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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. A policy difficult to defend

Context:

- India's new vaccination policy.

Liberalized vaccination policy:

- Under the new vaccination policy, States will no longer have to bear the responsibility or expenses of procuring vaccines; the **Centre will procure vaccines on behalf of the States as the single purchaser and provide them to states free of cost.**
- Of the total domestic production of vaccines in India, 75% has been reserved for exclusive government purchase while **25% of the total vaccines have been opened up for private sector procurement.**

Concerns:

- The article expresses concerns over the provision to reserve 25% of the vaccines for the private sector based on the following arguments.

Demand supply mismatch:

- The private sector's share of total manufactured vaccines is not proportional with the private sector's share of total vaccination centres, which are much lesser than the number of government vaccination centres.
- The demand for free vaccines at the government centres continues to be high and the proposed share for the private sector might result in a demand-supply mismatch between government and private centres.

Doubts over ability to pay:

- The allocation of a 25% share for private vaccination entails an implicit assumption that 25% of the population is willing and able to pay for the vaccine. This goes against available evidence which notes that the **affluent form only a small fraction of the uppermost 25% of India's population based on income.**

Depress vaccine demand generation:

- The move to divert 25% of the vaccines through the private health sector could **disincentivize vaccine uptake and depress vaccine demand generation.**

Crowding out effect:

- With the need for online registration for free vaccination, the affluent class with greater digital awareness is more likely to block slots for free vaccination. This can lead to a '**crowding out**' effect for the poorer sections.

Policy incoherence:

- A large chunk of the proposed self-payers for vaccination are likely to be younger, productive individuals, who are at lesser risk of severe disease and mortality than the elderly.
- Hence the new policy fails to **consider the age structure into vaccination policy and its possible implications.**

Improbability of achieving herd immunity:

- Though some may argue that the new vaccination policy is driven by herd immunity considerations, which estimate that **vaccination of 60% to 80% of the population can help limit the spread of the infection**, the resultant disparities along geographic and socioeconomic lines which could result from the new policy would not be consistent with the notion of herd immunity.
- It is critical to note that vaccinating the poorer and marginalised sections, even if it is free of charge, is much more challenging than vaccinating the easily accessible better-off sections.

Inequity:

- An inadvertent consequence of the new policy is that it would result in **higher out-of-pocket expenditure.** This would amount to deepening the already existing inequities in India.

Way forward:

Increase share of government's uptake of vaccines:

- Given that **vaccine as a commodity has much higher social benefits than private benefit**, there is the urgent need to increase the government's share of total vaccines.

Engagement with private sector:

- **The private sector is marked by greater reach, innovative processes, and efficiency.** These strengths of the private sector need to be sufficiently exploited as part of a **strategic purchasing framework** which could also reduce the cost of vaccines for the private sector and thus help vaccine uptake.

2. An elite club

- In the light of the recently held **G7 summit**, the article discusses the **highlights of the summit** and some of the **challenges facing the G7 grouping**.

Green Climate Fund:

- The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a fund established within the **framework of the UNFCCC** as an **operating entity of the Financial Mechanism** to assist developing countries.
 - **The Copenhagen Accord**, established during the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-15) in Copenhagen first considered the idea of a Green Climate Fund.
 - GCF was formally established under the **Cancun Agreements in 2010** during the 2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancun.
- The objective of the Green Climate Fund is to **support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country parties to help them in adaptation and mitigation practices** to counter climate change.
- The Fund has set itself a goal of **raising \$100 billion a year by 2020**.
- The GCF is based in Incheon, South Korea.

Significance of Green Climate Fund:

Climate finance needed:

- **The World Economic Forum projects that by 2020, about \$5.7 trillion will need to be invested annually in green infrastructure to meet the Paris agreement targets.** The poor and developing countries are not in a position to mobilize funds to this extent and therein lies the need for a dedicated funding mechanism like the Green Climate Fund.
- Climate finance will help the developing and underdeveloped countries cut carbon emissions and cope with global warming by enabling their shift to renewable and sustainable technology while also helping them adapt to climate change.

Higher per capita emission:

- **The G7 countries account for 20% of global carbon emissions while supporting a smaller proportion of the overall global population.** This necessitates the need for the G7 nations to reduce their GHG emissions and reduce their carbon footprint.

