

www.vishnuias.com



SEPTEMBER

13.09.2021

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. Iran to allow nuclear surveillance under IAEA**

Iran has agreed to allow international inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to install new memory cards into surveillance cameras at its sensitive nuclear sites and to continue filming there, potentially averting a diplomatic showdown this week.

What is IAEA

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an international organization that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- As the preeminent nuclear watchdog under the UN, the IAEA is entrusted with the task of upholding the principles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970.
- It was established as an autonomous organization on July 29, 1957, at the height of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

What are its safeguards?

- Safeguards are activities by which the IAEA can verify that a State is living up to its international commitments not to use nuclear programs for nuclear weapons purposes.
- Safeguards are based on assessments of the correctness and completeness of a State's declared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities.
- Verification measures include on-site inspections, visits, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Basically, two sets of measures are carried out in accordance with the type of safeguards agreements in force with a State.

1. One set relates to verifying State reports of declared nuclear material and activities.
2. Another set enables the IAEA not only to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material but also to provide assurances as to the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in a State.

2. Atmanirbhar Bharat corner for tribal products

Context As part of India@75, the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) is setting up an Atmanirbhar Bharat corner.

Atmanirbhar Bharat corner

- This corner will be an exclusive space to promote GI tagged tribal art and craft products besides natural and organic products.
- With the focus on “Vocal for Local” and building an “Atmanirbhar Bharat”, TRIFED is undertaking several activities, while re-dedicating its efforts towards tribal empowerment.
- The TRIFED has been actively collaborating with several ministries & agencies such as:
 - Ministry of Culture.
 - Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce.
 - India Posts.
 - Ministry of Tourism.
 - Office of the Prime Minister.
- TRIFED is also setting up an Atmanirbhar Bharat corner in 75 Indian Missions/ Embassies across the world in the next 90 days by collaborating with Ministry of External Affairs.
- The first Atma Nirbhar Bharat corner has been successfully inaugurated at the Indian Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand on the occasion of Independence Day.

TRIFED

- It was established in August 1987 under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984 by the Government of India.
- **Main objective:** Institutionalising the trade of Minor forest products(MFP) and to provide the tribals of India a fair price for the surplus agricultural products produced by them.
- It is a national level cooperative body.
- **Ministry:** Ministry Of Tribal Affairs.
- TRIFED is mandated to bring about socio-economic development of tribals of the country by institutionalising the trade of Minor Forest Produce & Surplus Agricultural Produce (SAP) collected/ cultivated by them.

3. e-Shram portal – National Database on Unorganized Workers (NDUW)

Context: Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) Holds Interactions with Trade Unions and Media at Mathura refinery.

e-Shram portal

- e-Shram portal is a portal through which the government aims to register 38 crore unorganised workers, such as construction labourers, migrant workforce, street vendors and domestic workers, among others.
- The workers will be issued an **e-Shram card containing a 12-digit unique number**, which, going ahead, will help in including them in social security schemes.

Significance of e-Shram portal – National Database on Unorganized Workers (NDUW)

- **Targeted identification of the unorganized workers** was a much-needed step and the portal which will be the national database of our nation builders will help take welfare schemes to their doorstep, who are the builders of our Nation.
- **Targeted delivery and last mile delivery**, has been a major focus of the schemes of government of India and the National Database of Unorganised workers (E-Shram portal) is another key step towards that.

4. U.K.'s Children's Code

In News: Recently, U.K. government brought into effect the Age Appropriate Design Code or the Children's Code that provides a set of regulations that will make using the digital space safer for children.

Children's Code

- The Children's Code is a **data protection code of practice for online services** likely to be used by children.
- It sets out 15 **standards for online services**, including in apps, games, toy and devices and even news services.
- It is rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that recognises the special safeguards children need in all aspects of their life.

What are the threats to children online?

