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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. A vague and wanting statement

Context:

- The **Carbis Bay Declaration** made during the recently held Group of Seven summit in Cornwall, England.
 - The 'Carbis Bay Declaration' is a **landmark global health declaration aimed at preventing future pandemics** under which G7 leaders have committed to use all their resources.

Background:

Devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- The COVID-19 pandemic apart from being one of the biggest health challenges to mankind has also resulted in devastating economic impact.
- Millions have lost their lives and many more have lost their livelihoods thus being pushed into acute poverty and the challenges thereof.

Threat of future pandemics:

- COVID-19 is not going to be the last pandemic that the earth faces. **The threat of future pandemics remains high** due to the following reasons:
 - The **increasing proximity between humans and animals** due to deforestation, population growth, and the search for wild food. This represents an ideal setup for pathogens to be easily transmitted from animals to humans (zoonotic spillover).
 - A report by the **Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR)** notes that most of the new pathogens' origins are zoonotic.
 - The **increasing movement of people** across countries owing to the availability of transport facilities will aid the faster spread of the disease.
 - **Global warming** has led to the melting of permafrost in arctic regions. This could lead to the **revival of dormant or unknown pathogens and organisms**.

- Example – **bdelloid rotifers**, a microscopic creature was unearthed from the permafrost.
- Climate change could aid the **spurt in vectors of deadly infections**.

Concerns:

- Though the declaration marks a welcome relief amid the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the article expresses concerns over the fact that the participating leaders **failed to adopt any substantive measures** towards the prevention of future pandemics.
 - The G7 merely acknowledged the recommendations of the IPPPR and the other committees and stated that it will work with other countries and organizations towards preparing for future pandemics **without giving any roadmap** for such collaboration.
 - The G7 failed to provide any material support to the already suffering countries and offered only **vague commitments of support for vulnerable countries**. Its claim of striving for fairness, inclusion and equity is not backed by the allocation of requisite resources.

Recommendations:

Global treaty:

- The G7 should strive towards building consensus on a potential global **treaty to deal with such future pandemics**, under the framework of the WHO. Any such treaty should incorporate the IPPPR's recommendations.
- A treaty is needed to plug holes in the current system and strengthen national capacities and resilience.

Hand holding the most vulnerable countries:

- Given that **a pandemic anywhere is a pandemic everywhere**, there should be ample focus on strengthening the developing countries' capacities to deal with future pandemics. This could be in the form of the supply of requisite resources for the developing countries.

Holistic approach:

- The world needs to adopt a holistic approach for the prevention of future pandemics.
- Human interventions to prevent future pandemics can be classified under three broad stages – **upstream, midstream, and downstream stages of intervention**.

- Downstream intervention refers to steps taken on the public health front, like prevention of disease spread.
- **Upstream intervention would focus on the 'One Health' approach**, which acknowledges the interconnection between humans, animals, plants, and the shared ecosystem.
- Midstream intervention would involve setting up a science and policy panel to ensure that science informs the law. This would also involve **pre-emptively detecting pathogens of concern, and identifying potential hotspots for an outbreak** and setting up a mechanism for regular inspection and appropriate international oversight.
- The countries will have to **focus on deep prevention which prioritizes upstream and midstream interventions.**

2. 'OPEC risks forcing India to tap Iran for oil if prices stay high'

Context:

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies (OPEC+) are expected to discuss a possible easing of supply cuts.

Background:

- When the **demand dropped in the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic** and crude prices briefly turned negative in 2020, the club led by Saudi Arabia and Russia (OPEC+) **imposed sharp production cuts in order to raise prices.**
- However, considering the success of this strategy the group is currently following a policy of **cautiously increasing production.**

Details:

- India is the **third-largest consumer of crude oil.** It has been forced to **phase out crude output cuts to lessen the effects of rising inflationary pressures.**
- Inflation is a major challenge for the Indian economy. Read more on inflation [here](#).
- Besides, over the last few months, India has exhausted the strategic petroleum reserves it had built up by taking advantage of lower oil prices in 2020.
- India is working to persuade oil-exporting countries to **moderate surging oil prices.**
- If prices were to increase, India has warned that **it would consider tapping alternative import sources such as Iran** (if the sanctions imposed on it by the U.S. were lifted).

- If current negotiations on a US return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal are successful, the country may be able to resume exporting oil at levels prior to 2018.
- In 2018, former US President Donald Trump dramatically withdrew from the deal and **imposed sanctions**.
- The **sanctions hurt India**, who **relied on Iran in particular for a sizeable chunk of its crude oil**.
- If prices remain high, it would eat into consumers' disposable incomes and **potentially choke economic growth**.

OPEC+ Meeting:

- Since December 2020, the OPEC+ countries have been meeting every month in order to calibrate their strategy as closely as possible to the latest developments.
- It is expected that they would agree to **boost production** in August 2021 in order to **meet demand and dampen recent price rises**.

3. Israel's Lapid opens Embassy in UAE

What's in News?

Israel's new Foreign Minister **inaugurated the country's Embassy in the United Arab Emirates**.