Legacy emission of the developed world:

- Also, given that the G7 nations consisting of some of the **richest economies have had the advantage of early development based on high carbon usage**, these nations need to shoulder some responsibility for their historical GHG emissions. This would be in line with the principle of **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)**.
 - Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) is a principle within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that acknowledges the different capabilities and differing responsibilities of individual countries in addressing climate change.

Disproportionate impact on the poor and developing countries:

- Also despite being the smallest contributors to the overall GHG emissions, **the poor and developing world continue to remain the most affected countries by climate change.** Their fragile economic and social conditions make them very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This necessitates the need for greater focus on these vulnerable countries and hence the need to provide financial assistance to them through climate finance. This would be in line with the **principle of climate justice**.
 - Climate justice acknowledges the fact that climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations. Climate justice requires that these inequities be addressed through long-term mitigation and adaptation strategies. Climate justice examines concepts such as equality, human rights, collective rights, and the historical responsibilities for climate change.

Details:

- G7 leaders have pledged to **meet the climate finance target**.
 - The seven nations including the U.S., Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan have reaffirmed their commitment to jointly **mobilize \$100 billion per year from public and private sources, through to 2025.**

- They have also agreed to **raise their contribution** to meet the overdue spending pledge and have also called upon other developed countries to join and enhance their contributions too.
 - Under the Paris Agreement in 2015, developed countries had agreed that prior to 2025 a new collective quantified goal from a floor of USD 100 billion per year shall be set.

Concerns:

- The **Climate finances pledges made so far remain substantially lower than the targeted amount.**
- Also, the pledges of cash promises lack specifics and hence cannot be counted as concrete commitments on climate finance.
- Some green groups were unimpressed with the climate pledges and have reiterated the demand on the rich economies to consider new and additional climate finance.

3. Govt. report flags 'lapses' in Nagaland bat study

Context:

The government has concluded that there had been **concerning lapses in the conduct and protocols followed for the Nagaland bat study.**

Background:

- It was a probe into a filovirus study of bats in Nagaland by the Bengaluru-based National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR).

Issue:

- Earlier, an enquiry was initiated into **whether adequate permissions had been sought for the study that had listed two scientists at the Wuhan Institute of Virology as co-authors, and was partially funded by the U.S. Department of Defense** through its Defence Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).
- Besides, there is **an inter-department disagreement over where the bat samples should be stored.**
- Both the **foreign funding of the study**, which cost an estimated ₹1.9 crore, as well as **concerns over the storage of the bat samples** collected have come up for scrutiny.

- According to the Health Ministry report, the **study didn't have the requisite approval of ICMR**. And the **facility at NCBS was not equipped in terms of biosafety and biosecurity to undertake such testing**.
- The Health Ministry wants the samples of nucleic acid extract stored at the Bio Safety Level-4 (BSL-4) standard facility at the National Institute of Virology laboratory in Pune, rather than NCBS's Bengaluru facilities, which are rated BSL-3 at present.

The findings of the report are significant in the backdrop of the debate over the origins of COVID-19 worldwide, and the handling of bat samples at the Wuhan Institute laboratory.

Note:

However, scientific experts and officials have made it clear that the **Nagaland bat study on filoviruses (Ebola and Marburg) was in no way related to the coronavirus (SARS) studies at Wuhan**.

4. 'ONORC is tailor-made for migrants'

Details:

One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme.

Details:

- The centre has told the Supreme Court that the **ONORC scheme makes food security portable and is tailor-made for migrant labourers**.
- One Nation One Ration Card plan aims to **empower all National Food Security Act migrant beneficiaries to access foodgrains from any Fair Price Shop [FPS] of their choice anywhere in the country** by using their same/existing ration card with biometric authentication.
- A total of 32 States/UTs covering around 69 crore NFSA beneficiaries, i.e., **86% NFSA population in the country, were brought under the ONORC plan by December 2020**.

5. G7 accommodates Indian stand on need for Internet curbs

Context:

India signed off on a joint statement by G-7 and guest countries on “open societies” after making its reservations known to the negotiators from G-7 countries.

Note:

47th edition of the “Group of Seven (G7)” summit was held at Carbis Bay, southwest England.

