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# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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

### **1. Challenging negative social norms**

#### **Context:**

- In the context of the upcoming **World Population Day on July 11**, the article analyzes the challenges for India in terms of demographic management and suggests certain measures in that direction.

#### **Background:**

- India is currently enjoying what is referred to as a **demographic dividend**. **Half of India's population is under 29 years of age**. This significant proportion of young people in the total population will help drive India's economic growth.
- However, for India to be able to enjoy the fruits of this demographic dividend the young population must not only be healthy, knowledgeable and skilled but must also be provided with the rights and choices to develop to their fullest potential, including, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

#### **Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR):**

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights or SRHR is the **concept of human rights applied to sexuality and reproduction**.
- Apart from ensuring **good sexual and reproductive health via access to quality healthcare facilities**, the definition of SRHR would also encompass a broader range of issues such as violence, stigma and **respect for bodily autonomy**.
  - SRHR include issues like abortion, HIV and other STIs, maternal health and rights, contraceptive access, gender-based violence, discrimination and stigma, and more.
- SRHR is a **critical aspect of human well being** given that it greatly impacts the psychological, emotional and social well-being of individuals.

#### **India's progress:**

- **India's population growth has been stabilizing.** The overall fertility rate has been decreasing. The **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)**, presently at 2.2 children, will soon reach replacement level (2.1).
  - Notably, despite the decline in overall fertility, the population will continue to grow because of the effect of 'population momentum'.
- In the last two decades, India has made **substantial gains with SRH indicators.**
  - There has been a marked **improvement in the rate of institutional delivery.**
  - There has been a **decline in maternal mortality ratio (MMR)** from 327 in 1999-2001 to 113 per 100,000 live births in 2016-18.
- Data from the National Health Family Survey 5 for the year 2019-20 (NFHS-5) notes **improvement in contraceptive prevalence in most States.** This marks a significant shift in family planning methods considering the earlier emphasis on forced sterilization efforts.

#### Concerns:

##### Lack of universal access to SRHR:

- **Pervasive negative social norms, health system barriers and gender inequality have hindered universal access to SRHR.**
  - As per a 2021 report from the Guttmacher Institute, around two million adolescent girls (15-19 years) each year had a pregnancy, and of these, nearly 63% were unwanted or unintended. This points to **inadequate information and access to SRH services** for this age group.
  - According to NFHS-4, in girls aged 15-19 years, 22.2% had an **unmet need for contraception.**

##### Uneven progress:

- The TFR remains higher than the national average of 2.2 children among **women who live in rural areas** and a majority of them living **in the poorer States.**
  - This is indicative of the poor social status of rural women who have very little formal education and economic power given their poor income levels.

##### Social norms as an impediment:

- **Early marriage of girls** is a big challenge in India. 26.8% of women aged 20-24 years are married before they turn 18.

- Many girls and women face **gender-based violence and harmful practices** that are socially sanctioned and rooted in social norms, beliefs and practices that deny women their bodily autonomy.

#### **Challenges posed by the pandemic:**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to serious gaps and challenges in the provision of information and services on sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Universal access to SRHR:**

- There is the need to ensure universal access to SRHR as envisioned under the **Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)**.

##### **Avoiding coercive methods:**

- Prescriptive or coercive methods, such as one- or two-child norms, have rarely worked well anywhere for long as is evident from the experience of China in demographic management. Rather, the people should be empowered to take suitable measures.

##### **Placing the youth and women at the centre of policymaking:**

- Youth, women and girls must be placed at the centre of policymaking and services given the positive ripple effect that it can generate. **Turning the focus on women and youth** could lead to better health outcomes.
  - Young people, and adolescent girls, in particular, must be provided access to education, relevant skills, information and services to make healthy choices, including those related to SRH.
  - Women must be empowered to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health.

##### **Recognizing women rights:**

- India's population stabilisation strategy must be formulated **keeping in mind the rights of women and girls**. Women must have a greater say in choosing their family size.
- Empowerment to make their own choices will lead to better health outcomes among women and girls as this will allow them to prevent unintended pregnancy or give birth with the help of a skilled birth attendant.

- **Changing social norms** would be the biggest challenge to address in this direction.
- Governmental programmes like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**, has played a significant role in challenging the existing regressive social norms and similar efforts should be taken going ahead.