Background:

- Israel **did not have diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states** owing to its **long-standing conflict with Palestinians**. **Read more on the Israel-Palestine conflict in the link**.
 - However, it had signed peace agreements with Egypt in 1979 and with Jordan in 1994.
- In 2020, the US, Israel and the UAE, the leaders of the three countries agreed to the **full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates**.
- It also refers to the agreement reached between **Israel, Bahrain and the UAE to normalise relations between the three**.
- It was believed to be a **historic diplomatic breakthrough** that would advance **peace in the Middle East region**.
- The agreement, called the 'Abraham Accord', was **brokered by US President Donald Trump**.

Abraham Accords:

- The Abraham Accords are a **joint statement made between Israel, the United States and the United Arab Emirates** on August 13, 2020.

4. **Ensure that no migrant worker goes hungry, SC instructs govt.**

Context:

The Supreme Court has directed the government to ensure that **none of the estimated 38 crore migrant workers goes hungry during the pandemic.**

Issue:

- Migrant workers form **one-fourth of India's population.**
- They are not able to get jobs that may satisfy their basic needs.
- There is a large number of such migrants who **do not possess any card.** This is because of **poverty and lack of education.**
- The work on the **National Database for Unorganised Workers (NDUW) portal has not been completed.** It was **ordered to be completed in 2018.**
 - NDUW portal is a ₹45.39 crore project to **register and identify migrant workers and unorganised labourers to ensure their rights, welfare and food security.**

Supreme Court's Directions:

- The SC judgement said that **a government cannot abdicate its duties to feed migrant workers,** especially during a pandemic, merely because they **did not have ration cards.**
- It asserted that the **Right to food is an intrinsic part of the right to live with dignity.**
- It has set **July 31, 2021, as the deadline** for the Centre and the States to ensure that **none among migrant workers goes hungry** during the pandemic.
 - The court ordered the State governments to frame **schemes to distribute dry rations** to migrant workers.
- All the states must fully implement the **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme** by July 31, 2021.
 - With ONORC **labourers covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA),** a person can **access food at any fair price shop** with his or her ration card in any part of the country.
- The **Centre has to supply whatever additional quantity of food grains a State demands.**
- The **allocation of additional food grains** and the running of **community kitchens** in prominent places to feed workers should **continue throughout the pandemic.**

- The Bench directed the States/Union Territories to **register establishments and license contractors under the InterState Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979** and ensure that they provided the authorities complete details of the workers employed with them.

5. Lanka 'banking on' \$1 bn India swap deal

Context:

Sri Lanka is depending on a **\$1 billion currency swap from India.**

Details:

- **Sri Lanka** has to meet its daunting debt repayment obligations for 2021 and is facing an **economic crisis**, due to the pandemic.
- It has already **serviced part of its debt** and is preparing to repay the remaining more than \$3 billion over the next six months.
- With an international sovereign bond maturing, a \$1 billion repayment is due.
- Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had **in 2020 requested the Prime Minister of India for a special \$1.1-billion currency swap** to help the country boost its foreign reserves.
- Sri Lanka is already expecting a **\$400 million swap from the Reserve Bank of India** in a couple of months through the **SAARC facility**. However, an additional \$1 billion it says is going to be crucial for the country.

China's Assistance:

- In addition to sanctioning loans and a **currency swap facility worth more than \$2 billion** since the pandemic struck, China has announced a **\$90 million grant to Sri Lanka in October 2020.**
- **China's rapidly growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** and specifically in **Sri Lanka is a cause of concern for India.**

Assistance from other countries:

- In May 2021, **Bangladesh** cleared a **\$200 million currency swap facility for Sri Lanka.**
- Sri Lanka has inked a **\$500 million loan agreement with the EXIM Bank of Korea.**

6. Méndez's anti-torture vision is still distant for India

- The 'Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering', are also called the 'Méndez Principles'.
- It proposes practical measures to **replace torture and coercive interrogation with rapport-based interviews**, reinforced through legal and procedural safeguards at every step.
- The Méndez Principles thus represent a new standard for effective interviewing by police and others, while **respecting human rights**.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

7. Flying terror

Context:

- In the first such instance in India, **drones were used to attack an Indian Air Force base in Jammu**. Explosive devices were dropped from drones triggering blasts.
- There have been reports of at least two more subsequent attempts to use drones to attack military targets.

History of use of drones in warfare:

- In 2018, **Syrian rebels used homemade drones to attack Russian military bases in Syria**.
- There has been an assassination attempt on the Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro using an explosive-laden drone.
- In 2019, **Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for bombing Saudi oil installations using drones**.

Concerns:

Technology backed terrorism:

- The use of drones represents a new mode of terrorism characterized by the increasing use of technology. This helps **reduce costs and the risk of identification for terrorists while increasing their efficacy**. The exponential proliferation of new technologies and Artificial Intelligence will only make the threat posed by drones increase exponentially.