- Research shows that within 24 hours of a social media profile being created, **children were being targeted with graphic content.**
 - It shows that services such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are allowing children, some as young as 13 years old, to be directly targeted within 24 hours of creating an account with a stream of harmful content.
- Despite knowing the children's age, the companies are enabling unasked contact from adult strangers
- These platforms are recommending damaging content, including material related to eating disorders, extreme diets, self-harm and suicide as well as sexualised imagery and distorted body images.
- Further, these recommendations are by no means 'bugs' or mistakes in the code. They are designed to maximise engagement, activity and followers – the three drivers of revenue.
- Though not intentionally designed to harm children, they are not currently creating a safe space for them to learn, explore and play

Who does the Code apply to?

- The Code applies to "information society services likely to be accessed by children".
- This includes apps; programs; search engines; social media platforms; online messaging or internet-based voice telephony services; online marketplaces; content streaming services (like video, music or gaming services); online games; news or educational websites; and any websites offering other goods or services to users on the internet.
- Electronic services for controlling connected toys and other connected devices are also included.
- The code applies to the **U.K. based companies and non-U.K. companies** that use data of children in the country.

Will children in India benefit from the Code?

- It has the potential to completely transform the way that companies collect, share and use children's data, requiring them to offer children a high level of privacy protection by default
- UK Code will force tech giants to make the entire architecture child-friendly, and not region-specific alone. If tech giants universalise their safety architecture, children across the world, including in India, will benefit from the Code.

Conclusion

It is high time that the Indian government incorporated child safety into its social media agenda.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. NATGRID to go live soon

Context The Indian Prime Minister is soon expected to launch the National Intelligence Grid or NATGRID that aims to provide a “cutting-edge technology to enhance India’s counter-terror capabilities”.

- The final “synchronisation and testing” of the ambitious electronic database is being carried out so that it can go live.

NATGRID

- NATGRID is an online database for collating scattered pieces of information from more than 20 organisations in the field of telecom, tax records, bank, immigration, etc. to enable the generation of intelligence inputs.
- NATGRID is a post Mumbai 26/11 attack measure.
- It aims to mitigate a vital deficiency — lack of real time information, which was considered to be one of the major hurdles in detecting US terror suspect David Headley’s movement across the country during his multiple visits between 2006 and 2009.
- NATGRID will utilise technologies like Big Data and analytics to study and analyse the data from various intelligence and enforcement agencies
- At least 10 central agencies like IB, R&AW and others will have access to the data for counter-terror investigations.
- It will also have access to the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems, including FIRs, across 14,000 police stations in India.
- Unlike the NCTC or the NIA which are central agencies, the NATGRID is essentially a tool that enables security agencies to locate and obtain relevant information on terror suspects from pooled data sets of various organizations and services in the country.
- It will help identify, capture and prosecute terrorists and help preempt terror plots.
 - The National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) are two organisations established in the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks of 2008.
- The data recovery centre for NATGRID is at Bengaluru

6. SC to probe into snooping scandal today

In News :

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a batch of pleas seeking an independent probe into the alleged snooping on some people in India using Pegasus, the Israeli spyware.

Pegasus:

Pegasus spyware is malicious software that is designed to enter a device, gather your data, and then forward it to a third party without the consent of the user.

Pegasus was developed in 2010 by the Israeli firm, the NSO Group.

Pegasus spyware was first discovered in an iOS version in 2016 and then a slightly different version was found on Android.

Pegasus spyware is able to read the victim's SMS messages and emails, listen to calls, take screenshots, record keystrokes, and access contacts and browser history.

Hackers can hijack the phone's microphone and camera, turning it into a real-time surveillance device. Pegasus can send back to the hacker the target's private data, including, contact lists, calendar events, passwords, text messages, and live voice calls from popular mobile messaging apps".

The target's phone camera and microphone can be turned on to capture all activity in the phone's vicinity, expanding the scope of the surveillance. Pegasus has evolved from a crude system that was reliant on social engineering to software that can compromise a phone without the user having to click on a single link. This is called **Zero-click attack**

- Media outlets said they had identified more than 1,000 people in over 50 countries whose numbers were on the list.
- They include business executives, activists, politicians and heads of state and many royal family members of Arab. More than 180 journalists were also found to be on the list, from organisations including the New York Times, CNN and Al Jazeera.
- According to the reports, many of the numbers were clustered in 10 countries: **Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates,**

7. Saline Gargle RT-PCR technique

Context : In a notable step forward in India's fight against COVID-19, Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) has transferred the know-how of indigenously developed Saline Gargle RT-PCR technique, used for testing COVID-19 samples.

