist)'**.

Details:

- However, this was **made public three weeks later**. The belated public announcement was made at a time when citizens organisations and collectives in the State were trapped in the coils of the pandemic.

Issue:

- The list of organisations banned as unlawful trawls in anyone who is likely to resist or protest on any count by merely dubbing organisations as a front or new front, or as 'urban guerillas'.
- **The reason for the proposed ban** is that these **activists are moving in urban areas by adopting various guerilla tactics, to wage war against the state.**
- Even the reasons for the ban range from **waging war to protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, repealing of UAPA Act, Farm Laws, NRC, etc.**
- This omnibus labelling of organisations and so-called crimes in themselves are grounds for challenging the ban.
- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is widely challenged by many as being against every constitutional guarantee.
 - Protesting against the UAPA or seeking its repeal cannot in itself be construed as an unlawful activity, as this notification by the Telangana government seems to suggest.

Way forward:

- The ban **comes during a surging second wave of COVID-19**, in which **Telangana has fared poorly.**
- The Telangana High Court asserted that the **event reflected the failure in governance in the state.**

- The **timing** of this notification **merits close scrutiny**.
- The attention of the government should be directed at **managing the public health crisis and the distress caused to the people at large**, demonstrating due diligence in fulfilling its constitutional obligations under Part IV (DPSPs) of the Constitution.

2. Creating critical thinkers

The article discusses how the **pandemic provides an opportunity to re-imagine educational assessments and evaluations**.

Context:

Despite the pandemic unleashing in full force, the issue over **holding or postponing board examinations is being debated**.

Details:

- While there are valid concerns about the future, which include admissions to higher educational institutions, the possibility of **holding exams in person poses a further threat to the lives of people**.
- The **National Curriculum Framework of 2005 affirms the importance of embracing the emotional, social, physical and intellectual growth** of children within a framework of human values.
 - Therefore, a question to consider is **whether academic performances can continue to be the sole representation of student growth**.
 - Alternatively, **student success can be redefined based on social, emotional and spiritual development benchmarks**.
- Raising the quality of educational assessments and evaluations by involving higher educational institutions may even **prevent a mass exodus to international universities** so that young leaders can be nurtured to **engage with underlying national challenges and add value** by sustaining the fabric of a diverse and non-stratified India.

Way Forward:

- **Virtual educational committees** must be organised to rethink approaches to assessing student learning.
- Question papers must be designed in a way that encourages students to **critically engage with the material, contest perspectives and build opinions**.

- In light of the **right to education** that affirms the **importance of formative assessments**, teachers could be invited to engage in evaluating student's performance across the year.
- If there are concerns around the tendency of schools to self-bolster their performance, reports, portfolios, samples of responses and **grades could be shared across a pool of schools so that teachers can anonymously assess and provide insightful feedback on student performance**, until a sense of self-accountability and trust can be cultivated.
- Opening up possibilities of **evaluating students on their performance through the year** will contribute towards **making evaluation and learning much more holistic**.
- Further, inviting higher educational institutions to facilitate **online entrance exams** could be another option. Eventually, the goal could be to involve students in self and peer evaluations.

Conclusion:

The pandemic presents an opportunity to **redefine meaningful education** even though it **requires a concerted change across the curriculum in K-12 schools**, the **entrance criteria** determined by higher educational institutions. Viewing this crisis as a signal for urgent change, core issues can be engaged with and re-evaluated to **prevent students from being trapped in the current system of cramming, rote learning and anxiety**. The government needs to give complete autonomy to educational committees composed of students, teachers, educational leaders, scholars and researchers who can advocate, organise and implement this change nationally and internationally. Re-imagining educational assessments and evaluations, exploring alternatives is the need of the hour.

3. To stop a third wave, India has to mask up

With the **slow pace of the government's vaccination drive**, the article talks about **other active interventions and measures for the prevention of a third wave of COVID-19 infections**.

Waves across the globe:

- **The United States and Brazil** have had **three distinct waves**.
- The **United Kingdom had a small first wave**, after which the virus seemed to be disappearing. This was followed by **two explosive waves**, which only subsided after a lockdown and an aggressive vaccination campaign in which 95% of all those over the age of 50 have been vaccinated.
- **South Africa** has also seen **two waves**.