Redundancy of available tools to counter drones:

- The conventionally available tools would be redundant in combating the threat posed by drones. **Since drones fly very low it is extremely difficult to detect them using radars and they also leave little by way of reaction time once detected.**

Easy accessibility:

- The fact that drones are **available in open markets for very cheap prices** makes them easily accessible for terrorists to procure. This could enable even individuals with sufficient motivation and skills to carry out drone attacks without the threat of being identified by intelligence agencies.
- Thus drones offer the non-state actors **cheap and affordable ways of targeting the security agencies.**

Increased capacity of drones:

- Drones have developed significantly and acquired massive leaps in capability. **The increased speed, range, manoeuvrability and load-carrying capacity** have turned them into potential weapons that could be used to target adversaries. Such drones can hit strategic targets and cause huge damage.
- **Small size, stealth drones pose a lethal threat to strategic installations.**

No comprehensive regulation:

- The existing international framework for controlling the proliferation of technology that can be weaponized, such as the **Wassenaar Arrangement and Missile Technology Control Regime**, may be termed ineffective in addressing the threat posed by drones.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement aims to **promote transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.** The aim is also to prevent the acquisition of these items by terrorists.

Recommendations:

- Requisite measures in terms of **anti-drone capabilities**, as well as **policy measures**, should be put in place to counter the threat posed by drones.
- Requisite Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems capability must be developed and made available. There is an urgent need for an **anti-drone system shielding critical installations in the country.** This could involve anti-drone techniques like **drone jammers, Directed Energy Weapons such as lasers and the use of suitable guns, missiles and other hard kill options.**

- Enhanced **international cooperation and consensus on the development and deployment of technologies** are required to combat such new methods of terror attacks.
- **Tighter regulation of drones sales and operations** needs to be implemented to prevent their use for terrorist activities.

8. **Pyrostria laljii: New Species from Andaman**

Why in News

Recently, **Pyrostria laljii**, a new species which **belongs to the genus of the coffee family** has recently been **discovered from the Andaman Islands**.

- A new species of pokeweed named **Rivina andamanensis** was also discovered.
- **Andaman and Nicobar** is a group of 572 islands and islets that are rich and **unique in terms of plant diversity** in India.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is the **first record of the genus Pyrostria** in India. It is a **15-meter-tall tree**.
 - Plants belonging to genus **Pyrostria** are **usually found in Madagascar** but the recently discovered species is new to science.
 - While the genus **Pyrostria** is **not found in India**, there are several **genera from the family Rubiaceae** that are **common in India**.
 - These plants, including **cinchona, coffee, adina, hamelia, ixora, gallium, gardenia, mussaenda, rubia, morinda**, have high potential for economic value.
 - **Named Pyrostria laljii after Lal Ji Singh**, Joint Director, Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre, **Botanical Survey of India**.
 - It has been assessed as **'Critically Endangered'** based on the **International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List** criteria.
- **Features:**
 - Distinguished by a **long stem with a whitish coating on the trunk**, and **oblong-ovate leaves with a cuneate base**.
 - Another physical feature that distinguishes the tree from other species of the genus is its **umbellate inflorescence with eight to 12 flowers**.

- **Habitat in India:**
 - First reported from **South Andaman's Wandoor forest**. Other places in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands where the tree could be located are the **Tirur forest near the Jarawa Reserve Forest** and the **Chidiya Tapu (Munda Pahar) forest**.

Rivina andamanensis

- Another **new species of pokeweed** named **Rivina andamanensis** was also discovered. It was **found growing under large trees, shaded and rocky areas**, along with herbs and shrubby plants.
 - **Pokeweed** is a **strong-smelling plant with a poisonous root**. The berries contain a red dye used to colour wine, candies, cloth, and paper.
- This discovery of new species, representing the **first record of the pokeweed family Petiveriaceae in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, adds one more family to the islands' flora.

Botanical Survey of India

- **About:**
 - It is the **apex research organization** under the **Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEFCC)** for carrying out **taxonomic and floristic studies on wild plant resources** of the country.
 - It was **established in 1890** with the objective to **explore plant resources of the country and to identify plant species with economic virtues**.
 - It has **nine regional circles** situated at different regions of the country. However the **headquarter is located in Kolkata, West Bengal**.
- **Functions:**
 - **Exploration, inventorying and documentation** of phytodiversity in general and protected areas, hotspots and fragile ecosystems in particular
 - **Publication** of National, State and District Floras.
 - **Identification** of threatened and red list species and species rich areas needing conservation.
 - **Ex-situ conservation** of critically threatened species in botanical gardens.
 - **Survey and documentation** of traditional knowledge (ethno-botany) associated with plants.
 - **Develop National database** of Indian plants, including herbarium and live specimens, botanical paintings and illustrations, etc.

9. Lanka 'banking on' \$1 bn India swap deal

Context:

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Details:

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Assistance from other countries:

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- Sri Lanka has inked a **\$500 million loan agreement with the EXIM Bank of Korea.**

10. **Bharitalasuchus Tapani: A Carnivorous Reptile**

Why in News

Recently, an international team of paleontologists has thrown light on a carnivorous reptile that lived 240 million years ago (Bharitalasuchus tapani).