- The Saline Gargle RT-PCR technology is simple, fast, cost-effective, patient-friendly and comfortable
- It also provides instant test results and is well-suited for rural and tribal areas, given minimal infrastructure requirements.
- The transfer of knowhow would enable the innovation to be commercialized and licensed to all capable parties, including private, government and various rural development schemes and departments. This will lead to commercial production in the form of easily usable compact kits in the light of the prevailing pandemic situation and probable third wave of COVID-19.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Allahabad HC verdict disqualifying then PM

The 1975 verdict of Justice Jagmohanlal Sinha of the Allahabad high court, disqualifying then PM Indira Gandhi on charges of electoral malpractices was a judgment of "great courage" that "shook" the nation, said CJI in his speech.

What was the case?

- It all started with the 1971 Lok Sabha elections, where the Congress (R), which was the newly formed faction of the Congress party floated by Indira Gandhi after her expulsion from the party in 1969, won a landslide victory securing 352 out of the 518 seats in the lower house.
- An election petition was filed directly before a High Court challenging the election of Indira Gandhi.

What is an Election Petition

- Election Petition has to be filed within 45 days from the date of declaration of the election results.
- The Representation of People (RP) Act of 1951 lists out the grounds on which the election of a candidate can be called into question.
- Section 123 of the RP Act lists certain corrupt practices which, if proved successful, can be grounds to declare the election of a candidate void.
- While hearing an election petition, the High Court being the court of first instance, exercises powers similar to a trial court.
- Thus, there is cross-examination of witnesses and detailed examination of evidence which is normally employed in trial courts and not High Courts.

Findings against Gandhi

- Use of government machinery to set up stage, loudspeakers
- Use of gazetted officer as an election agent

A case that led to the promulgation of National Emergency

The verdict is widely believed to have led to the imposition of Emergency on June 25, 1975.

- A vacation bench of the Supreme Court allowed a partial stay of the judgment after Gandhi had appealed against the High Court verdict.
- Then Justice VR Krishna Iyer, said that she could continue as Member of Parliament (MP) in the Lok Sabha and could attend the House, but could not participate in its proceedings or vote as MP.
- She also could not draw any remuneration as an MP.
- Importantly, the apex court allowed her to continue as Prime Minister and allowed her to speak and participate in the proceedings of the House and to draw salary in her capacity as Prime Minister.
- The order by the apex court, while not completely against Gandhi, did not satisfy her.
- She wanted a blanket stay on the Allahabad High Court judgment.
- Since the Supreme Court did not grant her that, National Emergency was proclaimed the very next day, June 25.

2. Women's Reservation Bill awaits Parliament nod

Women's Reservation Bill

- Women's Reservation Bill [108th Constitution Amendment Bill] is one of the **longest pending legislations** in the Indian Parliament.
- The Bill seeks to **reserve 33.33% seats** in the **Lok Sabha** or the Lower House of Indian Parliament and in the **State Legislative Assemblies** for women.
 - This would be in accordance with the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments** which reserved the same percentage of seats for women in rural and urban local bodies respectively.
- The Bill was **initially launched** in **1996**, and has been introduced in the Indian Parliament **several times**. However, the status of the bill remains undecided primarily due to **lack of political consensus**.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Constitution Bill seeks to **reserve one-third** of all seats for women in the **Lok Sabha** and the **State Legislative Assemblies**.
- The **allocation of reserved seats** shall be determined by such authority as prescribed by the Parliament.
- **One third** of the total number of seats reserved for **Scheduled Castes** and **Scheduled Tribes** shall be reserved for women of those groups in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- Reserved seats may be **allotted by rotation** to different constituencies in the States or Union Territories.
- Reservation of seats for women shall **cease to exist 15 years after** the commencement of this Amendment Act.

