

www.vishnuias.com



JUNE

17.06.2021

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A MAGAZINE FOR CIVIL SERVICES PREPARATION

JOIN OUR TELEGRAM: <https://t.me/vishnuiasmentor>

**Articles of the day
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS**

UPSC

General Studies

Test Series

**Online &
Offline
classes**

**One-Stop
Solution**

**Free daily
materials**

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Soon, drones might ferry vaccines

Context:

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has invited expression of interest from drone operators to develop a **delivery model**.

Details:

- With the growing need for **smart vaccination instead of mass vaccination** to stem the epidemic, a study was conducted to **check the feasibility of delivering vaccines using drones**.
- **With an innovative vaccine delivery mechanism**, the surge in the number of cases can be checked.
- Drones could be used for **delivering COVID-19 vaccines in remote and hard to reach geographies in the country**.
- Technical specifications for this include:
 - The ability of drones to fly beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS)
 - The ability to carry a payload of up to 4 kg
 - To cover a distance of up to 35 km
- While at present, government rules **permit only those drone operations that are within visual range**, the ICMR project comes at a time the **Ministry of Civil Aviation has allowed 20 entities to conduct trials for long-range or “beyond visual line of sight” drone flights**.
- Based on learnings from test flights, the government will frame the guidelines for BVLOS operations.

2. Cabinet panel approves additional fertilizer subsidy

Context:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal **to hike subsidy rates for phosphorus and potassium-based fertilizers by 140%**.

Details:

- The move is aimed at **providing relief to farmers as the Kharif sowing season begins.**
- It is a **one-time measure as part of COVID-19 relief.**

Fertilizer Subsidy:

- For **urea, the Centre sets a fixed maximum retail price.**
- For **non-urea fertilizers, prices are decontrolled and the Centre fixes nutrient-based subsidy rates.**

Note:

- Fertilisers supply one or more plant nutrients essential to the growth of plants.
- Diammonium phosphate (DAP) is the **main source of Phosphorous.**
- **Essential plant nutrients** based on the amounts of nutrients that are required by plants are distinguished as **macronutrients and micronutrients.**
- **Phosphorus is a macronutrient.**
- Other frequently used fertilizers are **muriate of potash (MOP) and urea.**

3. Closure, compensation

Context:

- The Supreme Court has ordered the **closure of criminal court proceedings in India against the two Italian marines** who in 2012 allegedly killed two fishermen off the Kerala coast after mistaking them for pirates.

Background:

Complexity of the case and its implications:

- **The Enrica Lexie case had generated complex legal questions over jurisdiction, the lawfulness of their arrest and the location of their trial, as well as the provisions of law under which they should be tried.** This had resulted in considerable **diplomatic turbulence between India and Italy.**
 - The Supreme Court of India in 2013 had ruled that prosecuting the marines was solely in the Union government's jurisdiction which Italy had challenged.
 - The invoking of the stringent **anti-piracy law – the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Maritime Navigation and Fixed**

Platforms on Continental Shelf Act, 2002 – had been criticized and contested by Italy.

UN tribunal ruling:

- **The Permanent Court of Arbitration, a tribunal under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**, had in 2020 ruled that even though India and Italy had concurrent jurisdiction to try the case, the marines enjoyed immunity from Indian jurisdiction as they were acting on behalf of a state.
- It had also ruled that the Indian fishing boat and the victims were entitled to compensation, as the boat's right of navigation under the Law of the Sea had been violated.

Details:

- The Supreme Court order came after Italy deposited compensation of ₹10 crores which would be divided between the two fishermen families and the owner of the fishing vessel.
- The two marines are likely to face trial in Italy.

Conclusion:

- A valuable lesson from this episode is that such incidents should be **dealt with a combination of legally sustainable steps and diplomatic efforts** to find early resolution and avoid an Enrica Lexie like repeat.

4. Cabinet approval for OFB corporatisation

What's in News?

The Union Cabinet has approved a plan to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).

Details:

- OFB which has 41 factories will be **corporatised into seven fully government-owned corporate entities** on the lines of Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU).
- Once implemented, **the OFB**, the establishment of which was accepted by the British in 1775, **will cease to exist**.
- Currently, the **OFB headquartered in Kolkata functions as a department under the Department of Defence Production**.