- The Team studied some of the fossil specimens stored at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

- In the mid 20th century, researchers from the Institute carried out extensive studies on rocks of the Yerrapalli Formation in what is now Telangana, uncovering several fossils.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - This reptile belongs to a **genus and species previously unknown to science**. They named it **Bharitalasuchus tapani (BT)**.
 - **BT were robust animals with big heads and large teeth**, and these probably predated other smaller reptiles.
 - They were **approximately the size of an adult male lion and might have been the largest predators in their ecosystems**.
 - In the **Telugu language**, Bhari means huge, Tala means head, and Suchus is the name of the Egyptian crocodile-headed deity.
 - The species is named after **paleontologist Tapan Roy Chowdhury** in honour of his contribution to Indian vertebrate paleontology and especially his extensive work on the **Yerrapalli Formation** tetrapod fauna.
 - Further studies revealed that the reptile **belonged to a family of extinct reptiles named Erythrosuchidae**.
 - Erythrosuchids are known from Lower-Middle Triassic rocks of South Africa, Russia, and China, and there have been preliminary reports from the Middle Triassic Yerrapalli Formation of south-central India.
- **Yerrapalli Formation:**
 - It is a Triassic (period from 250-201 million years ago) rock formation consisting primarily of mudstones that outcrops in the Pranhita-Godavari Basin in southeastern India.
 - Apart from this erythrosuchid reptile, the fossil assemblage of the Yerrapalli Formation **includes many other extinct creatures** such as ceratodontid lungfish, rhynchosaur and allokotosaurian.
 - However, **deforestation, mining, agricultural expansion, urbanisation** are gradually destroying the fossiliferous localities of India.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Supreme Court's Ruling on ONORC System for Migrant Workers

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court** directed all states and Union Territories (UT) to implement the **One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC)** system by 31st July 2021.

- The scheme allows migrant labourers covered under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)** to access food at any fair price shop with his or her ration card in any part of the country.

Key Points

- **Right to Food:**
 - The **fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution** may be interpreted to **include the right to live with human dignity, having the right to food** and other basic necessities.
- **Importance of Migrants:**
 - There are around **38 crore workers** engaged in the unorganized sectors (National Statistics Office (NSO) data of 2017-2018).
 - These unorganized workers **did not have any permanent source of employment and have engaged themselves in small time vocations and occupations** at various places away from their native places.
 - **Contributions** of these labourers towards different projects, industries, make considerable **additions in the economic development of the country.**
- **Database:**
 - Criticized the Labour Ministry for not completing the work of the Rs 45.39-crore **National Database for Unorganised Workers (NDUW) portal** to register and identify migrant workers.
 - The Court had ordered the Ministry to finalise the NDUW module way back in 2018.
 - Directed the States/UTs to register establishments and license contractors under the **Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979** and ensure that they provide the authorities complete details of the workers employed with them.

- **Redetermination of Beneficiaries under NFSA:**
 - Directed the Centre **“to undertake exercise under Section 9 of the National Food Security Act, 2013”** to re-determine the total number of persons to be covered under Rural and Urban areas of the State.

ONORC System

- **Background:**
 - Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, about 81 crore people are entitled to buy subsidised food grains - rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg, and coarse grains at Re 1/kg – from designated fair price shops.
 - However, **NFSA beneficiaries were not able to access their PDS (Public Distribution System) benefits outside the jurisdiction of the specific fair price shop** to which they have been assigned.
 - By introducing ONORC, the idea was to reform the PDS, which has been historically marred by inefficiency and leakages.
- **Launch:**
 - ONORC was launched in August, 2019.
- **Aim:**
 - The ONORC scheme is **aimed at enabling migrant workers and their family members** to buy subsidised ration from any fair price shop anywhere in the country under the NFSA.
 - To promote this reform in the PDS, the government has provided **incentives** to states and also set a **precondition for additional borrowing** by states during the Covid-19 pandemic last year.
- **Technology Used:**
 - ONORC is based on technology that **involves details of beneficiaries’ ration card, Aadhaar number, and electronic Points of Sale (ePoS)**. The system identifies a beneficiary through biometric authentication on ePoS devices at fair price shops.
 - The system runs with the support of two portals - **Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)** and **Annavitran**.
 - While the **Annavitran portal maintains a record of intra-state transactions** - inter-district and intra-district - the **IM-PDS portal records the inter-state transactions**.
- **ONORC Coverage:**
 - Till date, 32 states and UTs have joined the ONORC, covering about 69 crore NFSA beneficiaries.
 - Four states are **yet to join the scheme - Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and West Bengal**.

- While inter-state ration card portability is available in 32 states, the number of such transactions is much lower than that of intra-district and inter-district transactions.
- **Benefits:**
 - Under the ONORC, the beneficiaries from one state can get their share of rations in other states where the ration card was originally issued.
 - ONORC will also give the beneficiaries the opportunity to opt for the dealer of their choice.
 - It will be particularly beneficial for women and other disadvantaged groups, given how social identity (caste, class and gender) and other contextual factors (including power relations) provide a strong backdrop in accessing PDS.
 - This will help achieve the **target set under SDG (Sustainable development Goals) 2** (Ending hunger by 2030). Also, it will address the poor state of hunger in India, as highlighted by the **Global Hunger Index**, where India has been ranked 94 out of 107 countries.