Arguments in favour of the Bill:

- Proponents of the bill stress the **necessity of affirmative action** to improve the condition of women.
- Some recent **studies on panchayats** have shown the positive effect of reservation on empowerment of women and on allocation of resources.
- Major political parties are **reluctant** to give **more tickets** to women candidates.
 - Majority of the female candidates contested as **independents** or from smaller parties in 2019 Lok Sabha elections.
 - While women made up **only 9%** of the candidates in 2019, they **won 14%** of the seats, indicating that women significantly outperformed men.

Arguments against the Bill:

- The Bill would benefit **only women from privileged strata** of the society. The reservation should contain **33%** reservation within the women's category for women belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.
- The Bill would **only help female relatives** of current politicians to enter public space and thereby defeat the very purpose of the Bill.
 - There are instances of women being **used as proxies** by men to win elections.
- Women in modern India **do not need reservation**. It would be perceived that they are **not competing** on merit.
- Rotation of **reserved constituencies** in every election may **reduce the incentive for an MP** to work for his constituency as he may be **ineligible to seek re-election** from that constituency.

Key Facts:

- The **first Lok Sabha** (constituted on 17 April 1952) only had 24 women members.
- There are **78 women MPs** in the 2019 **Lok Sabha**, highest number in the history of the House.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

3. Edible Oil Mission is a good idea. But more is needed

Last week, the government announced the minimum support prices (MSP) of rabi crops for the marketing season 2022-23.

Key Highlight

- The MSP for wheat is up by 2 per cent while that of rapeseed-mustard is up by 8.6 per cent.
- This indicates that the government wants to focus more on edible oils/oilseeds than on wheat.
- It is important to note that PM recently announced a Rs 11,000-crore National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NEOM-OP), as a part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

About NEOM-OP

- This is a bold step to augment domestic edible oil supplies, given that 60 per cent of the edible oil consumed in the country is imported – more than half of this is palm oil followed by soybean and sunflower.
- In FY 2020-21, edible oil imports touched \$ 11 billion or about Rs 80,000 crore (for 13.5 million tonnes).
- Despite these imports, edible oil inflation remains very high (July 2021 was 32.5 per cent).
- Against this backdrop, the move to promote oil palm is a step in the right direction.

Reasons for oil price hikes

- Effective duty for rapeseed and cottonseed oils ranges from 38.5 per cent for crude and 49.5 per cent for refined oils.
- It's this high import duty, at a time when global edible oil prices have gone up by almost 70 per cent (y-o-y), that has caused high domestic inflation (32.5 per cent) in edible oils.

Why Oil Palm?

- It is the only crop that can give up to four tonnes of oil productivity per hectare under good farm practices.
- But it is a water-guzzling crop, loves humidity (requires 150 mm rainfall every month) and thrives best in areas with temperatures between 20 and 33 degrees Celsius.
- The National Re-assessment Committee (2020) has identified 28 lakh hectares suitable for oil palm cultivation in the country – the actual area under oil palm cultivation, as of 2020, is only 3.5 lakh hectares.
- Much of this (34 per cent) is in the Northeastern states, including Assam, followed by Andhra Pradesh (19 per cent) and Telangana (16 per cent).
- A large potential is thus waiting to be tapped.

No reasons for farmers to switch

- The government has a massive procurement programme for wheat, but a very meagre one for rapeseed-mustard even when the prices rule below MSP.
- This relative incentive structure remains in favour of wheat.
- So, we doubt if farmers will switch from wheat to mustard in any meaningful manner to bridge the edible oil deficit.

What can be done to make NEOM-OP more effective?

The NEOM-OP intends to focus on productivity and area expansion by supporting the farmers in the following ways:

(A) Financial assistance

- Input assistance for planting material, additional assistance to cover maintenance/opportunity costs of farmers, with no limits on acreage.
- Big-budget assistance to industries that plan to set up a five tonnes/hour processing unit.
- Such a comprehensive assistance package will attract farmers as well as incentivize the industry to work with agriculturists and augment domestic edible oil production.