- The restructuring is aimed at **transforming the ordnance factories into productive and profitable assets, deepening specialisation in the product range, enhancing competitiveness, improving quality and achieving cost efficiency.**
- This move would allow these companies **autonomy, as well as help improve accountability and efficiency.**

Ordnance Factory Board:

- OFB is a **government agency that is controlled by the department of defence production (DDP) under the Ministry of Defence (MoD).**
- It is **involved in research, development and production** in the areas of **air, land and sea.**
- It is also **involved in testing and logistics.** OFB comprised 41 ordnance factories and 9 training institutes.
- It is called the **“Fourth Arm of Defence”** and also the **“Force Behind the Armed Forces”** of India.
- OFB is the **35th largest defence equipment manufacturer in the world, 2nd largest in Asia, and the largest in India.**

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. Energy inefficiency can short circuit cooling India

Background:

Threat posed by heat waves:

- **Rising temperatures and heat waves are a growing threat to India as climate change accelerates.**
 - As per the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences’ first national climate change report, ‘Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region’, India’s average temperature had risen by 0.7 degrees Celsius from 1901-2018.
- **Global warming will lead to more frequent and intense heat waves.**
 - In the last three decades alone, there have been 660 heat waves across India causing 12,273 deaths.

Cooling as an indispensable adaptation to climate change:

- Substantial cooling services to keep citizens healthy and productive may as well become a necessity in the coming years. **Cooling will constitute an important part of India's adaptation measure to climate change.**
 - **The India Cooling Action Plan** projects the number of room air conditioners to become about four times in the next 10 years, and about 10 times in the next 20 years, making India the world's largest energy user for cooling.

Concerns:

- The **current low penetration level of air conditioners (ACs) in India** is a major cause of concern. A recent survey conducted in New Delhi notes that the desired levels of cooling appliances vary greatly even among relatively homogenous communities.
- The **use of inefficient ACs** to meet the cooling needs could severely dent India's climate change mitigation efforts as these inefficient ACs will lead to **high GHG emissions.**
 - As per the survey conducted in New Delhi, energy efficiency does not feature as a priority in the purchase of cooling appliances. Only 7% of the households have an energy-efficient (star-rated) fan, and most people prefer to buy a three-star AC, and less than 20% of AC-owning households bought the highest rated five-star AC.
- There is a **lack of credible data** on important factors like AC ownership and usage which can help frame appropriate policies and interventions to address residential cooling demand.

Factors leading to the use of inefficient cooling options:

Lack of awareness:

- **The low level of energy efficiency awareness** is a major bottleneck that hinders the purchase of more efficient appliances.
- There is a lack of knowledge of the **Star Labelling programme** among the general populace.
 - The Star labelling Programme has been formulated by the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency, under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.**
 - Presently, the program covers a star rating for 26 appliances/equipment including refrigerators and air conditioners.
 - The objectives of the labelling program are to **provide the consumer with an informed choice about energy-saving** and thereby the cost-saving potential of the marketed household and other equipment.

- Energy labelling is one of the most cost-effective policy tools for improving energy efficiency and lowering the energy cost of appliances.

Higher upfront cost:

- The higher upfront cost of the higher star rated appliances serves as a disincentive to buy such products upfront.

Low market availability:

- Given the **relatively price-sensitive market in India** and the currently low level of demand for energy-efficient appliances, there is very little output of higher-rated appliances leading to very low market availability of efficient appliances like air conditioners (four-star and five-star).

Recommendations:

- **Large-scale adoption of efficient cooling appliances will be essential to providing the required thermal comfort in a low carbon manner.**
- The following measures might be taken to encourage the adoption of more efficient appliances.

Awareness generation:

- Awareness campaigns on the benefits of energy efficiency must constitute a major aspect of the outreach program. The prospective customers must be made to realize that **the more expensive price tag would be offset by quantifiable savings on energy costs.**

Incentivize adoption of efficient appliances:

- **Subsidies and financial incentives like rebate programs** that can help offset **the higher initial cost** can help drive up the adoption of more efficient technologies.

Promote passive cooling:

- Encouraging the use of passive cooling alternatives including energy-efficient building designs can help **provide the desired thermal comfort with reduced dependence on energy-intensive cooling technologies.**
 - Passive cooling is a building design approach that focuses on heat gain control and heat dissipation in a building in order to improve indoor thermal comfort with low or no energy consumption. This approach

works either by preventing heat from entering the interior or by removing heat from the building.