Given the pattern, a second wave in India was almost a given. And once this wave recedes, it is highly likely that a third wave will build up, unless active measures are taken to stop it from building up. Now is the time to think ahead and find ways to prevent the next wave.

Vaccine as an option for preventing the third wave:

- Vaccines are the best option. However, this might not be the most feasible option to blunt either this or future waves due to:
 - The huge population of the country
 - The slow pace of vaccination
 - Inelastic vaccine supplies both in India and globally
 - Limited finances with State governments which have now been given the responsibility of vaccinating the bulk of the country's population.

Tested methods that work:

- **Along with vaccination**, it is important to practise the full methods that have been shown to slow the spread of COVID-19 in different parts of the world: **wearing a mask, physical distancing, hand hygiene and a ban on mass gatherings.**
- While these measures may not be as effective as mass vaccination, but in the absence of vaccines, they are perhaps the only **way to reduce community transmission** and slow the spread of the virus.
- **The near-universal adoption of nonmedical masks when out in public**, in combination with complementary **public health measures** could reduce community spread, provided the measures are sustained.

Conventional wisdom in India has it that **wearing a mask only works** when it is imposed as a **police measure**. However, public health measures that work best are those that the people voluntarily adopt, drastically reducing transmission.

Bangladesh shows the way:

- There is evidence from an experimental study in Bangladesh that **people will use masks enthusiastically if they are provided free, are comfortable, and accompanied with appropriate instructional material.**
- Interventions such as **reminders from religious and community leaders and volunteers** increased the percentage of people using masks three-fold.

Way Forward:

- Public health measures that work best are those that the **public voluntarily adopts** because they see it as being in their best interests.

- **Communication at the level of communities** is the key to getting people to protect themselves this way.
- **Imaginative and creative communication campaigns** are essential.
- Vaccines are the ultimate solution. But in the meanwhile, it is important to focus on what can be done right now if further disasters are to be prevented.

4. 'Childhood vaccinations must not be delayed'

Context:

Experts have underlined the importance of vaccines by stating that **childhood vaccinations are crucial to ensure the health and well-being of children**, and must not be delayed or missed.

Details:

- Vaccination has been the biggest contributor to the health of mankind.
- Vaccination **greatly reduces disease, disability, death and inequity worldwide**. It has greatly **reduced the burden of infectious diseases**.
- Primary vaccinations (those given in the first nine months), should not be postponed – the aim is to protect the baby from deadly diseases that can kill them in the first year of life.

Note:

- **Hepatitis A** is a disease **transmitted by contaminated water and affects the liver**.

5. Opinion Polls and Exit Polls

Opinion Polls:

- An opinion poll is **an inquiry into public opinion** conducted by **interviewing a random sample of people before actual Election Day**.

Exit Polls:

- An exit poll is a **poll of voters taken** soon after a voter walks out **after casting his or her vote**. It is considered an **indicator of which party forms the government**.

Regulation:

- Restrictions are imposed on exit polls through **Section 126(A) in the Representation of the People's Act, 1951.**
- The Election Commission advises electronic and print media not to publish or publicise any article or programme related to the dissemination of results of exit polls during the prohibited period.
- RP Act puts a ban on exit polls from the period between **the commencements of the poll until half an hour after the closing of the final phase of the poll.**
- However, there are no similar restrictions placed on opinion polls under RPA. But, it cannot be published during the period of Election Silence, i.e, 48 hours before the close of voting.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. China launches key module for its permanent space station

Context:

China has launched the main module of its first permanent space station that will host astronauts for the long term.

Details:

- The **Tianhe**, or the “Heavenly Harmony” module, blasted into space atop a **Long March 5B rocket.**
- The launch kicks off the first of 11 missions necessary to complete, supply and crew the station by the end of 2022.
- China’s space programme recently brought back the first new lunar samples in more than 40 years and it also expects to land a probe and rover on the surface of Mars shortly.
- The Space Station China is building is called **Tiangong which means “Heavenly Space”.**
- The size of Tiangong Space Station will be a quarter the size of the International Space Station, and has a lifespan of fifteen years.
- The programme has realised a number of its growing ambitions in recent years.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Supreme Court must oversee vaccination to protect the right to life

Why Supreme Court needs to step in

- Amid raging debate over the vaccination strategy, the role the Supreme Court of India can play to safeguard the right to life guaranteed under **Article 21, for which it is duty-bound to exercise jurisdiction under Article 32** needs consideration.
- In this regard, universal vaccination is a glimmer of hope.
- The Supreme Court of India **can facilitate speed and deeper penetration of universal vaccination**, which is now commonly accepted as the only possible solution to the pandemic in the long run.