2.PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme

Why in News

The **Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME)** Scheme, launched under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**, completed its one year on 29th June.

- The PMFME Scheme is currently being **implemented in 35 States and Union Territories (UTs)**.

Key Points

- **Nodal Ministry:**
 - Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI).
- **Features:**
 - **One District One Product (ODOP) Approach:**
 - The States would identify food products for districts keeping in view the existing clusters and availability of raw material.
 - The ODOP could be a perishable produce based or cereal based or a food item widely produced in an area. E.g. mango, potato, pickle, millet based products, fisheries, poultry, etc.
 - **Other Focus Areas:**
 - Waste to wealth products, minor forest products and **Aspirational Districts**.
 - **Capacity building and research:** Academic and research institutions under MoFPI along with State Level Technical

Institutions would be provided support for training of units, product development, appropriate packaging and machinery for micro units.

- **Financial Support:**
 - **Upgradation of Individual Micro Food Processing Units:** Existing individual micro food processing units desirous of upgrading their units can avail credit-linked capital subsidy at 35% of the eligible project cost with a maximum ceiling of Rs.10 lakh per unit.
 - **Seed Capital to SHG:** Initial funding of **Rs. 40,000- per Self Help Group (SHG)** member would be provided for working capital and purchase of small tools.
- **Implementation:** Over a period of five years from **2020-21 to 2024-25.**
- **Funding Details:**
 - It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore.
 - The expenditure under the scheme would be shared in 60:40 ratio between Central and State Governments, in 90:10 ratio with North Eastern and Himalayan States, 60:40 ratio with UTs with legislature and 100% by Centre for other UTs.
- **Need:**
 - The **unorganized food processing sector comprising nearly 25 lakh units contributes to 74% of employment** in the food processing sector.
 - The unorganised food processing sector **faces a number of challenges** which limit their performance and their growth. The challenges include lack of access to modern technology & equipment, training, access institutional credit, lack of basic awareness on quality control of products; and lack of branding & marketing skills etc.
- **Status of Indian Food Industry:**
 - The Indian food and grocery market is the **world's sixth largest**, with retail contributing **70% of the sales.**
 - The **Indian food processing industry accounts for 32% of the country's total food market**, one of the largest industries in India **and is ranked fifth** in terms of production, consumption, export and expected growth.
 - It contributes around 8.80 and 8.39% of Gross Value Added (GVA) in Manufacturing and Agriculture respectively, 13% of India's exports and 6% of total industrial investment.
- **Other Schemes Related to Food Processing:**
 - **Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI):** Aims to give companies incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units.
 - **Mega Food Park Scheme:** Mega Food Parks create modern infrastructure facilities for food processing along the value chain from

farm to market with strong forward and backward linkages through a cluster-based approach.

3. Energy Compacts

Why in News

National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Limited has become the **first energy company** in the energy domain in India to **declare its Energy Compact Goals** as part of **UN High-level Dialogue on Energy (HLDE)**.

- The **United Nations** is set to convene a **high-level dialogue (HLD)** in **September, 2021** to promote the **implementation of the energy-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.
- NTPC is India's largest power generating company which is under the **Ministry of Power**.

Key Points

- **Energy Compacts** (a platform to unite and connect commitments and actions):
 - Energy Compacts are being **mobilized by UN-Energy** and will continue to be mobilized and updated **throughout the current Decade of Action**.
 - These are ongoing or new commitments with clear, underlying actions that will **advance progress on one or more of SDG7's three core targets**.
 - SDG7 calls for "affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all" by 2030.
 - **SDG 7 three core targets:** Access to energy, Renewable energy, Energy efficiency.
 - These are **voluntary commitments** from Member States and non-state actors, such as companies, regional/local governments, NGOs, and others.
 - Since affordable, clean energy is a prerequisite for achieving all other SDGs and the **Paris Agreement**, actions defined in an Energy Compact can be directly linked to **Nationally Determined Contributions** considered as SDG Acceleration Actions.
- **Difference between Energy Compacts (EC) and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):**
 - NDCs address **Member States' national climate ambitions and targets** that are legally required under the Paris Agreement, focusing on a **country's emissions profile** from the economy as a whole.