Details:

- The ‘**Open Societies Statement**’ was adopted at the end of a G7 outreach session titled ‘**Building Back Together – Open Societies and Economies**’ where India’s Prime Minister was invited as a lead speaker.
- The joint statement was signed by the G-7 countries, and **India, South Korea, Australia and South Africa.**
 - The British Prime Minister Boris Johnson termed them “**Democracies 11**”.
- While the statement is directed at China and Russia, **India has been under scrutiny** over
 - **Internet curbs in Jammu and Kashmir.**
 - **Face-off over its new IT rules** with tech giants such as Twitter.
- The ‘**Open Societies Statement**’ reaffirm and encourage the values of “freedom of expression, both online and offline, as a freedom that safeguards democracy and helps people live free from fear and oppression”.
- The statement also refers to “**politically motivated internet shutdowns**” as one of the **threats to freedom and democracy.**

India’s Stand:

- India has been a special guest to the G-7/G-8 since 2003.
- However, **it has also maintained its independent course**, especially on political issues.
- India voiced concerns about some clauses in the **joint communiqué on Open Societies** which condemned rising authoritarianism, net shutdowns, manipulation of information, and rights violations.
 - These are the areas where the Indian government has often been criticised.
- India’s External Affairs Minister who had participated in the G-7 Foreign Ministers meeting had said that “**open societies and personal freedoms require careful nurturing. Must be on guard against fake news and digital manipulation.**”
- India signed off on the statement **after making its reservations known** to the negotiators from the G-7 count.

- Government sources said that India's tough negotiations on the joint communique had ensured that the original language criticising Internet shutdown was amended to include India's concerns.
 - "politically motivated Internet shutdowns" clarified that **national security and public order concerns are an exception to the need for Internet freedoms.**
- It is significant that the **G-7 outreach communiqués that included the guest countries, did not make the same references to China as the main document.**
 - Chinese aggression was not raised at the outreaches.

Conclusion:

India had the largest number of Internet shutdowns in 2020. In the present, the Indian Government will **be expected to walk the talk** on its **commitments at the G-7 outreach**, especially in the areas of information clampdowns.

6. EU resolution puts spotlight on Sri Lanka's rights situation

What's in News?

European Parliament has **adopted a resolution** urging the EU Commission to consider a **temporary withdrawal of the GSP+ status given to Sri Lanka.**

Details:

- The resolution notes the continuing discrimination against and violence towards religious and ethnic minorities while voicing serious concern about the 20th Amendment passed in 2020, and the resulting decline in judiciary independence, the reduction of parliamentary control, and the excessive accumulation of power with the presidency.
- This has put the **spotlight back on Sri Lanka's human rights situation.**
- **Sri Lanka regained the GSP+ in 2017, on Colombo's commitment to implement 27 international conventions on human rights, labour conditions, protection of the environment and good governance.**
- The status effectively removes import duties on goods from Sri Lanka entering the EU.

Generalized Scheme of Preferences

- The European Union's "Generalized Scheme of Preferences" (GSP) allows developing country exporters to pay lower duties on their exports to the EU.

- This gives them vital access to EU markets and contributes to their economic growth.
- EU's GSP removes import duties from products coming into the EU market from vulnerable developing countries. This helps developing countries to alleviate poverty and create jobs based on international values and principles, including labour and human rights.
- There are three main variants (arrangements) or tiers of the EU GSP Scheme:
 - **General GSP arrangement** offers tariff reductions or elimination on identified products exported from beneficiary developing countries.
 - **The "GSP+" enhanced preference** means full removal of tariffs on essentially the same product categories as those covered by the general arrangement. These are granted to countries that ratify and implement international conventions relating to **human and labour rights, environment and good governance**.
 - **"Everything but Arms" (EBA) arrangement** for least developed countries (LDCs), which grants duty-free quota-free access to all products, except for arms and ammunitions.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

7. 'China, India, Pak. expanding nuclear arsenal'

What's in News?

Swedish think tank **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Year Book 2021** has been released.