Issue of patent of vaccine

- It is time to question patents claimed by vaccines that have been **developed with aid from the state** in research and development.
- These patents, if established, must be immediately acquired with **just and adequate compensation** and made accessible to all manufacturers.
- This was **done for medicines for AIDS** and it can be done again under the **Patents Act**.
- The Court can also **issue mandamus** to undertake this exercise on an emergency basis.
- Thereafter, all pharmaceutical companies with **Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)** as per the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act** must be allowed to manufacture vaccines at a **pre-approved price of cost + 6 per cent** return on investment.
- States can also be directed to **incentivise the setting up of new manufacturing facilities** as a possible third wave, periodic booster doses and the need for ancillary vaccines make it a long-term phenomenon.

- All this has to be ensured in addition to the free import of vaccines approved by advanced nations.

Free for all

- The availability of all the vaccines, whether indigenous or imported, must be free for all the recipients to be paid by GoI.
- The vaccines can be **distributed to states on a pro-rata basis** as per population and price adjusted as part of general revenue sharing in GST.

Vaccine administration

- The vaccine administration needs to be ramped up both in state and private facilities.
- For vaccine hesitancy, we need to **incentivise the vaccination** through a direct deposit of Rs 500 in Jan Dhan accounts for each vaccinated member of BPL families.
- This vaccination can be **made compulsory for identifiable categories of persons** from MGNREGA beneficiaries to Aadhaar Card holders to income-tax payers to bank account holders to driving-licence holders.
- There must be a **strict penalty to be recovered** from those who do not get vaccinated without medical reasons.
- Private efforts can be made eligible for reimbursement of cost.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court can steer us, with greater emphasis on the right to life. The pandemic may leave nothing and nobody behind to bicker about.

2. Agreement between India and UK on custom cooperation approved

Background of the agreement

- The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister has approved the signing and ratification of an Agreement with the UK on **Customs Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters**.
- The Agreement would provide a **legal framework for sharing of information and intelligence between the Customs authorities of the two countries**.
- It will also help in the proper application of Customs laws, prevention and investigation of Customs offences and the facilitation of legitimate trade.

- The Agreement takes care of Indian Customs' concerns and requirements, particularly in the area of exchange of information on the correctness of the Customs value, tariff classification and origin of the goods traded between the two countries.

Impact

- The Agreement will help in the availability of relevant information for the prevention and investigation of Customs offences.
- The Agreement is also expected to facilitate trade and ensure efficient clearance of goods traded between the countries.

3. Corporate Social Responsibility Expenditure

Why in News

Experts are calling on the government to ease CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) regulations to allow corporate expenditure on vaccinations for employees and treatment of employees suffering from Covid to be covered under spending for CSR.

- Under current CSR norms, companies are not permitted to count expenditure incurred exclusively for the welfare of employees as part of their mandatory CSR expenditure.

Key Points

- **Corporate Social Responsibility:**
 - **Meaning:**
 - The term "Corporate Social Responsibility" in general can be referred to as a corporate initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment and impact on social welfare.
 - **Governance:**
 - In India, the concept of CSR is governed by clause 135 of the Companies Act, 2013.
 - India is the first country in the world to mandate CSR spending along with a framework to identify potential CSR activities.
 - The CSR provisions within the Act is applicable to companies with an annual turnover of 1,000 crore and more, or a net worth of Rs. 500 crore and more, or a net profit of Rs. 5 crore and more.