(B) Pricing mechanism for OP

- There will be no MSP, but the FFB price for farmers would be fixed at 14.3 per cent of average landed crude palm oil price of the past five years, adjusted with the wholesale price index.
- This is the most critical part of the pricing policy and the formula needs to be carefully calibrated.
- However, the litmus test of pricing will be dovetailing it with the import tariff policy to protect the farmers in case landed prices fall below the cost of production.

Way forward

(1) Rationalizing import duties

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP, which recommends MSP) recommended that India should keep an import duty trigger at \$800/tonne (say).
- If the import price falls below \$800/tonne, the import tariff needs to go up in countercyclical manner.
- Thus, import duty needs to be in sync with rational domestic price policy.
- It is a necessary condition to give a fillip to aatmanirbharta in edible oils.

(2) Neutral incentive structure

- But the sufficient condition would be revisiting the existing incentive structure that unduly favours rice, wheat and sugarcane through heavy subsidisation of power, fertilisers and open-ended procurement.

- The need is to devise a crop-neutral incentive structure where cropping patterns are aligned with demand patterns, and the crops are produced in a globally competitive manner.

Conclusion

- There is a huge deficit in edible oil production in the country.
- Achieving self-sufficiency in edible oil production through the other oilseeds complex would require adding about 45 million hectares under oilseed cultivation.
- This is not possible without drastically cutting down the area under cereal crops.
- The best alternative is, therefore, to ensure proper care of palm oil crops, provide good planting material, better irrigation management, fertilizers and other inputs to raise productivity to four tonnes of oil/hectare.

4. Container shortage and its impact on international trade

The government is in talks with exporters to help them deal with an international container shortage that has led to freight rates rising by over 300 per cent in the past year for key shipping routes.

Why is there an international container shortage?

- The reduction in the number of shipping vessels operating as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to fewer empty containers being picked up.
- This has left many containers in inland depots and stuck at ports for long durations.
- Long waiting times at key ports such as those in the US due to congestion are also contributing to lengthening turnaround time for containers.
- A sustained global economic recovery has added to the impetus to trade.
- Some countries are willing to pay a premium for empty containers and that this was further adding to the container shortage.

Freight rate impact

- The lack of availability of containers and the faster than expected recovery in international trade has pushed up freight rates significantly over the past year.
- Some key international routes are seeing an increase in freight rates of over 500 per cent compared to September last year.

- Structural problems such as the high turnaround time for ships in India also add to the container shortage issue that exporters are currently facing.

How is the container shortage impacting Indian exporters?

- **Delay:** Indian exporters are facing major delays in their shipments and consequent liquidity issues as they have to wait longer to receive payment for exported goods.
- **Liquidity crunch:** Exporters noted that shipments that used to take 45 days are now taking 75-90 days leading to a 2-3-month delay in payments leading to liquidity crunch particularly for small exporters.

How can the government help address this issue?

- Exporters are calling on the government to regulate the export of empty containers.
- Exporters have asked the government to curb the export of empty containers at all Indian ports in line with a move by the Kolkata port which restricted the number of empty containers permitted to be exported to 100 per vessel for a three month period.
- Exporters are also calling on the government to release about 20,000 containers that have been abandoned or are detained by government agencies so that they can augment supply.
- Indian exporters has also called on the government to notify a freight support scheme for all exports till the end of the fiscal when freight rates are expected to normalise.

5. NCLT, ITAT get new members

- The government has appointed 31 people as judicial, technical and accountant members at the NCLT and the ITAT, amid the Supreme Court flagging concerns about vacancies in various tribunals.
- The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) deals with matters mainly related to companies law and the insolvency law, while the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) deals with income tax matters.
- The appointments also come at a time when the Supreme Court has flagged concerns, saying the Centre was “emasculating” tribunals by not appointing officials to the quasi-judicial bodies that are facing a staff crunch.
- There are around 250 posts lying vacant at various key tribunals and appellate tribunals such as the NCLT, the DRT, the TDSAT and the SAT.
- As many as eight judicial and 10 technical members have been appointed to the NCLT while 13 judicial and seven accountant members have been

appointed to the ITAT, according to separate communications issued by the Department of Personnel and Training on September 11 based on decisions taken by the Appointments Committee of Cabinet.