#### **Additional information:**

- India has slipped to 140th rank among 156 countries in **the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report**.

## **2. Judge recuses from Mamata's election case**

### **Context:**

Justice Chanda has **recused himself from hearing the petition** filed in the Calcutta High Court by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee **challenging the Assembly poll result in Nandigram** but **imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh on her**.

### **Recusal**

- Recusal is the **act of abstaining from participation in an official action** such as a legal proceeding due to a **conflict of interest** of the presiding court official or administrative officer.
- It is the **withdrawal of a judge, prosecutor, or juror from a case on the grounds that they are unqualified to perform legal duties because of a possible conflict of interest or lack of impartiality**.

As noted by the Supreme Court in the NJAC judgment, a judge may be required to step down in one of two scenarios:

- **Cases of presumed bias**, where the judge has a pecuniary interest in the outcome of a case (extended, through the Pinochet judgment to other similar non-pecuniary interests); or
- **Cases of apparent bias**, where a reasonable, fair-minded observer would believe there is a real possibility that the judge is biased.

### 3. Issues with the UAPA and role of judiciary

#### Context

Father Stan Swamy passed away at a private hospital in Mumbai on July 5. Fr. Swamy was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)**.

#### How Supreme Court judgment leaves the scope for misuse of UAPA

- The Supreme Court's April 2019 decision in National Investigation Agency vs Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali on the interpretation of the UAPA has affected all downstream decisions involving the statute.
- This decision has created a new doctrine.
- According to the decision, in considering bail applications under the UAPA, **courts must presume every allegation made in the First Information Report to be correct.**
- Further, bail can now be obtained only if the **accused produces material to contradict the prosecution.**
- In other words, **the burden rests on the accused to disprove the allegations**, which is virtually impossible in most cases.
- The decision has essentially **excluded the admissibility of evidence at the stage of bail.**
- By doing so, it has effectively **excluded the Evidence Act itself**, which arguably makes the decision unconstitutional.
- Due to the Supreme Court judgment, **High Courts have their hands tied**, and must perforce refuse bail, as disproving the case is virtually impossible.
- The Delhi High Court recently granted bail to three young activists arrested under UAPA in a conspiracy relating to the 2020 riots in Delhi.
- The Supreme Court reportedly expressed surprise and gave the direction that the decision will **"not to be treated as precedent by any court"** to give similar reliefs.

#### Misuse of the UAPA

- With such high barriers of proof, it is now impossible for an accused to obtain bail, and is in fact a convenient tool to put a person behind bars indefinitely.
- This is being abused by the government, police and prosecution liberally: now, all dissenters are routinely implicated under charges of sedition or criminal conspiracy and under the UAPA.
- In multiple instances, evidence is untenable, sometimes even arguably planted, and generally weak overall.
- But as a consequence of UAPA being applied, the accused cannot even get bail.

## Way forward

- If we want to prevent the misuse, the decision in the Watali case must be urgently reversed or diluted, otherwise, we run the risk of personal liberties being compromised very easily.

## Conclusion

The provision of the act leaves the scope for misuse and therefore judiciary and legislature need to take steps to provide safeguards to prevent the misuse.

## 4. Indemnity issues hold up U.S. vaccine donation

### Context:

Despite the announcement by the USA to donate 80 million doses of American-made COVID-19 vaccines to dozens of countries including India, the **vaccines are being held up by regulatory issues over indemnity (waiver of liability)**.

### Details:

- The U.S. had announced the distribution of 80 million doses as part of its “**COVID-19 Global Response and Recovery Framework**”.
- The indemnity would be used as a **legal defence to protect the U.S. firms**, which have pointed out that they cannot take responsibility for cold-chain lapses and transportation problems within India.

### Background:

- Pfizer and Moderna have been **demanding indemnity as a pre-condition to enter into supply contracts with India**.
- Local manufacturer Serum Institute of India (SII) is also seeking the same.
- The government said it was **considering the requests**, and is **yet to take a decision**.

### What is indemnity?

- The indemnity will **protect manufacturers from any potential civil-legal liability or immunity from being sued by people for any unforeseen complications arising from their COVID-19 vaccine**.

### Why are manufacturers demanding indemnity?

- The vaccines were developed at record speed and were approved for **emergency use**.
- As the processes were expedited, there is a possibility of **potential unknown side-effects**.
- Therefore, the vaccine makers have demanded the **governments to support them by providing them indemnity**.