- The Act **requires companies to set up a CSR committee** which shall recommend a Corporate Social Responsibility Policy to the Board of Directors and also monitor the same from time to time.
- The Act **encourages companies to spend 2% of their average net profit in the previous three years on CSR activities.**
- **CSR Activities:**
 - The **indicative activities**, which can be undertaken by a company under CSR, have been **specified under Schedule VII of the Act**. The activities include:
 - Eradicating extreme hunger and poverty,
 - Promotion of education, gender equality and empowering women,
 - Combating **Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome** and other diseases,
 - Ensuring environmental sustainability;
 - Contribution to the **Prime Minister's National Relief Fund** or any other fund set up by the Central Government for socio-economic development and relief and funds for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women etc.
- **Injeti Srinivas Committee:**
 - A **High Level Committee on CSR** was formed in 2018 under the Chairmanship of Injeti Srinivas.
 - The **main recommendations** included making CSR expenditure tax deductible, allowing the carry-forward of unspent balance for a period of 3-5 years, and aligning Schedule VII of the Companies Act with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**.
- **Recent Development:**
 - In 2020, the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs allowed companies to spend CSR funds on Covid-19 relief**, including preventive healthcare and sanitation and on research and development of Covid drugs, vaccines and medical devices.
 - The **ambit was expanded further this year** to include awareness or public outreach programmes on Covid-19 vaccination and setting up of makeshift hospitals and temporary Covid care facilities.
- **Benefits of Further Easing CSR Norms:**
 - **Role in Vaccination Drive:** Approximately, Rs. 10,000 crore is available with listed companies annually for spending on CSR activities. If the eligible unlisted companies are taken into account, the available sum may be larger. This can be handy in supplementing the expenditure of the Centre and States on vaccination.

- **Rural Population can be reachable:** Many of these companies have a presence in rural areas. This will ensure that the drive goes beyond the large cities and reach the rural population too.
- **Benefit of Allowing Corporate Expenditure on Vaccinations for Employees under CSR:** This will boost vaccinations for unorganised labour in the manufacturing sector and will benefit the overburdened healthcare system.

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

4. Don't worry about the deficit

Role of fiscal policy to support economy through second wave

- As India battles to contain the surge in COVID-19 cases, several states have already imposed severe restrictions at the local level.
- The services sector has been hit the most as a consequence of these lockdowns and **it would be difficult for India to deliver on this optimistic growth projection.**
- Against this background, the role **fiscal policy** can play to support the economy needs consideration.
- The monetary policy **is already accommodative** and may not have enough room to further boost the economy.
- With headline as well as core inflation inching up in recent months, the **RBI may not be in a position to further cut the policy rate.**
- As per the latest Union Budget, the fiscal deficit is estimated to moderate **from 9.5 per cent of GDP in FY21 to 6.8 per cent of GDP in FY22.**
- This expected decline in fiscal deficit is not on account of lower fiscal spending but because of **expectations of sharper revenue growth.**
- The revenue receipts are estimated to grow by 15 per cent and fiscal spending by 1 per cent this financial year.
- With the debt to GDP ratio already **more than 90 per cent, additional fiscal expansion will not be an easy choice** for the government.

Government need to create fiscal space

- Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures and the government will have to **find ways to create fiscal space.**

- This has become especially important as the economy is yet to shrug off the impact of the previous lockdown.
- Under these difficult circumstances, immediate measures must aim at providing the **requisite social safety net** to the poor and the vulnerable.
- The central government has already announced it will distribute an additional five kg of grain to the 800 million beneficiaries of the **National Food Security Act**, which is welcome.
- However, given the unprecedented uncertainty brought about by this COVID wave, the **ration support under the PDS should be raised further**.
- The government should also consider transferring cash to the bank accounts of the poor, just as it did last time.
- This becomes important as MGNREGA may not provide the safety cushion that it is indeed to as long as lockdown measures remain in place.
- The best stimulus perhaps would be to provide free vaccinations to the population as the benefits of faster and wider vaccine coverage more than outweighs its monetary cost.
- Immunisation is a public good. As we get over this crisis, the government must increase its outlay on physical and human health infrastructure.

How to finance additional cost?

- Part of this additional cost may be financed **by reducing non-essential government expenditures** and use it for COVID-related expenditure.
- The government may need to resort to additional borrowings from the market than budgeted earlier.
- The RBI may allow inflation above the upper bound of 6 per cent only in the short run.
- The plausible rise in interest rates may also be crucial to prevent capital outflows, given the global “economic outlook” when the US economy adopts an easy monetary policy combined with a huge fiscal stimulus.