- Andhra Pradesh High Court judge Justice Telaprolu Rajani, Bombay High Court retired judge Justice Pradeep Narhari Deshmukh, Madras High Court retired judge Justice S. Ramathilagam and District Court judge Deep Chandra Joshi are among those appointed as the judicial members to the NCLT.
- The newly appointed technical members include Principal Commissioner of Income Tax Ajai Das Mehrotra, retired NHPC Chairman and Managing Director Balraj Joshi, retired Ministry of Panchayati Raj Secretary Rahul Prasad Bhatnagar, retired Principal Director General of Income Tax Subrata Kumar Dash, retired Department of Consumer Affairs Secretary Avinash K Srivastava and retired SBI Chief General Manager Shree Prakash Singh.
- The **appointments will be for five years** from the date of assumption of charge or **till attaining the age of 65** or until further orders.
- Six judicial members have been appointed to the ITAT. They are advocates Sonjoy Sarma, S. Seethalakshmi and T.R. Senthil Kumar, and Additional District and Sessions judges Shatin Goyal and Anubhav Sharma, and Law Officer in SBI Manomohan Das.
- Besides, there are seven accountant members.
- **The appointments in the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal were for four years.**

6. India lacks self-sufficiency in oilseed production

Central government's decision to **allow import of 1.2 million tonnes (MT)** of crushed and de-oiled genetically modified (**GM**) **soya cake or soyameal** has landed Maharashtra's soya producers in trouble.

- **Maharashtra**, along with Madhya Pradesh, is one of the **leading soya** producing States. Together they contribute an estimated **89%** of the total soya production in India.

Major Highlights:

- India had the **requirement** of 28.99 lakh quintal of soybean seeds for 2021 Kharif season, and the availability was 28.11 lakh quintals.
- But India had exported about **19 lakh tonne non-GM soyameal** to other countries.
- As a result, India's poultry sector faced a **shortage of soyameal** and the now government has decided to **import GM soya cake**.

- So, the **soya prices** in the market have come down and farmers have to sell their produce at a **lower** price.
- This explains lack of ecosystem and **poor planning in India's oil seeds and oil production.**

Oil seeds in India:

- **Major edible oils** consumed in India are mustard, soyabean, groundnut, sunflower sesame oil, niger seed, safflower seed, castor, and linseed (primary source) and coconut, palm oil, cottonseed, rice bran, solvent extracted oil, tree and forest origin oil.
- From **5.16 MT** in 1950-51 to **33.42 MT** in 2019-20, oil seed production in India has **witnessed growth** at a slow pace.
- The average **per hectare yield** of major oilseeds is **over 50 per cent lower** than average world yields in several crops.

Concerns:

- The **four main concerns** for oil seed and oil producers in India are:
 - Micro-irrigation, quality seeds, marketing infrastructure and government policies.
- The **crop-wise coverage of irrigated area** for oil seeds is only 27.8%.
 - Almost 70% of cereals and 52% of foodgrains are covered under irrigation.
- The production and **domestic availability** of oilseeds in India falls short of needs in domestic demand for edible oil. A big volume of edible oil has to be **imported** every year.
- **Changes in international prices** of edible oil make an impact on its domestic Indian price.

Dependency on imports:

- The **total domestic demand** of edible oils in India is approximately **250 lakh metric tonnes** per year.
- Around **60%** of the edible oils consumed is met through imports. **Palm oils** (crude + refined) import constitutes around 60% of the total edible oil imported, out of which 54% is imported from Indonesia and Malaysia.
- During 2019-20 the **import** of Agri-commodities was **\$19.91 billion** and the import of vegetable oils constituted the largest share – **48%**.