Highlights:

- The overall number of warheads in global military stockpiles appears to be increasing.
 - It signals that the declining trend that characterised global nuclear arsenals since the end of the Cold War has come to a halt.
- China is in the middle of significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear weapon inventory. India and Pakistan also appear to be expanding their nuclear arsenals.
 - India and Pakistan are seeking new technologies and capabilities that dangerously undermine each other's defence under the nuclear threshold.

- China's evolving profile as a nuclear weapons state is compounding India's security challenges.
- The **nine nuclear-armed states – the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea – together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons** at the start of 2021.

Russia and the U.S. together possessed over 90% of global nuclear weapons.

8. Unlocking war histories with a purpose

- In the light of the recent **announcement by the Defence Minister on archiving, declassifying and compiling war histories**, here is a compilation of a few operations of significance in Indian history.

Exercise Brasstacks (1986-87):

- Operation Brasstacks was a **major combined arms military exercise of the Indian Armed Forces in the Rajasthan state of India** to simulate the operational capabilities of the Indian armed forces. It was one of the biggest mobilization of Indian forces on the Indian subcontinent.
- The military exercise heralded the transformation of Indian warfighting doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures in conventional warfighting, particularly in the plains and the desert.

Operation Meghdoot:

- Operation Meghdoot (1984) was the codename for the Indian Armed Forces' operation to **seize control of the Siachen Glacier in Kashmir.**

Operation Falcon:

- Operation Falcon (1986) was launched along the borders of Arunachal Pradesh to counter the Chinese army. MI 26 helicopters were used to airlift an entire Brigade south of the Indo-China border.
- Indian Army took up positions along the ridges they had lost in 1962 and overlooked the entire **Sumdorong Chu range.**

Operation Pawan:

- Operation Pawan (1987) was the code name assigned to the **operation by the Indian Peace Keeping Force** to take control of Jaffna from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. SC move to quash OBC quota in Maharashtra Local Bodies

The Supreme Court last month quashed Maharashtra's review petition challenging its earlier verdict that scrapped a quota for OBCs in the state's local bodies, triggering a war of words between the ruling and opposition parties.

What is the OBC reservation in local bodies?

- The Maharashtra government set up a 27 percent quota in local bodies for OBCs in 1994.
- The 27 percent reservation was applicable to all urban (Municipal Corporations, Councils and Nagar Panchayat) and rural bodies (Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat) across the state.
- In Maharashtra, the OBCs include the Denotified Tribes (Vimukta Jatis), Nomadic Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Special Backward Category.
- This quota for OBCs increased their representation in rural and urban local bodies.

What is the history of the demand for an OBC census in Maharashtra?

- As per the Mandal Commission report, the last caste-wise census was conducted in 1931 and it was later discontinued.
- Based on the data from the 1931 census, the Mandal commission worked out the OBC population to be 52 per cent and recommended a 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in view of the SC judgment limiting reservation up to 50 per cent.
- There was already a 22.5 per cent reservation for SC and ST categories.
- The Mandal Commission report recommended 27 per cent reservation in government jobs and promotions along with others.
- The report gave momentum to OBC leaders and the community's demand for a caste-wise census of OBC.

Need for a caste-wise census

- The 2011 census included data about the socio-economic caste census but has not released the data citing the errors in it.
- In 2018, ahead of the Lok Sabha polls the following year, the Centre announced that OBC enumeration will be done in the 2021 census.
- But this promise could not be tested with the onset of the pandemic and the indefinite delay in population enumeration.
- OBC leaders fear the OBC enumeration may never actually happen.

How did the matter reach the SC?

- The quota was exceeding the 50 per cent limit which is contrary to SC 2010 judgment of K Krishna Murthy (Dr.) and Ors. vs. Union of India and others.
- The court granted the status quo and the elections were delayed.
- On March 4 this year, The SC read it down in stating that it may be invoked only upon complying with the triple conditions before notifying the seats reserved for OBC category in the concerned local bodies.
- The triple conditions included setting up “a dedicated Commission to conduct a contemporaneous rigorous empirical inquiry into the nature and implications of the backwardness qua local bodies, within the State”.
- This was to specify the proportion of reservations required to be provisioned local body-wise in light of recommendations of the commission.
- It also stated that such reservation, in any case, shall not exceed the aggregate of 50 per cent of the total seats reserved in favour of SCs, STs and OBCs taken together.
- The apex court observed the reservation for OBCs is only “statutory”, to be provided by the state legislations, unlike the “constitutional” reservation regarding SCs/STs which is linked to the proportion of the population.