Pfizer enjoys such immunity in the US, UK and most other countries where it is supplying COVID-19 vaccines.

### What happens in case the Government allows indemnity?

- Indemnity is only a contractual arrangement between the vaccine manufacturer and the government will be privy.
- In case people suffer from a grave injury, disability and death linked to the vaccine, **indemnity doesn't stop people from suing the manufacturer**.
- Liability under the legislation will be intact. They can **recover the losses contractually from the government**.

### Way Forward:

- There is a need to strengthen **adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) reporting and investigations**.
- Government must be more **transparent on indemnity arrangements**.
- At present, there is no compensation mechanism available for COVID-19 vaccine linked serious adverse events or for that matter any vaccine.
- Public health activists say the government should **create a compensation mechanism**.

## 5. Give details on information panel, says SC

### Context:

The Supreme Court has directed the Central government to provide details on the **appointment of Information Commissioners, vacancies and pendency of cases in the Central Information Commission (CIC)**.

### Issue:

- **The pendency of cases in the CIC is as high as 36,000.**

- Activists have raised concerns that the **appointments** to CIC have been made in an **opaque manner** despite a **direction from the court in 2019** that the **appointment process should be transparent**.

#### Central Information Commission:

- It is the apex adjudicatory body for disputes under the **Right to Information (RTI) Act**.
- The CIC was constituted with effect from 12th October 2005 under the RTI Act 2005.
- It is **not a constitutional body**.

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

### 6. New platform maps Pegasus spread

#### Context:

Forensic Architecture of Amnesty International and Citizen Lab launched an **online database about the use of the spyware Pegasus** to document attacks against human rights defenders.

**Spyware** is software with **malicious behaviour** that aims to **gather information about a person or organization** and send it to another entity in a way that **harms the user**.

#### Details:

- Amnesty stated Pegasus had been used in some of the “**most insidious digital attacks**” on **human rights activists in the world**.
- In 2020, Amnesty and Citizen Lab revealed that the spyware was used on **nine human rights defenders who were accused in the Bhima Koregaon case**.

#### Pegasus spyware:

- Pegasus is a spyware tool from **Israeli firm NSO Group**.
- In 2020, WhatsApp’s report stated that 1,400 of its users were **hacked by Pegasus**.
  - It was used to **spy on journalists and human rights activists** across the globe, including in India.

- Pegasus works by **sending an exploit link**, and if the target user clicks on the link, the malware or the code that allows the surveillance is installed on the user's phone.
  - A presumably newer version of the malware does not even require a target user to click a link.
- Once Pegasus is installed, the **attacker has complete access to the user's phone**. Every call, message, can be intercepted and monitored. It can also access any document stored on the phone.
- Pegasus can also **control the phone's camera and microphone** and has access to the device's location data.
- The Pegasus delivers "a chain of **zero-day exploits** to penetrate security features on the phone and installs Pegasus without the user's knowledge or permission".
  - "zero-day exploit" is a completely unknown feature (vulnerability). There is no fix for it as even the manufacturer is not aware of it.

## 7. Delhi gets own genome sequencing lab

### What's in News?

Chief Minister of Delhi inaugurated the **SARS CoV-2 genome sequencing facility** at Delhi.

- It will help in the **timely identification of COVID-19 variants** and aid **strategies to counter them**.

### What is a genome?

- A genome is the **complete set of genetic information of an organism**. It contains all the **instructions for creating and maintaining life**.
- A human genome consists of **nuclear and mitochondrial DNA**.
- The genome of a virus comprises **RNA as the genetic material**.

### Genome Sequencing:

- Genome sequencing is **figuring out the order of DNA nucleotides, or bases, in a genome**.
  - The order of **As, Cs, Ts, and Gs** that make up an organism's DNA.

## THE INDIAN EXPRESS

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

#### 1. Authorised Economic Operators Programme

##### Why in News

The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)** has inaugurated the online filing of **Authorised Economic Operators (AEO)** applications.

- The web application is designed to ensure continuous real-time and digital monitoring of physically filed AEO applications for timely intervention and expedience.