- Passive cooling options include augmenting **natural ventilation and employing evaporative, thermal insulation and shading methods.**

6. India to launch deep ocean mission

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved the deep ocean mission.

Deep Ocean Mission

- Deep Ocean Mission is a **central sector scheme.**
- The mission **proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration** started by ISRO about 35 years ago.
- The **focus of the mission will be on deep-sea mining, ocean climate change advisory services, underwater vehicles and underwater robotics-related technologies.**
- Its **two key projects** include:
 - A **desalination plant powered by tidal energy.**
 - A **submersible vehicle** that can explore depths of at least **6,000 metres.** It will allow a crew to **hunt the floor for precious metals.**

Details:

- The mission is expected to **cost ₹4,077 crore over the next five years.**
- The **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) will be the nodal Ministry** implementing this **multi-institutional mission.**
- India has been allotted a site of **75,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB)** by the **UN International Sea Bed Authority** for the **exploitation of polymetallic nodules (PMN).** These are rocks scattered on the seabed containing **iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt.**
- There are **six components to the programme.**
 1. A **manned submersible vehicle** will be developed to carry three people to a depth of 6,000 metres with a suite of scientific sensors and tools. **An integrated mining system will be also developed for mining polymetallic nodules** at those depths in the central Indian Ocean.
 2. **Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services** will be developed. It would entail developing a suite of observations and models to understand and **provide future projections of important climate variables on seasonal to decadal time scales.**

3. **Deep sea flora and fauna, including microbes, will be searched.** Studies would be carried out to sustainably utilise them.
4. Potential sources of hydrothermal minerals that are sources of precious metals formed from the earth's crust along the Indian Ocean mid-oceanic ridges would be explored and identified.
5. A detailed engineering design would be prepared for **offshore Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) powered desalination plants.**
6. The final component is aimed at **grooming experts in the field of ocean biology and engineering.**

Significance:

- With its success, India will be among a handful of countries able to launch an **underwater mission at such depths.**
- It aims to **translate research into industrial applications and product development** through on-site business incubator facilities.
- Polymetallic nodules (PMN) are rocks scattered on the seabed containing **iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt.**
 - Being able to lay hands on a fraction of that reserve can **meet the energy requirement of India for the next 100 years.**

7. Inland Vessels Bill receives Cabinet nod

Context:

The Union Cabinet gave the nod to the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021.

Details:

- **Inland Vessels Bill, 2021 will replace the Inland Vessels Act, 1917.**
- Draft Inland Vessels bill proposes to **streamline and regulate how vessels travel in the inland water fields of India.**
- A total of 4,000 km inland waterways have been operationalised.
- The Bill will **regulate the safety, security and registration of inland vessels.**
- A key feature of the Bill is a **unified law for the entire country**, instead of separate rules framed by the States.
- The certificate of registration granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions from the States.
- The Bill provides for a **central database for recording the details of the vessel, vessel registration and the crew on an electronic portal.**
- It requires **all mechanically propelled vessels to be mandatorily registered.**

- All non-mechanically propelled vessels will also have to be enrolled at the district, taluk or panchayat or village level.
- It enlarges the definition of 'inland waters', by including tidal water limit and national waterways declared by the Central Government.
- It also deals with **pollution control measures of Inland Vessels**. This bill directs the Central Government to designate a list of chemicals, substances, etc. as pollutants.

8. 'Record' FDI inflows, yes, cause for celebration, no

Background:

Record FDI inflow:

- Data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry relating to foreign investment into India notes impressive Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow.
 - **India has attracted the highest ever total FDI inflow of \$81.72 billion during the financial year 2020-21** and it is 10 percent higher as compared to the last financial year 2019-20.
 - This marks an impressive growth given that the global FDI inflows in 2020 had declined by 42% over the level in 2019, and inflows to developing countries had fallen by 12% following the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The government credits the record level of inflows to **FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business reforms** and also being indicative of the growth potential of the Indian economy.

Critical analysis of the development:

- The article raises doubts over the above development based on the following arguments.