What do OBC leaders say now?

- There has been a mixed response from the OBC leaders to the SC verdict, with some welcoming it while others lamenting on losing reservation.
- Some say it will pave the way for conducting the OBC census in the state.
- So far, there was no data about the OBC population and our demand for the OBC census for the last 30 years have fallen on deaf ears.
- With this SC order, the state has to conduct the census now.
- Else, there will be no OBC reservation in the local bodies polls and the ruling parties will have to pay a huge price for it.

What lies ahead?

- The SC judgment is applicable to the elections of all local bodies – rural and urban.
- As per a statement from the CM's office, the SC verdict is likely to impact around 56,000 seats in all local bodies in the state.
- This includes polls pending due to Covid and the upcoming elections.
- So, the state election commission will consult with the state government whenever the local bodies' polls are held and will decide on the OBC reservation as per the SC order.

2. History of Tulu and the demand for Official Language Status

Various organizations have initiated a Twitter campaign demanding official language status to Tulu in Karnataka and Kerala and received an overwhelming response

Who all speak Tulu in India now and what is its history?

- Tulu is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in two coastal districts Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- As per the 2011 Census report, there are 18,46,427 Tulu-speaking people in India. Some scholars suggest Tulu is among the earliest Dravidian languages with a history of 2000 years.
- Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), in his book, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages, called Tulu "one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family".

So what exactly is the demand by Tulu speakers?

- The Tulu speakers, mainly in Karnataka and Kerala, have been requesting the governments to give it official language status and include it in the eighth schedule to the Constitution.
- Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri are the 22 languages presently in the eighth schedule.

Tulu art, culture and cinema

- Tulu has a rich oral literature tradition with folk-song forms like paddana, and traditional folk theatre yakshagana.
- Tulu also has an active tradition of cinema with around 5 to 7 Tulu language movies produced a year.
- Tulu films are being screened every day in Mangaluru and Udupi in at least one theatre.

What is the present status of Tulu?

- According to Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy president Dayananda G Kathalsar,
- People who speak Tulu are confined to the above-mentioned regions of Karnataka and Kerala, informally known as Tulu Nadu.
- At present, Tulu is not an official language in the country.
- Efforts are being made to include Tulu in the eighth schedule of the Constitution.
- If included in the eighth schedule, Tulu would get recognition from the Sahitya Akademi.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

3. New Shephard rocket system for cost-effective access to space

Last week, Amazon founder and billionaire Jeff Bezos's space company called Blue Origin concluded the online auction for the first seat on New Shephard, a rocket system meant to take tourists to space.

What is New Shephard?

- New Shephard has been named after astronaut Alan Shephard – the first American to go to space – and offers flights to space over 100 km above the Earth and accommodation for payloads.
- Essentially, it is a rocket system that has been designed to take astronauts and research payloads past the Karman line – the internationally recognized boundary of space.

- The idea is to provide easier and more cost-effective access to space meant for purposes such as academic research, corporate technology development, and entrepreneurial ventures among others.
- Apart from its academic and research-oriented goal, New Shepard will also allow space tourists to experience microgravity by taking them 100 km above the Earth.

Its components

- The rocket system consists of two parts, the cabin or capsule, and the rocket or the booster.
- The cabin can accommodate experiments from small Mini Payloads up to 100 kg.
- As per Blue Origin, the Mini Payloads provide easier space access to students, who are part of educational institutions that are developing their own space programs.
- Further, the cabin is designed for six people and sits atop a 60 feet tall rocket and separates from it before crossing the Karman line, after which both vehicles fall back to the Earth.
- All the six seats in the capsule are meant for passengers, each of whom gets their own window seat. The capsule is fully autonomous and does not require a pilot.

How does it work?

- The system is a fully reusable, vertical takeoff and vertical landing space vehicle that accelerates for about 2.5 minutes before the engine cuts off.
- After separating from the booster, the capsule free falls in space, while the booster performs an autonomously controlled vertical landing back to Earth.
- The capsule, on the other hand, lands back with the help of parachutes.