##### Key Points

- **About:**
  - AEO is a programme (2007) under the aegis of the **World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework** of Standards to **secure and facilitate global trade**.
  - It aims to **enhance international supply chain security and facilitate the movement** of goods.
  - Under this, an entity engaged in international trade is **approved by WCO** as compliant with supply chain security standards and **granted AEO status**.
  - An entity with an **AEO status is considered a 'secure' trader** and a reliable trading partner.
    - Benefits of AEO status include **expedited clearance times, fewer examinations, improved security and communication between supply chain partners**.
  - AEO is a **voluntary programme**.
- **Indian AEO Programme:**
  - The AEO Programme was introduced as a **pilot project in 2011**.
  - The security standards detailed in WCO SAFE Framework are the basis of the Indian AEO programme.

- There is a **three tier AEO Status** for Exporters and Importers. The three tiers are AEO T1, AEO T2, AEO T3, where AEO T3 is the highest level of accreditation.
- **Aim of Indian AEO Programme:**
  - To provide business entities with an internationally recognized certification.
  - To recognize business entities as “secure and reliable” trading partners.
  - To incentivize business entities through defined benefits that translate into savings in time and cost.
  - Secure supply chain from point of export to import.
  - Enhanced border clearance.
  - Reduction in dwell time and related costs.
  - Customs advice/assistance if trade faces unexpected issues with Customs of countries.
- **Benefits:**
  - **Safe and Compliant Business:** Worldwide recognition as safe, secure and compliant business partners in international trade.
  - **Reciprocal Recognition:** India gets trade facilitation by a foreign country with whom India enters into a **Mutual Recognition Agreement/Arrangement (MRA)**.
    - MRA is an international agreement by which two or more countries agree to recognize one another's conformity assessment results (for example **certifications** or **test results**).
  - **Streamline Cargo security:** It enables Indian Customs to enhance and streamline cargo security through close cooperation with the principal stakeholders of the international supply chain viz. importers, exporters, logistics providers, custodians or terminal operators, custom brokers and warehouse operators.
  - **Promote Ease of Doing Business:** A liberalized, simplified and rationalized AEO accreditation process has potential to promote **Ease of Doing Business** and to emulate global best practices.
  - Facility of **Direct Port Delivery of import Containers** and/or **Direct Port Entry of Export Containers**.
    - It also fast tracking of refunds and adjudications.
  - The Indian AEO Programme is a **game-changer**. It will not only achieve ‘**Make in India**’ but also substantially add to the vision and lead India to become a manufacturing and exporting power-house.

## World Customs Organisation

- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an **independent intergovernmental body**

whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.

- At present, it represents **183 Customs administrations** across the globe that collectively process approximately **98% of world trade**.
- **India** had become the **vice-chair** (regional head) of the Asia Pacific region of the WCO for a period of **two years to June, 2020**.
- It is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and which can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- It has its **headquarters in Brussels, Belgium**.

### SAFE Framework

- In June 2005 the WCO Council adopted the Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework) that would act as a **deterrent to international terrorism, to secure revenue collections** and to **promote trade facilitation worldwide**.
- The SAFE Framework has emerged as the global Customs community's concerted response to **threats to supply chain security**, equally supporting facilitation of **legitimate and secure businesses**.
- It prescribes baseline standards that have been tested and are working well around the globe.

## 2. ICDS Survey in Jharkhand

### Why in News

According to a recent survey, **more than 55% did not receive Supplementary Nutrition under Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in Jharkhand** even once in the first six months of 2021.

### Key Points

- **Vulnerability of Jharkhand:**
  - As per **National Family Health Survey-4 data**, **every second child in the state is stunted and underweight** and every third child is affected by stunting and **every 10<sup>th</sup> child** is affected from **severe wasting** and around **70% children are anemic**.
- **ICDS:**
  - **About:**