Conclusion

The government should not be **deterred by a worsening fiscal deficit** in the short run as the additional growth that it generates may make debt consolidation easier when things normalise.

5. DRDO conducts maiden trial of Python-5 Air to Air Missile

Tejas adds Python-5 in its capacity

- Tejas, India's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft, added the 5th generation Python-5 Air-to-Air Missile (AAM) in its air-to-air weapons capability on April 27, 2021.
- Trials were also aimed to validate enhanced capability of already integrated Derby Beyond Visual Range (BVR) AAM on Tejas.
- The test firing at Goa completed a series of missile trials to validate its **performance under extremely challenging scenarios**.
- The trials met all their planned objectives.
- The missiles were fired from Tejas aircraft of **Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)** flown by Indian Air Force (IAF) Test pilots.
- The successful conduct was made possible with years of hard work by the team of scientists, engineers and technicians from ADA and HAL-ARDC along with admirable support from CEMILAC, DG-AQA, IAF PMT, NPO (LCA Navy) and INS HANSA.

6. Tejas Adds Python-5 Air to Air Missile Capability

Why in News

Recently, India's Indigenous **Light Combat Aircraft Tejas** has added capability of firing **Israeli-origin Python-5 air-to-air missile (AAM)** after concluding successful tests.

- The same set of tests were also aimed to validate the enhanced capability of the already integrated Israeli-origin **Derby beyond visual range AAM** on Tejas.
- The tests were conducted by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.

Key Points

- **Python-5 Missile:**
 - It has been **developed by the Israeli defence company Rafael Advanced Defense Systems**. It is the **newest member of the Python family**.
 - This **fifth generation air-to-air missile** provides the pilot engaging an enemy aircraft with a revolutionary full sphere launch capability.
 - It can be **launched from very short to beyond-visual ranges** with greater kill probability, excellent resistance to countermeasures, irrespective of evasive target manoeuvres or deployment of countermeasures.

- It is a **dual use missile suitable for air-to-air and surface-to-air missions.**
- It is powered by a solid propellant **rocket engine.** The propulsion system provides a **speed of Mach 4** and an operational **range of more than 20 km.**
- It is also equipped with **lock-on-before launch (LOBL)** and **lock-on-after launch (LOAL)** capabilities.
- **Light Combat Aircraft Tejas:**
 - Tejas is a **single engined, light weight, highly agile, multi-role supersonic fighter.**
 - The **indigenously-developed aircraft** has been **manufactured at the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** and **designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)** for the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy.
 - It is **designed to carry** a range of air-to-air, air-to-surface, precision-guided, weapons.

Beyond Visual Range AAM

- A beyond-visual-range missile (BVR) is an air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) that is **capable of engaging at ranges of 37 km or beyond.** This range has been achieved using dual pulse rocket motors or booster rocket motors and ramjet sustainer motors.
- In addition to the range capability, the missile is also capable of tracking its target at this range or of acquiring the target in flight.
- Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) technology enables the fighter-pilots to shoot precisely at the enemy targets which are beyond their visual range.
 - **Astra missile** works on BVRAAM.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. World Happiness Report 2021 is released by which of the following organizations?

- a. Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations
- b. International Institute for Sustainable Development
- c. UN- Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN-SDSN)

- d. UN- Global Compact

Answer : c

World Happiness Report

- It is published by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN-SDSN).
- It is powered by data from the Gallup World Poll and Lloyd's Register Foundation.
- It ranks the world's 149 countries on "how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be".
- According to the recently published report Finland has been ranked as the happiest country in the world.
- It is followed by Iceland, Denmark, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Norway.
- India's ranking has been improved to 139 as compared to 144 in 2020 and 140 in 2019.
- The United States ranks at 19th place for happiness, despite being one of the richest countries in the world.

2. Python-5 recently seen in news is a

- a. Anti-Tank Guided Missile
- b. Air-to-Air Missile
- c. Surface to Air Missile
- d. Surface to Surface Missile

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Python is a family of air-to-air missiles (AAMs) built by the Israeli weapons manufacturer Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.
- Now, India's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft Tejas has added the 5th generation Python-5 Air-to-Air Missile in its air-to-air weapons capability.
- Python 5 is the newest member in the range of Python AAMs.