A boost for space tourism

- Space tourism seeks to give laypeople the ability to go to space for recreational, leisure, or business purposes.
- The idea is to make space more accessible to those individuals who are not astronauts and want to go to space for non-scientific purposes.

4. NatGeo recognizes 'Southern Ocean' as globe's fifth ocean

The National Geographic magazine has recognized the 'Southern Ocean' as the world's fifth ocean June 8, 2021 hoping others will soon follow suit.

Southern Ocean

- The Southern Ocean, also known as the Antarctic Ocean, comprises the southernmost waters of the World Ocean, generally taken to be south of 60° S latitude and encircling Antarctica.
- As such, it is regarded as the second-smallest of the five principal oceanic divisions: smaller than the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans but larger than the Arctic Ocean.
- Over the past 30 years, the Southern Ocean has been subject to rapid climate change, which has led to changes in the marine ecosystem.

What has NatGeo attempted?

- The magazine says the Southern Ocean is the only ocean 'to touch three other oceans and to completely embrace a continent rather than being embraced by them'.
- Its northern limit is a latitude of 60 degrees south.
- It is also defined by its Antarctic Circumpolar Current that was formed 34 million years ago. The current flows from west to east around Antarctica.
- The Southern Ocean is home to large populations of whales, penguins, and seals.

Why such a move?

- Usually, the magazine has followed the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) on marine names, it said in an article notifying the change.
- The IHO too had recognized 'Southern Ocean' as a distinct body of water surrounding Antarctica in 1937 but had repealed the same in 1953.

5. PASIPHAE: A Sky Surveying Project

In news

- The Wide Area Linear Optical Polarimeter (WALOP) is being developed at Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), India.
 - WALOP is a vital instrument for the PASIPHAE Project.
 - Polar-Areas Stellar-Imaging in Polarisation High-Accuracy Experiment (PASIPHAE) is an international collaborative sky surveying project.

About the PASIPHAE Survey

- It is an **opto polarimetric survey**
- It aims to measure the **linear polarization from millions of stars**.
- The survey will use two high-tech optical polarimeters to observe the northern and southern skies, simultaneously.
- The survey will be **conducted concurrently** from the South African Astronomical Observatory in Sutherland, South Africa in the southern hemisphere, and the Skinakas Observatory in Crete, Greece, in the north.

Importance of the Project

- It will be used to perform **magnetic tomography of the Milky Way Galaxy**.
 - Tomography is a technique for displaying a representation of a cross section through a solid object using X-rays or ultrasound.
- It will deduce the 3-dimensional structure of the magnetic field and the dust that resides in the Galaxy.

About WALOP

- The WALOP will be **capable of observing hundreds of stars concurrently** present both in the northern and the southern skies.
- It will operate on the principle that at any given time, the data from a portion of the sky under observation will be split into four different channels.
- Depending on the manner in which light passes through the four channels, the polarisation value from the star is obtained.

6. Modifications in FAME II Scheme

In news

- Department of Heavy Industry (DHI) has recently modified FAME II scheme.
- **Objective of the modification:** To drive adoption of electric vehicles

Modifications

- Introduction of a **demand incentive** of Rs. 15,000 per kWh for electric two wheelers with a maximum cap at 40% of the vehicles' cost.
- Launch of an aggregate demand for 300,000 electric three- wheelers by Energy Efficiency Services Limited.

FAME scheme

- It was launched in 2015

- It forms a part of **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020**.
- It **aims to promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology** and to ensure sustainable growth of the same
- Phase 2 of the scheme was approved for a period of **three years** starting from first April 2019
- It **aims to generate** demand by way of supporting e-buses, e 2-wheelers, e three- wheelers
- By selling over 75,000 vehicles FAME has so far resulted in **savings** of over 20 million litres of fuel and has led to almost 40 million kg **reduction** in CO₂.



Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to Bhitarkanika National Park, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is a national park in the State of Odisha.
2. It is a Ramsar site.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Bhitarkanika National Park is located in northeast Kendrapara district in Odisha in eastern India. It is also a Ramsar site.
- The national park and wildlife sanctuary is inundated by the rivers Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, Pathsala. It hosts many mangrove species, and is the second-largest mangrove ecosystem in India.
- The national park is home to Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), Indian python, king cobra, black ibis, darters and many other species of flora and fauna.