- The **Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** is a **centrally sponsored scheme** implemented by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**. It was **launched in 1975**.
- **Six Schemes under Umbrella ICDS:**
  - **Anganwadi Services Scheme:**
    - It is a unique programme for **early childhood care and development**.
    - The **beneficiaries** under the Scheme are **children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers**.
    - It provides a **package of six services** namely **supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education, nutrition & health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services**.
    - **Supplementary Nutrition** includes Take Home Ration (THR), Hot Cooked Meal and morning snacks and holds importance for many vulnerable households as it impacts the nutritional outcome of the children.
  - **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:**
    - It provides **cash incentive amounting to Rs.5,000/- in three installments** directly to the Bank/Post Office Account of Pregnant Women and Lactating Mother (PW&LM) in **DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) Mode** during pregnancy and lactation in response to individual fulfilling specific conditions.
  - **National Creche Scheme:**
    - It provides **day care facilities to children of age group of 6 months to 6 years of working women**.
    - The facilities are provided for **seven and half hours a day for 26 days in a month**.
    - Children are provided with supplementary nutrition, early childcare education, and health and sleeping facilities.
  - **Scheme for Adolescent Girls:**
    - It aims at **out of school girls in the age group 11-14**, to empower and improve their social status through nutrition, life skills and home skills.
    - The scheme has **nutritional and non nutritional components** which include nutrition; iron and folic acid supplementation; health check up and referral service; nutrition and health education; mainstreaming out of school girls to join formal schooling bridge course/ skill training; life skill education, home management etc;; counselling/ guidance on accessing public services.

- **Child Protection Scheme:**
  - It aims to **contribute to the improvement and well-being of children in difficult circumstances**, as well as, reduction of vulnerabilities to situations and actions that lead to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and separation of children from parents.
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:**
  - It targets to **reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies** by reducing mal-nutrition/undernutrition, anemia among **young children** as also, **focus on adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.**
- **Objectives of ICDS:**
  - To improve the **nutritional and health status of children** in the age-group **0-6 years.**
  - To lay the foundation for **proper psychological, physical and social development** of the child.
  - To reduce the **incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout.**
  - To achieve **effective coordination of policy and implementation** amongst the various departments to promote child development.
  - To enhance the **capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child.**
  - To **facilitate, educate and empower Adolescent Girls (AGs)** so as to enable them to become self-reliant and aware citizens.

### Other Similar Government Schemes

- **National Health Mission (NHM):**
  - Launched in 2013, it subsumed the **National Rural Health Mission and the National Urban Health Mission.**
  - It is being **implemented by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.**
  - The main programmatic components include health system strengthening in rural and urban areas for - **Reproductive-Maternal-Neonatal-Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A)**, and **Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases.**
- **Mid Day Meal Scheme:**
  - It was launched in 1995 as a **centrally sponsored scheme.**
  - It provides that **every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII** who enrolls and attends the school shall be provided with a **hot cooked meal, free of charge every day except on school holidays.**

- It comes under the **Education Ministry's Department of School Education and Literacy.**
- **National Nutrition Strategy:**
  - The Strategy **aims to reduce all forms of undernutrition by 2030**, with a focus on the most vulnerable and critical age groups.
  - It also **aims to assist in achieving the targets identified as part of the Sustainable Development Goals** related to nutrition and health.
  - It has been released by the **NITI Aayog.**

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

### **3. Discrete Auroras on Mars**

The UAE's Hope spacecraft, which is orbiting Mars since February this year, has captured images of glowing atmospheric lights in the Red Planet's night sky, known as discrete auroras.

#### **What causes an Aurora on Earth?**

- Auroras are caused when charged particles ejected from the Sun's surface — called the solar wind — enter the Earth's atmosphere.
- These particles are harmful, and our planet is protected by the geomagnetic field, which preserves life by shielding us from the solar wind.
- However, at the north and south poles, some of these solar wind particles are able to continuously stream down, and interact with different gases in the atmosphere to cause a display of light in the night sky.
- This display, known as an aurora, is seen from the Earth's high latitude regions (called the auroral oval), and is active all year round.

#### **Where are they observed on Earth?**

- In the northern part of our globe, the polar lights are called aurora borealis or Northern Lights and are seen from the US (Alaska), Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.
- In the south, they are called aurora australis or southern lights and are visible from high latitudes in Antarctica, Chile, Argentina, New Zealand and Australia.

### So, how are Martian auroras different?

- Unlike auroras on Earth, which are seen only near the north and south poles, discrete auroras on Mars are seen all around the planet at night time.
- Unlike Earth, which has a strong magnetic field, the Martian magnetic field has largely died out.
- This is because the molten iron at the interior of the planet- which produces magnetism- has cooled.
- However, the Martian crust, which hardened billions of years ago when the magnetic field still existed, retains some magnetism.
- So, in contrast with Earth, which acts like one single bar magnet, magnetism on Mars is unevenly distributed, with fields strewn across the planet and differing in direction and strength.
- These disjointed fields channel the solar wind to different parts of the Martian atmosphere, creating “discrete” auroras over the entire surface of the planet as charged particles interact with atoms and molecules in the sky- as they do on Earth.