3. Which of the following regions fall under seismic zone 5?

1. Entire northeastern India
2. Parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh
3. Andaman & Nicobar Islands
4. Rann of Kutch in Gujarat
5. Delhi-NCR region

Options:

- a. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- b. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c. 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: a

Explanation:

Entire northeastern India, parts of the UTs Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rann of Kutch, parts of North Bihar and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are classified as Zone-V.

4. Which of the following are the pillars of Global Gender Gap Index?

1. Health
2. Education attainment
3. Political empowerment
4. Economic participation

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 and 4 only
- c. 2, 3 and 4 only
- d. All of the above

Answer : d

- In the recently released Global Gender Gap index by World Economic Forum (WEF) for 2021, India falls 28 spots and is placed at 140th position.
- The Index has four pillars- education attainment, health, political empowerment and economic participation.
- In Asia region, only Pakistan and Afghanistan are behind India.

- India has suffered mainly in political empowerment and economic participation.
- India fell from 18 to 51 in political empowerment of women, despite women having a great opportunity to get better participation in political decision-making.
- As against a global average of 50%, India has just 12 % participation, which clearly is an issue of political will, as local self-government body elections have shown good participation.
- The labour participation of women is 22%, one of the lowest in the world (comparable countries have 50%).
- Educational attainment and economic participation are closely linked and the gender gap issue in India is stark here.
- The big drop in enrolment of girls in primary (93%), secondary (62%) and tertiary (29%) education which is alarming.
- The pandemic has affected more women than men.

5. Consider the following statements with respect to investments instruments Ct value in a Covid-19 Test?

1. It refers to the number of cycles after which the virus can be detected.
2. It tells about the viral load in the throat and not in the lungs.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : c

Ct value in a Covid-19 Test

- The cycle threshold or Ct is a value that emerges during RT-PCR tests, which is the gold standard for detection of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.
- According to the ICMR advisory, the Ct value of an RT-PCR reaction is the number of cycles at which fluorescence of the PCR product is detectable over and above the background signal.
- If a higher number of cycles are required, it implies that the virus went undetected when the number of cycles was lower.

- The lower the Ct value, the higher the viral load because the virus has been spotted after fewer cycles.
- The ICMR has said that all patients with a Ct value less than 35 may be considered as positive while those with a Ct value above 35 may be considered as negative.
- The Ct values may differ between nasal and oropharyngeal specimens collected from the same individual.
- The temperature of transportation, as well as the time taken from collection to receipt in the lab, can also adversely impact Ct values.
- The globally accepted cut-off for Ct value for Covid-19 ranges between 35 and 40 which depend on instructions from the respective manufacturers of testing equipment.
- The ICMR has arrived at the Ct value of 35 based on laboratory experiences and inputs taken from several virology labs.

6. With respect to Navigation with Indian Constellation (NaviC), consider the following statements:

1. It is an autonomous regional satellite navigation system established and maintained by ISRO.
2. It covers India and a region extending up to 1500 km beyond Indian mainland.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : c

NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)

- It is an autonomous regional satellite navigation system established and maintained by ISRO.
- It is an indigenous positioning system that is under Indian control.
- There is no risk of the service being withdrawn or denied in a given situation.
- It covers India and a region extending up to 1,500 km beyond Indian mainland (primary coverage area).

- It provides position accuracy better than 20 m (20) and timing accuracy better than 50 ns (20).
- The actual measurements demonstrate accuracy better than 5 m and 20 ns respectively.
- NavIC based applications are being used in various civilian sectors, including, transport, map applications, and timekeeping.

Mains Practice Questions

Q1. Discuss how far Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) has been useful for our environment as well as society? (250 words)

Approach

- Write a few introductory lines about the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA).
- Discuss the importance of EIA for the environment as well as society.
- Discuss the shortcomings of the EIA process.
- Provide solutions to remove such shortcomings.
- Conclude suitably.

Q2. Strategic convergence of Indian foreign policy with that of the US can impact India's interests in the Middle East region. Discuss. Comment. (250 words)

Approach

- Mention the importance of the Middle-East for India in the introduction.
- Write about recent US foreign policy actions in the middle-east and how it impacts Indian interests in the region.
- Mention the steps that India should take in view of its national interest.