Increased repatriation/disinvestment:

- There has been a **47.2% increase in repatriation/disinvestment** and it has reached a record level of \$27.0 billion in the current fiscal. Considering the net of repatriation/ disinvestment, **FDI inflows have actually declined by 2.4% in 2020-21**, as compared to the previous year.
- The sustained sizeable repatriation of the long-term FDI does not bode well for the Indian economy.

High proportion of portfolio investment:

- A high proportion of the increased foreign capital inflow in 2020-21, can be attributed to the **high increase in portfolio investment by foreign institutional investors (FIIs)**.
- This large increase in **speculative capital** does not bode well for an economy looking to recover from an economic slump.
- In principle, private equity funds do not make long-term greenfield investment and hence **do not add much to fixed investment, output growth and employment creation**.

Skewed distribution:

- The analysis of FDI inflows reveals that a substantial proportion of the equity inflows were directed towards a select few companies. Hence **though FDI inflows were stronger in 2020-21, their distribution was highly skewed**. The top five FDI deals account for a substantial share of the total FDI.
 - The RBI notes in its annual report that the coefficient of variation of FDI flows (based on transaction size) was larger during the pandemic period, implying a **concentration in distribution of the FDI inflows**.
- This skewed distribution of FDI points to the **underlying weakness in FDI inflows** during the year.

Doubts over productiveness of these investments:

- A major part of the foreign funds will flow towards acquisitions and will only facilitate the parent country to withdraw its investments without a proportional rise in actual investment into the economy.
- Thus these **investments involve only a mere transfer of shares without creating productive assets in the country**. This would make such investment ineffective in contributing to the revival of the Indian economy.

Concerns associated with acquisition inflows:

- The acquisition-related inflows will lead to **foreign investors taking over existing businesses**. The increased foreign capital will not only lead to the **outflow of profits** but also result in the **increased influence of such investors in Indian businesses**.

Skewed investments with respect to economic sectors:

- **The services sector attracted nearly 80% of the total inflows** with information technology-enabled services (ITeS) being the largest component. Wholesale and retail trade were the other prominent ones.

- The investment in the services sector, though welcome, suffers from certain shortcomings like **low employment generation potential**.
- **The manufacturing sector contrary to expectations received just 17.4% of the total inflows during 2020-21.** According to the RBI, non-acquisition-related inflows into the manufacturing sector (Greenfield investments) were the lowest in 2020-21 even in absolute terms, over the past five years.
 - The FDI inflows have **not been in sync with the government's priorities for the post-COVID-19 economic recovery** based on the AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan and anchored on the revival of the manufacturing sector through the Performance Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

Concerns over regional distribution:

- The regional distribution of the FDI inflows has not been uniform.
- While states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka account for a lion's share of the total FDI inflows, other regions account for a disproportionately lower amount of 23% of the remaining foreign equity capital. This is indicative of the skewed pattern of FDI inflows and gives rise to **concerns of unbalanced growth**.

Conclusion:

- The 'record' levels of FDI inflows during 2020-21 cannot be a cause for celebration as is revealed by a closer analysis of the FDI inflows. The government must focus on attracting FDI into India through appropriate interventions.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. New Norms on Hallmarking of Gold

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution** made it **mandatory for the hallmarking of gold jewellery**, which will be **implemented in a phased manner**.

Key Points

- **About Hallmarking:**
 - The **Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS)**, which operates the gold and silver hallmarking scheme in India, defines hallmarking as the **“accurate determination and official recording of the proportionate content of precious metal in precious metal articles.”**
 - So, it is a **“guarantee of purity or fineness”** of precious metal articles, which **started in 2000**.
 - In India, at present **two precious metals namely gold and silver** have been brought **under the purview of Hallmarking**.
 - The **BIS certified jewellers** can get their **jewellery hallmarked from any of the BIS recognized Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (A&HC)**.
 - Earlier, it was **optional for the jewellers** and thus **only 40% of gold jewellery** was getting hallmarked.
- **Implementation in a Phased Manner:**
 - In the first phase, gold hallmarking **will be available only in 256 districts and jewellers having annual turnover above Rs. 40 lakh** will come under its purview.
 - A **certain category of jewellery and items will also be exempted** from the mandatory requirement of hallmarking.
 - Jewellery for international exhibitions, jewellery for government-approved B2B (Business-to-Business) domestic exhibitions will be exempted from mandatory Hallmarking.
- **Need of Gold Hallmarking:**