- EC includes a variety of voluntary commitments, actions, initiatives, and partnerships focused specifically on the energy system and SDG7.
 - They will cover the SDG7 targets, including those that are not reflected in a country's NDCs, such as clean cooking access.
- EC is also open to all stakeholders in the global movement on SDG7, including businesses, organizations, and subnational authorities, and will have annual mechanisms to track progress on the commitments.
- **Need for Energy Compacts (EC):**
 - The energy sector continues to be the **most significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)** globally, continuing a trend aligned with industrialization.
 - **Current Situation:**
 - 789 million people without access to electricity (2018)
 - 2.8 billion people without access to clean cooking (2018)
 - 17% share of total final energy consumption from renewables (2017)
 - 1.7% energy efficiency improvement rate (2017)
- **NTPC Energy Compact Goals:**
 - It has set a target to install **60 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2032**. It is also aiming at 10% reduction in net energy intensity by 2032.
 - NTPC has declared that it will form **at least 2 international alliances/groups to facilitate clean energy research** and promote sustainability in the energy value chain by 2025.

UN-Energy

- UN-Energy was established by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in 2004 as the **United Nations' mechanism for inter-agency collaboration in the field of energy**.
- It seeks to act to support countries in achieving SDG7 and the interrelated goals of the Paris Climate Agenda and the broader SDG agenda.

Decade of Action

- In September 2019, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the Decade of Action (2021-2030) to **deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** to accelerate efforts to deliver on the ambitious, universal and inclusive 2030 Agenda.

4. Not-for-Profit Hospital Model Study: NITI Aayog

Why in News

Recently, the NITI Aayog released a comprehensive study on the **Not-for-Profit Hospital Model** in the country.

- It is an initiative in a step towards **closing the information gap on such institutions and facilitating robust policymaking** in this area.

NITI Aayog

- It is a **public policy think tank of the Government of India**, established with the aim to **achieve sustainable development goals with cooperative federalism** by fostering the involvement of State Governments of India in the economic policy-making process using a bottom-up approach.
- It was established to **replace the Planning Commission**. The **Prime Minister is its ex-officio chairman**.

Key Points

- **Major Findings:**
 - **Low Charge:**
 - Most of the not-for-profit hospitals **charge lower than the for profit hospitals**.
 - Prices of Rural Community Based Hospitals are lower, while Rural Cooperative Hospital prices are comparable with government hospital rates.
 - **Empanelment:**
 - Most of the Not-for-profit Hospitals are **empaneled with State or Central Government Healthcare schemes**.
 - **Expenditure:**
 - The not-for-profit hospitals **use various levers to facilitate their low cost of clinical care and reduced operational expenditure**.
 - Following levers are used - multitasking of workforce, In-house manufacturing of equipment, such as beds, dental chairs, etc.
 - Not for profit Hospitals have **lower operating costs as compared to For-Profit Hospitals**.
 - **Quality:**
 - There is a **strong focus on quality care** across all categories of not-for-profit hospitals, as most of them had some form of accreditation for their services.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Recruitment:**

- Most of the hospitals find it **difficult to recruit and retain doctors and staff.**
- **Reimbursements:**
 - Delayed **reimbursements and long-pending amounts**, despite their persistence, causing strain in their cash flows, and in turn, burdening their operations.
- **Funding:**
 - Many of these hospitals are **dependent on external funding** in the form of philanthropy and grants for capital expenditure components, such as infrastructural expansion, purchase of new technology, and advanced equipment.
- **Compliance burden:**
 - Some of the hospitals, especially those in remote areas, reported challenges because of the **high compliance burden of staffing requirements of the Regulations for running a blood bank 1999, Clinical Establishments Act 2010, Pre-Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) 1994, and Quality standards.**
- **Suggestions:**
 - **Policy Interventions:**
 - Short- and long-term policy interventions – such as **developing criteria to identify these hospitals, ranking them** through a performance index.
 - **Tax Exemptions:**
 - To promote these hospitals, the government **should increase the tax exemption for donations and membership fees** of these hospitals.
 - **Using their Expertise:**
 - Promoting top hospitals for practising philanthropy, among others. It also highlights the **need to use the expertise of these hospitals** in managing human resources with limited finance in **remote areas.**

Not-for-Profit Hospital

- **About:**
 - Private hospitals are largely divided into **for-profit hospitals and not-for-profit hospitals.**
 - Cumulative cost of care at not-for-profit hospitals is lesser than for-profit hospitals by about **one-fourth in the in-patient department.**

- For-profit hospitals account for 55.3% of in-patients, while not-for-profit hospitals account for only 2.7% of in-patients in the country.
- Not-for-profit does not make profits for its owners from the funds collected for patient services. The owners of these hospitals are often charitable organizations or non-profit corporations.
- The fees for service at these hospitals are generally lower than for-profit hospitals and the income from fees (above the cost of service) are reinvested in the hospital.
- These hospitals are a potential remedy to the challenges of unavailability and unaffordability of healthcare in India.
- **Significance:**
 - The infrastructure, services, and charges of these hospitals are positioned to cater to the unreached and underprivileged population of the country.
 - The not-for-profit hospital sector provides not only curative but also preventive healthcare.
 - It links healthcare with social reform, community engagement, and education. It uses government resources and grants to provide cost-effective healthcare to people without being concerned about profits.
 - However, over the years, this sector has remained understudied.

Recent Initiatives in Health Sector

- Increased Allocation for Health in Budget 2021.
- PM Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Scheme
- National Digital Health Mission
- National Medical Commission (NMC) Act, 2019.
- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana.
- Ayushman Bharat.