Need for a strategy:

- **Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA)** members have been demanding **higher** Minimum Support Price (**MSP**) for oilseeds, so that more farmers are drawn towards oilseed cultivation.
- The demand is also to **link import duty** on edible oils to MSP.
- India's **domestic oilseed production** needs to go up about **54 MT** by 2025 to reduce edible oil imports by 10 MT annually.

Government's efforts:

- To achieve self-sufficiency in the production of oilseeds, the government of India decided to distribute **free high yielding varieties** of seeds to the farmers for the kharif season 2021 in the form of **mini-kits**.
- It is expected that the **special kharif programme** will bring an **additional 6.37 lakh hectare** of area under oilseeds and is likely to produce 120.26 lakh quintals of oilseeds and edible oil amounting to 24.36 lakh quintals.

7. IRDAI pitches for global jurisdiction

With online frauds on the rise, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has advised insurance firms to **expand the coverage** of individual cyber-cover by including card cloning, skimming, small claims without FIR (First Information Report).

Major Highlights:

- As per IRDAI, the Insurers may **offer options** for worldwide territory, the jurisdiction for claims settlement should be **India**.
- A number of **syndicated frauds** originate from outside India like phishing, ransomware and malware attack. The **cyber insurance clauses** may or may not be clear on the coverage in this regard.

Types of Cyber Attacks:

1. Phishing:

- It is the practice of sending **fraudulent communications** that appear to come from a reputable source.
- It is usually done through email. The goal is to **steal sensitive data** like credit card and login information, or to install malware on the victim's machine.

2. Malware:

- Malware is malicious software designed **to infect IT systems** and cause damage or compromise data.
- It comes in many forms such as viruses, worms, trojans, adware, spyware, ransomware, and more.

3. Ransomware:

- Ransomware is a form of malware that **encrypts data** on infected IT systems.
- It demands a ransom which is paid to get a code to decrypt the infected system, usually to an anonymous address using Bitcoin.

4. SIM-jacking:

- It is essentially **taking control of someone's phone number**, and tricking a carrier into transferring it to a new phone.
- Thieves usually manage to gain control of a number by bribing someone who works for the carrier and stating the subscriber's personal information.

5. Credit Card Cloning:

- It refers to making an **unauthorized copy** of a credit card. This practice is also sometimes called skimming.
- Thieves copy information at a credit card terminal using an electronic device and transfer the **data** from the stolen card to a new card or rewrite an existing card with the information.

6. Skimming Attack:

- Skimming is a method used by identity thieves **to capture payment** and personal information from a credit card holder.
- The most advanced approach involves a small device called **skimmer** that reads the information stored in a card's magnetic strip or microchip.

7. Spoofing Attack:

- Spoofing is when an attacker impersonates an authorized device or user to steal data, spread malware, or bypass access control systems.

Types of Spoofing:

- **IP address spoofing** - Attacker sends packets over the network from a false IP address

- **ARP spoofing** - Attacker links their MAC address to an authorized IP address already on the network
- **DNS spoofing** - Attacker initiates a threat such as cache poisoning to reroute traffic intended for a specific domain name traffic to a different IP address

8. Sim swapping:

- A SIM swap attack is where an attacker tricks a mobile phone service provider into transferring a customer's phone number from the customer's SIM card, to the attacker's SIM card.
- An attacker may try to access a bank account, either with stolen or guessed credentials.

About IRDAI:

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India is the apex body responsible for regulating and developing the insurance industry in India.
- It was established under the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999**.
- **Headquarters:** Hyderabad, Telangana.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which among the following is/are Earth Observation Satellites?

1. Megha-Tropiques
2. SARAL
3. OCEANSAT
4. IRNSS-1A
5. Bhaskara-I

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- IRNSS-1A is the first navigational satellite in the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System series of satellites.
- The other four satellites mentioned are all earth observation satellites.
 - Megha-Tropiques is an Indo-French Joint Satellite Mission for studying the water cycle and energy exchanges in the tropics.
 - The Satellite with ARGOS and ALTIKA (SARAL) is a joint Indo-French satellite mission for oceanographic studies.
 - Oceansat-1 or IRS-P4 was the first Indian satellite built primarily for ocean applications. It was a part of the Indian Remote Sensing Programme satellite series.
 - Bhaskara-I was India's first low orbit Earth Observation Satellite.