- **India is the biggest consumer of gold.** However, the level of hallmarked jewellery is very low in the country.
- The mandatory hallmarking will **protect the public against lower caratage** (the fraction of pure gold) and ensure **consumers do not get cheated** while buying gold ornaments.
 - It will help to get the **purity as marked on the ornaments.**
- It will **bring in transparency** and assure the consumers of quality.
- It will **weed out anomalies and corruption in the system of manufacturing of jewellery.**

Bureau of Indian Standards

- BIS is the **National Standard Body** of India for the harmonious development of the activities of **standardization, marking and quality certification of goods.**
- **Standards Formulation:** BIS formulates Indian Standards in line with the national priorities for various sectors that have been grouped under 14 Departments like Chemicals, Food and Agriculture, Civil, Electro-technical, Electronics & Information Technology, etc.
- **BIS' International Activities:**
 - BIS is a **founder member of ISO (International Organization for Standardization)** and is actively involved in the development of International Standards.
 - India is **represented in IEC (International Electro-technical Commission)** through BIS. IEC is the world's leading organization for the preparation and publication of International Standards for all electrical, electronic and related technologies.
 - BIS is the **National Enquiry Point for WTO -TBT (World Trade Organisation - Technical Barriers to Trade).**
- **Other Initiatives:**
 - **BIS SDO Recognition Scheme:**
 - To attain the **One Nation One Standard** vision of the Government of India, BIS launched a scheme which provides for Recognition of SDO (Standard Developing Organization).
 - **Product Certification Scheme:**
 - BIS operates a Product Certification scheme for ensuring compliance to Indian Standards. Presence of **BIS standard mark (popularly known as ISI mark)** on a product indicates conformity to the relevant Indian Standard.

2.8th ADMM-Plus Meeting

Why in News

Recently, the defence minister addressed the 8th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus.

- The ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN and its eight Dialogue Partners.

Key Points

- **Security & Dispute Resolution:**
 - India called for an **open and inclusive order in Indo-Pacific** based upon respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.
 - Supports **freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded commerce in the international waterways** including the **South China Sea**, India hopes that the **Code of Conduct negotiations** (for South China Sea) will lead to outcomes that are in keeping with international law, including the the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
 - Recently, ASEAN and China agreed to **expedite the resumption of negotiations on the code**, which were halted by the pandemic.
 - China and ASEAN **started negotiations in 2013** on a supposedly binding code of conduct.
 - Stressed on **peaceful resolutions of disputes** through dialogue and adherence to international rules and laws.
 - Need **new systems** to address the emerging challenges to **international peace and security**.
- **Act East Policy:**
 - The key elements of the **Act East Policy** aims to **promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationships** with countries in the Indo-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.
- **Terrorism:**
 - Called for **collective cooperation to fully disrupt terror organisations** and their networks.
 - Identify the perpetrators and hold them accountable and ensure that **strong measures are taken against those who support and finance terrorism** and provide sanctuary to terrorists.
 - As a member of the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** India remains committed to combat financing of terrorism.
 - **FATF** is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.

- **Cybersecurity:**
 - Called for a **multi-stakeholder approach, guided by democratic values**, with a governance structure that is open and inclusive and a secure, open and stable internet with due respect to sovereignty of countries, that would drive the future of cyberspace.
- **Covid-19:**
 - Globally available patent free **vaccines**, unhindered supply chains and greater global medical capacities are some of the lines of effort that India has suggested for a combined effort.
 - South Africa and India have called for the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** to suspend intellectual property (IP) rights related to **Covid-19** to ensure equitable sharing of vaccines and new technology to control the pandemic.
- **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Operations:**
 - India remains one of the first to respond in times of distress in the immediate as well as extended neighbourhood.
 - As a founding member of the **Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM)**, India seeks to enhance capacity building through collaboration in the areas of Maritime Search & Rescue.
 - HACGAM is an **apex level forum facilitating the congregation of all the major Coast Guard Agencies of the Asian region**, it was **established in 2004**.
- **ASEAN Centrality:**
 - India **shares a deep connection with ASEAN** and has continued its active engagement in many areas **contributing to regional peace and stability, particularly through ASEAN led mechanisms**, such as:
 - **East Asia Summit.**
 - **ASEAN Regional Forum.**
 - **ADMM-Plus.**
 - The India-ASEAN strategic partnership has been strengthened by virtue of flourishing cultural and civilisational links and enhanced people-to-people cooperation.