### Why is it important to study them?

- Studying Martian auroras is important for scientists, for it can offer clues as to why the Red Planet lost its magnetic field and thick atmosphere- among the essential requirements for sustaining life.

### 4. Anti-methanogenic feed supplement ‘Harit Dhara’

An Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institute has developed an anti-methanogenic feed supplement ‘Harit Dhara’.

#### Harit Dhara

- Harit Dhara is prepared using condensed and hydrolysable tannin-rich plant-based sources abundantly available in the country.
- It changes the composition of the volatile fatty acids that are the end-products of rumen fermentation (along with hydrogen and CO<sub>2</sub>).
- It roughly costs Rs 6/kg and it is to be fed only to animals aged above three months having fully functional rumen.
- When given to bovines and sheep, it not only cuts down their methane emissions by 17-20%.
- It also results in higher milk production and body weight gain.

### Why it is significant?

- Belching cattle, buffaloes, sheep and goats in India emit an estimated 9.25 million tonnes (mt) to 14.2 mt of methane annually, out of a global total of 90 mt-plus from livestock.
- And given methane's global warming potential – 25 times of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) over 100 years, making it a more potent greenhouse gas – that's cause for concern.
- An average lactating cow or buffalo in India emits around 200 litres of methane per day, while it is 85-95 litres for young growing heifers and 20-25 litres for adult sheep.
- Feeding Harit Dhara can reduce these by a fifth.

### How is methane produced by the cattles?

- Methane is produced by animals having rumen, the first of their four stomachs where the plant material they eat – cellulose, fibre, starch and sugars – gets fermented or broken down by microorganisms prior to further digestion and nutrient absorption.
- Carbohydrate fermentation leads to the production of CO<sub>2</sub> and hydrogen.
- These are used as substrate by archaea – microbes in the rumen with structure similar to bacteria – to produce methane, which the animals then expel through burping.
- Harit Dhara acts by decreasing the population of protozoa microbes in the rumen, responsible for hydrogen production and making it available to the archaea for reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> to methane.
- Tropical plants containing tannins – bitter and astringent chemical compounds – are known to suppress or remove protozoa from the rumen.

### Need for India

- The 2019 Livestock Census showed India's cattle population at 193.46 million, along with 109.85 million buffaloes, 148.88 million goats and 74.26 million sheep.
- Being largely fed on agricultural residues – wheat/paddy straw and maize, sorghum or bajra stover – ruminants in India tend to produce 50-100% higher methane than their industrialized country counterparts.

## 5. Export of GI certified Bhalia Wheat

In a major boost to wheat exports, the first shipment of Geographical Indication (GI) certified Bhalia variety of wheat was exported today to Kenya and Sri Lanka from Gujarat.

### Bhalia Wheat

- The GI certified wheat has high protein content and is sweet in taste.
- The crop is grown mostly across Bhal region of Gujarat which includes Ahmadabad, Anand, Kheda, Bhavanagar, Surendranagar, Bharuch districts.
- The unique characteristic of the wheat variety is that grown in the rainfed condition without irrigation and cultivated in around two lakh hectares of agricultural land in Gujarat.
- The Bhalia variety of wheat received GI certification in July, 2011.
- The registered proprietor of GI certification is Anand Agricultural University, Gujarat.

## 6. Authorised Economic Operators

Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) has inaugurated the online filing of Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) T2 and T3 applications.

### Who are Authorised Economic Operators?

- The AEO concept is one of the main building blocks within the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards (SAFE).
- The latter is part of the future international Customs model set out to support secure trade.
- The growth of global trade and increasing security threats to the international movement of goods have forced customs administrations to shift their focus more and more to securing the international trade flow and away from the traditional task of collecting customs duties.
- Recognizing these developments, the World Customs Organization, drafted the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate global trade (SAFE).
- In the framework, several standards are included that can assist Customs administrations in meeting these new challenges.
- Developing an Authorized Economic Operator programme is a core part of SAFE.

## AEOs in India

- AEO is a voluntary programme.
- It enables Indian Customs to enhance and streamline cargo security through close cooperation with the principal stakeholders of the international supply chain viz. importers, exporters, logistics providers, custodians or terminal operators, customs brokers and warehouse operators.