5. Zen Garden - Kaizen Academy

Why in News

Recently, Indian Prime Minister virtually inaugurated a Japanese 'Zen Garden - Kaizen Academy' at the Ahmedabad Management Association (AMA) in Gujarat.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is a joint endeavour of the Japan Information and Study Centre at the AMA and the Indo-Japan Friendship Association (IJFA), Gujarat. It is supported by the Hyogo International Association (HIA) Japan.

- It has **traditional Japanese elements** such as Red Bridge Guzei, Shoji Interior, Glory of Tori, a 3D art mural, fusion Chabutaro, Taki waterfall, Tsukubai basin and Kimono scroll.
- It will **propagate Japan's work culture in India** and increase business interactions between Japan and India.
 - **Zen** is a Japanese school of **Mahayana Buddhism** emphasizing the value of meditation and intuition rather than ritual worship or study of scriptures. Zen in Japan is **meditation in India**.
 - **Kaizen** translates to 'change for the better' or 'continuous improvement'. Kaizen is a Japanese business philosophy that focuses on gradually improving productivity by involving all employees and by making the work environment more efficient.
- **India-Japan Friendship:**
 -
 - **Highlights of Recent Telephonic Conversation between the Prime Ministers of India and Japan:**
 - To **overcome challenges posed by the pandemic**, there is a need to work together to **create resilient, diversified and trustworthy supply chains**, ensure reliable **supply of critical materials** and technologies, and develop new **partnerships in manufacturing and skill development**.
 - Confirmed the importance of Japan-India bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including Japan-Australia-India-US **quadrilateral cooperation**, towards realising a **free and open Indo-Pacific**.
 - **Possible Cooperation in areas** like 5G, submarine cables, strengthening of industrial competitiveness and development projects in the northeastern state.
 - **Other Recent Developments Between India and Japan:**
 - Recently, India, Japan and Australia have formally launched the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** in a move to counter China's dominance of the supply chain in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - **Japan has finalised loans** and a grant totalling around 233 billion yen for several key infrastructure projects in India, including for a project in the Andaman and Nicobar islands.
 - In 2020, India and Japan signed a **logistics agreement** that will allow armed forces of both sides to coordinate closely in services and supplies. The agreement is known as the **Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA)**.
 - In 2014, India and Japan upgraded their relationship to '**Special Strategic and Global Partnership**'.

- The **India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** that came into force in August 2011 covers trade in goods, services, movement of natural persons, investments, Intellectual Property Rights, custom procedures and other trade related issues.
- **Defence Exercises:**
 - India and Japan defence forces organize a series of bilateral exercises namely, **JIMEX** (naval), **SHINYUU Maitri** (Air Force), and **Dharma Guardian** (Army). Both countries also participate in **Malabar exercise** (Naval Exercise) with the USA.

Way Forward

- Apart from taking assistance from Japan, India should also think about how Indian components could reach Japan, and how they can be rewarded dividends in Japan: the notion of the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** also needs to be promoted.
- India needs to look into the matter of post covid ties too, ensure good relations with the other parts of the world so as to emerge from the losses and also in order to restrain Chinese influence in the areas of maritime.
- With the help of Japan, India can pave its way to the permanent membership of the **UN Security Council**.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. NATRAX-High Speed Track

Why in News

Recently, the **Minister of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises** inaugurated NATRAX- the High Speed Track in Pithampur, Indore (Madhya Pradesh).

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is one of the state-of-the-art automotive testing and certification centre under **National Automotive Testing and Research and development (R&D) Infrastructure Project (NATRIP)**,
 - **NATRIP** is the **largest and most significant initiative in the automotive sector** which comprises representatives from the

Government of India, a number of State Governments and Indian Automotive Industry.

- It is a **flagship project of the Ministry of Heavy Industries.**
- It aims to create a state of the art testing, validation and R&D infrastructure in the country.
- It is a world class **11.3 km High Speed Track**. The track is the **longest in Asia** and the **fifth-largest in the world**.
 - It is developed in an **area of 1000 acres of land**.
- It has **multiple test capabilities** like measurements of maximum speed, acceleration, constant speed fuel consumption, emission tests through real road driving simulation, high speed handling and stability evaluation during manoeuvres such as lane change, high speed durability testing, etc. and is a **Centre of excellence for Vehicle Dynamics**.
- **Location:**
 - It is located only **50 km away from Indore, the financial capital of Madhya Pradesh**.
 - Being centrally located, it is **accessible to most of the major Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)**.
- **Significance:**
 - **Development of Prototype Cars for India:**
 - **High Speed Track** is used for **measuring the maximum speed capability** of high-end cars like BMW, Mercedes etc which cannot be measured on any of the Indian test tracks.
 - Foreign OEMs will be looking at NATRAX High Speed Track for the **development of prototype cars for Indian conditions**.
 - At present, foreign OEMs go to their respective high speed track abroad for high speed test requirements.
 - **One Stop Solution:**
 - It is one stop solution for **all sorts of high speed performance tests, being one of the largest in the world**.
 - It can **cater to the widest category of vehicles**; say from two wheelers to the heaviest tractor trailers.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements:

1. Collections from all small savings instruments are credited to the Consolidated Fund of India.
2. Interest rates on small savings schemes are reset on a quarterly basis.