ADMM-Plus

- **About:**
 - The **2nd ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in 2007** at Singapore adopted a resolution to establish the ADMM-Plus.
 - **The first ADMM-Plus was convened at Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010.**
 - **Brunei** is the Chair of the ADMM Plus forum for the year 2021.
 - It is an **annual meeting of Defence Ministers** of 10 ASEAN countries and eight dialogue partner countries.

- The **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** is a regional organization which was established to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific's post-colonial states.
- **Membership:**
 - The ADMM-Plus countries include **ten ASEAN Member States** and **eight Plus countries**, namely **Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States**.
- **Aim:**
 - It aims to promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments through greater dialogue and transparency.
- **Areas of cooperation:**
 - Maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine.

3. ADB Loan for Chennai - Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor

Why in News

Recently, the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and the Government of India signed a **USD 484 million loan** for the **Tamil Nadu Industrial Connectivity Project**.

- The loan is to **improve transport connectivity and facilitate industrial development in the Chennai - Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor (CKIC)** in the state of **Tamil Nadu**.

Asian Development Bank

- It is a **regional development bank established on 19th December 1966**. It is **headquartered in Manila, Philippines**.
- It now has **68 members, 49 from within Asia**. **India** is a member.
- It's **five largest shareholders** are **Japan** and the **United States** (each with 15.6% of total shares), the **People's Republic of China** (6.4%), **India** (6.3%), and **Australia** (5.8%).
- It aims to **promote social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific**.

Key Points

- **About:**

- The loan is **in line with Strategy 2030**, ADB's long-term corporate strategy, the project **emphasises sustainability, climate change resilience, and road safety elements**.
 - Under **Strategy 2030**, ADB will expand its vision to achieve a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty.
- CKIC is part of India's **East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC)**.
- **Industrial Corridors Scheme:**
 - An **industrial corridor** is an economic ecosystem built around a transportation corridor connecting two major economic centres, where the transportation corridor serves as the nerve centre of the economic activity across the corridor.
 - In addition to the transportation corridor, a well-designed industrial corridor **contains** clusters of industrial production serving regional and global demand, and urban centers proliferating equitable development.
 - In **2019**, the government approved the **development of the five industrial corridor projects**, being **implemented through National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)**.
 - NICDIT is an apex body under the administrative control of the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
 - **Five Industrial Corridor Projects:**
 - **Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)**.
 - **Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC)**.
 - **Chennai Bangalore Industrial Corridor (CBIC)**.
 - **East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC) with Vizag Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC)**.
 - **Bangalore Mumbai Industrial Corridor (BMIC)**.
- **East Coast Economic Corridor:**
 - It stretches from **West Bengal to Tamil Nadu** and connects India to the production networks of South, Southeast, and East Asia.
 - ADB is the lead partner of the Government of India in developing ECEC.
 - It covers West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. **Vizag to Chennai segment of this Corridor has been taken as phase-1.**
 - **Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC) is the first coastal economic corridor in the country.**
 - It is aligned with the **Golden Quadrilateral**. It also plays a critical role in the **"Act East Policy"** of India.

- The Golden Quadrilateral is the **longest road project in India** and the fifth-longest highway in the world. It connects Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai.
- **Significance of Industrial Corridors:**
 - **Avenues for Exports:**
 - The Industrial Corridors are likely to **lower the cost of logistics thereby increasing the efficiency of industrial production structure.**
 - Such an efficiency lowers the cost of production which **makes the Indian made products more competitive in international markets.**
 - **Job Opportunities:**
 - It will **attract investments for the development of Industries which is likely to create more jobs in the market.**
 - **Environmental Significance:**
 - The establishment of Industrial Units in a scattered manner along the industrial corridor across the length of the state will **prevent concentration of industries in one particular location** which exploited the environment beyond its carrying capacity and caused environmental degradation.
 - **Socio-Economic Significance:**
 - The cascading effect of industrial corridors in socio-economic terms are many such as the **setting up of industrial townships, educational institutions, hospitals.** These will further raise the standards of human development.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Loss of Safe Harbour for Twitter

Twitter has reportedly lost the coveted “safe harbour” immunity in India after failing to appoint statutory officers on time, as mandated by the new Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021.