2. Which of the following organizations is a certifying agency for Agricultural Marketing (AGMARK)?

- a. Bureau of Indian Standards
- b. Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- c. Directorate of Marketing and Inspection
- d. Ministry of Food processing Industries

Answer : c

Certifying Agencies for different Standards

- **ISI Mark** - It is certified by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).
- It is mandatory for a number of products especially electronic goods, but in cases of other manufactured products it is voluntary
- **BIS Hallmark** - It verifies that the jewellery conforms to the standards which are set by BIS
- **Agricultural Marketing (AGMARK)** - It is certified by Directorate of Marketing and Inspection.
- It is legally enforced in India by the Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act of 1937 (and amended in 1986)
- **Fruit Products Order (FPO) mark** - It is certified by Ministry of Food processing Industries.

- It is a certification mark mandatory on all processed fruit products sold in India following the food safety and Standards Act of 2006
- **Indian Organic Certification** - It is certified by Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).
- It is a certification mark for organically farmed food products manufactured in India.

3. Consider the following statements with respect to *Pyrostria laljii*:

1. It is the first record of the genus *Pyrostria* in India.
2. It belongs to the genus of the coffee family discovered from the Andaman Islands.
3. Its IUCN status is endangered.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- A new species named *Pyrostria laljii* belonging to the genus of the coffee family has recently been discovered from the Andaman Islands.
- The new species has been reported from the Wandoor forest in South Andaman.
- It is also the first record of the genus *Pyrostria* in India.
- Plants belonging to the genus *Pyrostria* are usually found in Madagascar.
- *Pyrostria laljii* has been assessed as 'Critically Endangered' based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List criteria.

4. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Kawasaki disease?

1. It is a rare viral zoonotic disease that occurs primarily in remote parts of central and west Africa, near tropical rainforests.
2. It is mostly transmitted to people from various wild animals such as rodents and primates.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Kawasaki disease is a syndrome of unknown cause that results in a fever and mainly affects children under 5 years of age. It is a form of vasculitis, where blood vessels become inflamed throughout the body.
- While the specific cause is unknown, it is thought to result from an excessive immune system response to an infection in children who are genetically predisposed. It does not spread between people.
- Kawasaki disease affects people of Asian ethnicity, particularly Japanese people. The higher incidence in Asian populations is thought to be linked to genetic susceptibility.

5. Consider the following statements regarding Innovations for Defence Excellence:

1. It aims to achieve self-reliance and foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace.
2. It is funded and managed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

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

- The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) initiative was **launched by the Prime Minister in April 2018.**

- It aims to achieve self - reliance and foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia. Hence, option 1 is correct.
- iDEX is funded and managed by the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO), and functions as the executive arm of DIO. Hence, option 2 is incorrect.

6. Which of the following is/are Rare earth minerals?

1. Neodymium
2. Selenium
3. Praseodymium
4. Dysprosium
5. Uranium
6. Thorium

Options:

- a. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- b. 2, 4, 5 and 6 only
- c. 1, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Rare earth metals are a group of 17 elements – lanthanum, cerium, praseodymium, neodymium, promethium, samarium, europium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, holmium, erbium, thulium, ytterbium, lutetium, scandium, yttrium – that appear in low concentrations in the ground. They are lustrous silvery-white soft heavy metals.
- Although they are more abundant than their name implies, they are difficult and costly to mine and process cleanly.

Mains Practice Questions

1. The frequent promulgation of ordinances is an assault on the democratic structure of the Constitution. Critically analyse. (250 words)

Approach

- Introduce the concept of ordinances with constitutional articles (for both President and Governors) for the same.
- Briefly explain the need for the promulgation of ordinances.
- Discuss the issues with the frequent promulgation of the ordinances.
- Also give some examples to show the frequent promulgation and re-promulgation of the ordinances in the country.
- Conclude suitably on a positive note.

2. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme protects farmers from the price fluctuations and market imperfections. In the light of the given statement, critically analyse the efficacy of the MSP. (250 words)

Approach

- Introduce by defining Minimum Support price (MSP).
- Discuss the advantages of MSP scheme.
- Analyse the constraints or issues with the MSP system.
- Conclude with a way forward.