### Prelims Practice Questions

#### 1. Which of the following Directive Principles of State Policy ensures Constitutional Privileges for women in India?

- a. Article 42
- b. Article 48
- c. Article 49
- d. Article 50

**Answer: a**

#### Explanation:

Article 42 of the Indian Constitution states “The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief”.

#### 2. In India, the Ministries/Departments of the Government are created by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister under which of the following?

- a. Article 75 of Indian Constitution
- b. The Representation of Peoples Act, 1951
- c. Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961
- d. Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha

**Answer : c**

- The Union Government has recently created a new **Ministry of Cooperation**.

- The move aims to realize the vision of 'Sahkar se Samriddhi' (through cooperation to prosperity).
- This ministry will provide a separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement in the country.
- It will help deepen Co-operatives as a true people based movement reaching up to the grassroots.
- The Ministry will work to streamline processes for 'Ease of doing business' for co-operatives and enable development of Multi-State Co-operatives (MSCS).

### Creation of Ministries/Departments

- The **Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961** are made by the President of India under Article 77 of the Indian Constitution for the allocation of business of the Government of India.
- The Ministries/Departments of the Government are created by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister **under these Rules**.

### 3. "Mazar-e-Sharif", often in news is located in:

- a. Israel
- b. Afghanistan
- c. Iran
- d. Syria

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

"Mazar-e-Sharif" is a city in northern Afghanistan.

### 4. Consider the following statements with respect to King Cobra

1. They live mainly in the rain forests and plains of India, southern China, and Southeast Asia.
2. They are listed as least concern under IUCN Red list.

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 : a

### King Cobra

- They are the only snakes in the world that build nests for their eggs, which they guard ferociously until the hatchlings emerge.
- They are comfortable in a variety of habitats, including forests, bamboo thickets, mangrove swamps, high-altitude grasslands, and in rivers.
- They are protected under IUCN Red List as Vulnerable and mentioned under CITES: Appendix II and Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule II.

### 5. The term 'Safe harbour immunity' seen in news refers to:

- a. Agreement between India-Sri Lanka providing immunity to fishermen entering into each other's territorial waters.
- b. Immunity offered to social media intermediaries from criminal liability.
- c. Immunity from quarantine rules in the EU countries for the holders of Green pass.
- d. Governmental immunity from taxation by state governments in the areas of overlapping tax jurisdiction.

Answer: b

### Explanation:

- 'Safe harbour immunity' is the immunity offered to social media intermediaries from criminal liability.
- The immunity of safe harbour is provided for under Section 79 (1) of the Information Technology Act.
  - Section 79 of the IT Act, states, "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.
- So long as the platform acts just as the medium to carry out messages from users without interfering in any manner, it will be safe from criminal liability.

6. Which of the following countries are not parts of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus (OPEC+)?

1. India
2. Russia
3. Malaysia
4. Australia
5. South Sudan

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer : b

- OPEC+ ministers called off oil output talks after the recent clash when the United Arab Emirates (UAE) balked at a proposed eight-month extension to output curbs.

### Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

- It is an intergovernmental organization of 13 countries.
- Founded on 14 September 1960 in Baghdad by the five members constitutes Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
- In addition to formal OPEC members, 10 additional oil exporting countries form the OPEC+.

### OPEC+ countries excluding OPEC

- Russia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, South Sudan, and Sudan

## Mains Practice Questions

**1. Mission Karmayogi is aimed at building a future-ready civil service with the right attitude, skills and knowledge, aligned to the vision of New India. Discuss. (250 words)**

### Approach

- Introduce by writing about Mission Karmayogi.
- Examine the benefits of the mission in building a future-ready civil service.
- Discuss the challenges in achieving the objectives of the Mission Karmayogi.
- Conclude suitably on a positive note.

**2. Rising air pollution in Delhi is a serious concern causing severe health hazards. Enumerate the reasons and measures taken by the government to combat this growing menace. (250 words)**

### Approach

- Write an introduction highlighting the relevant facts and status of air pollution in Delhi.
- Discuss the reasons for rising air pollution in Delhi citing facts about the costs in terms of health and threats caused by it.
- Explain the measures taken by the government highlighting the impending issues.
- Write a forward looking conclusion.