What is the news?

- With this, the social media giant becomes the only American platform to have lost the protective shield – granted under Section 79 of the IT Act.
- Its rival platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp remain protected.

- The new development could mean that Twitter's senior executives that include its India managing director, face legal actions under relevant IPC for 'unlawful' activities on the platform – even if conducted by users.

Why such a move?

- Earlier this week, Twitter said it appointed an interim Chief Compliance Officer (CCO), and the details of the officer were not yet shared with the government.
- The company also posted job openings for a Nodal Officer and Resident Grievance Officer – the two key positions mandated by the central government's IT Rules, 2021.

What is safe harbour protection?

- According to Section 79 of IT Act, 2000, "an intermediary shall not be liable for any third party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him," therefore providing Safe Harbour protection.
- To put it simply, the law notes that intermediaries such as Twitter or your Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are not liable to punishment if third parties (users) misuse the infrastructure, in this case, the platform.
- However, the protection is guaranteed only when the intermediary does not 'initiate the transmission,' 'select the receiver of the transmission,' and 'modify the information contained in the transmission.'
- It means that as long as the platform acts just as the medium to carry out messages from users A to user B, that is, without interfering in any manner, it will be safe from any legal prosecution.

Inception of the concept

- In its original form, the IT Act 2000 provided little or no Safe Harbour protection to internet intermediaries as the definition of the intermediary was restricted.
- However, things began changing in 2004, in a case where a student posted an obscene clip for sale.
- The student and the CEO of that company were both held later for letting pornographic material circulate online.
- The CEO challenged the proceedings against him, contending that he could not be personally held liable for the listing and that the MMS was transferred directly between the seller and buyer without the intervention of the website.
- The executive was acquitted, the case eventually resulted in the addition of Section 79 in the IT Act to provide immunity to intermediaries.

Why has Twitter lost the protection?

- Over the years, social media platforms have evolved and often tend to act as gatekeepers.
- For instance, Twitter banning Donald Trump and adding “manipulated media” label on select posts have been questioned by excerpts.
- In other words, an intermediary’s ability to “modify the information contained in the transmission,” opens rooms for revision of the law, experts believe.
- Hence, the government introduced the IT Rules 2021 in December last year and implemented it in May 2021.
- As per the new order, all social media platforms with more than 50 lakh (five million) users will need to appoint a Chief Compliance Officer, a Nodal Contact Person, and a Resident Grievance Officer from India to smoothen the grievance mechanism for citizens.
- The officers will need to acknowledge queries with 24 hours and resolve them in 15 days from the date of receipt.

What can happen next?

- Once a company loses the Safe Harbour protection, technically, officials are liable to punishment if a post even by a third user violates local laws.
- The new IT Rules 2021 do not mention any ban for non-compliance.
- But with an estimated 1.75 crore users in India, Twitter would likely fill key positions soon to comply with the new norms laid by the government.
- As mentioned, the company already appointed an interim Chief Compliance Officer earlier.
- This, according to the government, means that the protection under Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, accorded to Twitter for being a social media intermediary, now stands withdrawn.

How does this impact Twitter?

- If someone puts out any content on Twitter that leads to some form of violence, or violates any Indian law with respect to content, not only the person that has put out the tweet will be held responsible.
- Even Twitter will be legally liable for the content as it no longer has the protection.

Is there something else that can happen subsequently?

- In the longer run, there is also the theoretical possibility that Twitter might be subjected to the 26 per cent cap of direct foreign investment in media and publishing.

- This in turn means that the platform may be forced to look for an Indian buyer for the remaining 74 per cent stake.

5. Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) for Phosphatic & Potassic (P&K) Fertilizers

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal of the Department of Fertilizers for fixation of Nutrient Based Subsidy Rates for P&K Fertilizers for the year 2021-22.

Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme

- The NBS program for Fertilizers was initiated in the year 2010.
- Under the scheme, a fixed amount of subsidy decided on an annual basis is provided on each grade of subsidized Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilizers, except for Urea, based on the nutrient content present in them.
- The scheme is administered by the Department of Fertilizers under the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.

Why need this scheme?