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

- **Small Saving Schemes/Instruments** are the major source of household savings in India and comprises 12 instruments.
 - The depositors get an assured interest on their money.
 - Collections from all small savings instruments are **credited to the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF)**. Hence, **statement 1 is not correct**.
- **Interest rates on small savings schemes are reset on a quarterly basis**, in line with the movement in benchmark government bonds of similar maturity. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.
 - The rates are reviewed periodically by the Ministry of Finance.

2. With reference to Attorney General (AG) of India, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The term of AG is not fixed by the Constitution.
2. AG is barred from private legal practice.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Attorney-General of India is the first law officer of the Government of India.
- The tenure of the AG of India is not fixed by the Constitution.
- The Attorney-General is appointed by the President and he holds office during the pleasure of the President.
- The Attorney General represents the government but is allowed to take up private practice provided the other party is not the state.

3. With reference to the Prof. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, consider the following statements:

1. He devised a statistical method called Fractile Graphical Analysis to compare socio-economic conditions of varied groups.
2. He was instrumental in formulating India's first five-year-plan.

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

- **Prof. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis** is considered the **father of modern statistics in India**, founded the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), shaped the Planning Commission (which was replaced by the NITI Aayog on 1st January 2015) and pioneered methodologies for large-scale surveys.
- He introduced innovative techniques for conducting large-scale sample surveys, calculated acreages and crop yields, using the method of random sampling.
- He also devised a **statistical method called 'Fractile Graphical Analysis'**, used to compare socio-economic conditions of varied groups. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- He became a member of the Planning Commission and continued in that capacity till 1967.
- He was instrumental in **formulating India's second five-year-plan (1956-1961)**, which laid the blueprint for industrialisation and development in India. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

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

1. Persons with Disabilities (PwD) have the right to reservation in promotions.
2. Reservation to promotion can be given to a PwD even if the person was not originally appointed in the PwD quota.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Supreme Court has said that a disabled person can avail the benefit of reservation for promotion even if he/she was recruited in the regular category or developed the disability after gaining employment.
- The important thing is the employee should be a 'person with disability' (PwD) at the time of the promotion to avail of the disabled quota.

- The Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995 does not make a distinction between a person who may have entered service on account of disability and a person who may have acquired a disability after having entered the service.
- The Supreme Court has said that the mode of entry in service cannot be a ground to make out a case of discriminatory promotion.

5. With respect to *Virus Mutations*, consider the following statements:

1. Virus by its very nature mutates and it is a part of its evolution.
2. Mutations can have positive, negative or neutral effects on human health.

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

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

Answer : c

- SARS-CoV-2 can mutate and will continue to mutate as long as the pandemic remains.
- So, Vaccines and COVID Appropriate Behaviour can help us fight the pandemic. This makes it all the more crucial to follow COVID appropriate behavior.

Virus Mutations

- Virus by its very nature mutates and it is a part of its evolution.
- The SARS-Cov-2 virus is a single-stranded RNA virus.
- So, changes in the genetic sequence of the RNA are mutations.
- The moment a virus enters its host cell or a susceptible body, it starts replicating.
- When the spread of infection increases, the rate of replication also increases.
- A virus that has got a mutation in it is known as a variant.

Impact of Mutations

- The normal process of mutations begins to impact us when it leads to changes in transmission levels or on treatment.
- Mutations can have positive, negative or neutral effects on human health.

- Negative impacts include clustering of infections, increased transmissibility, ability to escape immunity and infect someone who has prior immunity, neutralization escape from monoclonal antibodies, improved binding to lung cells and increased severity of infection.
- Positive impacts can be that the virus becomes non-viable.

6. Songhua River originates from which of the following countries?

- a. Myanmar
- b. China
- c. South Korea
- d. Thailand

Answer : b

Songhua River

- It flows northward out of the Changbai Mountains and cuts across the Manchurian Plain before emptying into the Amur River, which separates northeastern China from Russia's Far East.
- It is the largest tributary of the Heilong River.
- The source of the river is a crater lake called Heavenly Lake with an elevation of 2,189 meters at the top of the Changbai Mountain.
- Recently an ancient human skull that could belong to an altogether new species of humans was found in the Songhua River.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. What do you understand by coral bleaching? Examine the reasons for coral bleaching and suggest corrective measures in this regard. (250 words)

Approach

- Define coral bleaching in introduction.
- Describe reasons for Coral bleaching.
- Suggest corrective measures to deal with Coral bleaching.
- Give conclusion

2Q. In countries like India, social security in its modern form has been a response to many issues arising out of the development process. Discuss. (250 words)

Approach

- Introduce by defining Social Security.
- Mention the steps and policies by government to address the issue.
- Conclude with challenges and suggestions with a way forward.