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The GST Council is a statutory body.
2. The GST Council is chaired by the Prime Minister of India.

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 : D

Explanation

- The **GST Council is a constitutional body (Article 279A)** for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to Goods and Services Tax. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The **GST Council is chaired by the Union Finance Minister** and other members are the Union State Minister of Revenue or Finance and Ministers in-charge of Finance or Taxation of all the States. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
 - It is considered as a federal body where both the centre and the states get due representation.

3. 'Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres)', often in the news, is

- a. a division of World Health Organization
- b. a non-governmental international organization
- c. an inter-governmental agency sponsored by European Union
- d. a specialized agency of the United Nations

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Médecins Sans Frontières, sometimes rendered in English as Doctors Without Borders, is an international humanitarian medical non-governmental organisation of French origin best known for its projects in conflict zones and in countries affected by endemic diseases.

4. Consider the following statements regarding Gaudiya Vaishnavism:

1. It is a religious movement inspired by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
2. The focus of Gaudiya Vaishnavism is the devotional worship of Vitthala, an incarnation of lord Vishnu.

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

- **Gaudiya Vaishnavism is a Vaishnava Hindu religious movement inspired by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
 - Here, “Gaudiya” refers to the Gaura or Gau?a region of Bengal with Vaishnavism meaning “the worship of Vishnu”.
- The focus of Gaudiya Vaishnavism is the **devotional worship** (known as bhakti-yoga) **of Radha and Krishna, and their many divine incarnations** as the supreme forms of God, Svayam Bhagavan. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- Most popularly, this worship takes the form of singing Radha and Krishna’s holy names, such as “Hare”, “Krishna” and “Rama”, most commonly in the form of the Hare Krishna (mantra) also known as kirtan and dancing along with it.

5. With reference to the the Deepor Beel, consider the following statements:

1. It is a riverine wetlands in the Brahmaputra valley of lower Assam.
2. It is the only Ramsar site in Assam declared as an important Bird Area by Birdlife International.

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 : C

Explanation

- **Deepor Beel** (Beel means wetland or large aquatic body in Assamese) located about 10 km Southwest of Guwahati city is considered one of the large and **important riverine wetlands in the Brahmaputra Valley of lower Assam. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Deepor Beel is one of the largest freshwater lakes in Assam and the State's only Ramsar site besides being an Important Bird Area by Birdlife International. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

6. Consider the following:

1. Lifestyle Material Footprint
2. Food Wastage
3. Plastic Waste
4. Sustainable Tourism

The above mentioned targets describe which of the following Sustainable Development Goals(SDG)?

- A SDG 16
- B SDG 12
- C SDG 8
- D SDG 4

Answer : B

Explanation

About SDG 12:

- **SDG12** aims at ensuring **responsible consumption and production patterns** everywhere in the world.
- **Sustainable consumption and production** refer to “the **use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources** and toxic materials as well as the **emissions of waste and pollutants** over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations”.
- **Target Under SDG 12**
 - **Halving global food waste per capita and ensuring the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources by 2030.**

- **Fighting pollution**, reducing the overall waste generation, and improving the management of chemicals and toxic wastes.
 - **Supporting companies'** transition to green infrastructures and practices.
 - Making sure **everyone everywhere is fully informed** of ways to live in harmony with nature and eventually adopts thoughtful habits.
- **Hence, option B is correct.**

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Discuss the socio-economic impact of climate change on India.

Approach

- Give a short introduction of 'Climate Change'.
- Enumerate the Socio-economic impact of climate change.
- Conclude with steps taken by government at national and global level.

2Q. Technology, if not effectively disbursed, creates new power asymmetries. Examine.

Approach

- Briefly write about technology keeping in perspective the 4th Industrial Revolution and its role in creating power asymmetry.
- Write how technology can create power asymmetry globally, economically and socially.
- Provide the way forward so that technology can be effectively disbursed.