- The scheme ensures that an adequate quantity of P&K is made available to the farmers at a statutory controlled price.
- The subsidy is released to fertilizer companies as per NBS rates so that they can make available fertilizers to farmers at affordable prices.
- In last few months, the international prices of raw materials of DAP (Di-Ammonium Phosphate) and other P&K fertilizers have increased sharply.
- Prices of finished DAP etc. in the international market have also increased.
- Despite this sharp increase, DAP prices in India were initially not increased by the companies however, some companies increased the DAP price at the beginning of this financial year.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which of the following cities are located in the Brahmaputra Valley?

1. Guwahati
2. Dibrugarh
3. Aizwal
4. Tezpur

Options:-

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Nagaon, Bongaigaon, Tinsukia, Tezpur are the cities are located in the Brahmaputra Valley.

2. Consider the following statements with respect to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

1. It is one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference.
2. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
3. India is one of the associate member of Food and Agricultural Organization.

Which of the statements given above are *incorrect*?

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

Answer : d

- *Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shri Narendra Singh Tomar has recently addressed the 42nd session of FAO Conference.*

Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- It is the largest of the UN agencies.
- It was established in **1945** and its headquarters is in **Rome, Italy**.
- Its goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.
- With over 194 member states, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide.
- **India is a founder member of the FAO** and has played significant role since inception as Chair and member of various statutory bodies and committees.

3. 'Christchurch Call to Action Summit' is related to -

- a. Tackling GHG emissions linked to cryptocurrency mining
- b. Curbing online dissemination of extremist content
- c. Preventing oil spills and marine disasters
- d. Promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Christchurch Call to Action Summit was a political summit started by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in Paris, France, after the Christchurch mosque shootings of 15 March 2019.
- The summit brings together leaders from signatory governments, tech companies, and civil society to discuss efforts to address terrorist and violent extremist content online.
- The Christchurch Call to Action Summit is related to curbing online dissemination of extremist content.

4. Mayun island/Perim island, recently seen in news, is located near which crucial maritime chokepoint?

- a. Strait of Malacca

- b. Suez Canal
- c. Bab-el-Mandeb Strait
- d. Strait of Hormuz

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Mayun island/Perim island, recently seen in news, is located near Bab-el-Mandeb Strait near Yemen.
- It is a volcanic island in the Strait of Mandeb at the south entrance into the Red Sea, off the southwest coast of Yemen.
- The location of the island is extremely strategic from the point of view of cargo shipments and war ammunition. It is a crucial maritime chokepoint.

5. World Giving Index, 2021 was recently published by?

- a. Oxfam
- b. Amnesty International
- c. Charities Aid Foundation
- d. Green Peace International

Answer : c

- *India is the 14th most charitable country according to a report recently released by Charities Aid Foundation's (CAF).*

World Giving Index, 2021

- It is an annual report published by the Charities Aid Foundation's (CAF).
- This year's survey highlights the impact of lockdowns on charitable giving.
- Scores for India rapidly improved between 2017 and 2019, and this improvement was maintained during 2020.
- The improvement in India is seen across all the age groups and amongst both men and women.
- 61 per cent of Indians helped strangers; 34 per cent volunteered; and 36 per cent donated money.

6. With reference to 'Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)', consider the following statements:

1. It is an initiative under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
2. It aims to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all statutory towns.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : B

Explanation

- In the Budget 2021-22, **Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban)** was announced under the **Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry**. Hence, **statement 1 is not correct**.
- It aims to provide universal coverage of water supply to **all households through functional taps** in all statutory towns in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal- 6 (clean water and sanitation). Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission:**
 - It is an initiative under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, aims to ensure access to piped water **for every household in rural India**.

Mains Practice Questions

1. According to the World Bank, one in every 12 households in India has a person living with a disability. In the light of this statement, discuss the steps taken by the government to protect the rights of disabled in India. Also, highlight the shortcomings of these measures. (150 words).

Approach

- Introduce by enlisting percentage of population with disability in India
- Mention the schemes, policies, steps that government has taken to address concerns of disabled persons
- Discuss the challenges remaining

2. The Green Revolution and consequent increase in agriculture produce has worked to the disadvantage of farmers. Critically analyse. (250 words)

Introduction

- A large increase in crop production in developing countries achieved by the use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, and high-yield crop varieties is referred to as Green revolution.
- To increase global food supply and reduce world hunger, farmers started to cultivate land using new farming techniques. These methods worked, crop yields climbed but also created a few unwanted side effects.

