

www.vishnuias.com



OCTOBER

16.10.2021

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. 2021 Global TB report: WHO

In News : According to the 2021 Global TB report released recently by the World Health Organization (WHO), for the first time in over a decade, Tuberculosis (TB) deaths have increased globally.

- WHO modelling projections suggest that the number of people developing TB and dying from the disease could be much higher in 2021 and 2022.

Key findings of the report

- **Reduced notifications:** India (41%) was among the top countries which contributed most to the global reduction in **TB notifications** between 2019 and 2020 which is not a good sign.
 - India, along with Indonesia (14%), the Philippines (12%), China (8%) and 12 other countries, accounted for 93% of the total global drop in notifications.
- **Increase in cases:** The WHO estimated that some 4.1 million people currently suffer from TB but had not been diagnosed with it or had not officially reported to the national authorities. This figure is up from 2.9 million in 2019.
- **Reduced provision:** There was also a reduction in the provision of TB preventive treatment. Some 2.8 million people accessed this in 2020, a 21% reduction since 2019.
- **Drug-resistant TB:** The number of people treated for drug-resistant TB fell by 15%.
- **Increased deaths:** In 2020, more people died of TB.
- **Reasons for increase in deaths:**
 - Reallocation of Human, financial and other resources from tackling TB to COVID-19, limiting the availability of essential services.
 - People struggled to seek care during lockdowns.

Tuberculosis (TB)

- TB is caused by **bacteria** (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that most often affect the lungs.
- **Transmission:** TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.

- **Symptoms:** Cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- TB is a treatable and curable disease.
- **Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to **isoniazid** and **rifampicin**, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs. It is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.
- **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.

Initiatives by India

- **Eliminating TB by 2025:** India is committed to eliminating tuberculosis by 2025, five years ahead of the global target of 2030.
- **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme:** To align with the ambitious goal, the programme has been renamed from the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) to National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).

2. New Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU) launched

In News : Indian Prime Minister recently launched seven new Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU), incorporated after the dissolution of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).

- Under the initiative of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the goal is to make India a military power globally on its own strength and also develop a modern indigenous defence industry.

Key takeaways

- The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has converted all pending orders with the 41 factories of the OFB into deemed contracts worth over Rs. 65,000 crore for the new companies.
- The over 70,000 employees of the OFB (Group A, B & C) units have been transferred to the new DPSUs on terms of foreign service without any deputation allowance initially for a period of two years.
- The new structure will help overcome various shortcomings in the existing system of OFB and encourage companies to become competitive and explore new opportunities in the market including exports.

- The seven new companies are Munitions India Limited, Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited, Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited, Troop Comforts Limited, Yantra India Limited, India Optel Limited, and Gliders India Limited.

3. COP26 Climate Conference

In News : The UK will host the COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference from October 31 to November 12.

- The event will see leaders from more than 190 countries, thousands of negotiators, researchers and citizens coming together to strengthen a global response to the threat of climate change.
- The conference comes months after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its assessment report on Earth's climate, highlighting heat waves, droughts, extreme rainfall and sea-level rise in the coming decades.

COP26

- The Conference of Parties (COP) comes under the United Nations Climate Change Framework Convention (UNFCCC) which was formed in 1994.
- 2021 marks the 26th Conference of Parties (thus the name COP26) and will be held in the Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow.
- The UNFCCC was established to work towards "stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere."
- It laid out a list of responsibilities for the member states which included:
 - Formulating measures to mitigate climate change
 - Cooperating in preparing for adaptation to the impact of climate change
 - Promoting education, training and public awareness related to climate change
- **India hosted the eighth COP** from October 23 to November 1, 2002 in New Delhi. The conference laid out seven measures including, 'strengthening of technology transfer... in all relevant sectors, including energy, transport...and the promotion of technological advances through research and development...and the strengthening of institutions for sustainable development.'
- One of the most important conferences, **COP21 took place in 2015, at Paris, France**. Member countries agreed to work together to 'limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.'

COP26 goals

According to the UNFCCC, COP26 will work towards four goals:

1. **Secure global net-zero** by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach
2. **Adapt to protect** communities and natural habitats
3. **Mobilise finance:** To deliver on our first two goals, developed countries must make good on their promise to mobilise at least \$100bn in climate finance per year.
4. **Work together to deliver:** Another important task at the COP26 is to 'finalise the Paris Rulebook'. Leaders will work together to frame a list of detailed rules that will help fulfil the Paris Agreement.

what India could do to reach its targets?

- It is time for India to update its Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs. (NDCs detail the various efforts taken by each country to reduce the national emissions)
- Sector by sector plans are needed to bring about development. We need to decarbonise the electricity, transport sector and start looking at carbon per passenger mile.
- Aggressively figure out how to transition our coal sector
- India also needs to ramp up the legal and institutional framework of climate change

4. 'One Health' consortium:

In News :

The Department of Biotechnology has launched a **'One Health' consortium**. This is the **First 'One Health' project of the DBT**.

About the project:

- It envisages **carrying out surveillance** of important bacterial, viral and parasitic infections of zoonotic as well as transboundary pathogens in the country.

- The project also looks into **use of existing diagnostic tests and development of additional methodologies** for surveillance and understanding the spread of emerging diseases.

Composition:

The 'One Health Consortium' consists of 27 organisations led by **DBT-National Institute of Animal Biotechnology, Hyderabad.**

5. Need for and significance of 'One Health' approach:

The Covid-19 pandemic showed the relevance of 'One Health' principles in the governance of infectious diseases, specially efforts to prevent and contain zoonotic diseases throughout the world.

- Therefore, there is a need for a holistic approach to understand the health of human, animals and wildlife to minimise the damage caused by future pandemics.

OneHealth concept

- One Health is the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally, to attain optimal health for people, animals and our environment, as defined by the One Health Initiative Task Force.
- One Health model facilitates interdisciplinary approach in disease control so as to control emerging and existing zoonotic threats.

zoonotic diseases

The word 'Zoonosis' (Pleural: Zoonoses) was introduced by Rudolf Virchow in 1880 to include collectively the diseases shared in nature by man and animals.

- Later WHO in 1959 defined that Zoonoses are those diseases and infections which are naturally transmitted between vertebrate animals and man.
- Zoonoses may be bacterial, viral, or parasitic, or may involve unconventional agents.

Concerns:

As well as being a public health problem, many of the major zoonotic diseases prevent the efficient production of food of animal origin and create obstacles to international trade in animal products.

6. India's framework, plans:

India's 'One Health' vision derives its blueprint from the agreement between the tripartite-plus alliance comprising the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – a global initiative supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank under the overarching goal of contributing to 'One World, One Health'.

- In keeping with the long-term objectives, India established a **National Standing Committee on Zoonoses** as far back as the 1980s.
- This year, funds were sanctioned for setting up a '**Centre for One Health**' at Nagpur.
- The **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD)** has launched several schemes to mitigate the prevalence of animal diseases since 2015, with a funding pattern along the lines of 60:40 (Centre: State); 90:10 for the Northeastern States, and 100% funding for Union Territories.

7. UN Human Rights Council:

Context:

India gets re-elected to **UN Human Rights Council** for 6th term with overwhelming majority.

- Besides, the US has also joined more than three years after **the Trump administration quit the UNHRC** over what it called chronic bias against Israel and a lack of reform.

Background:

Human Rights Council candidates are elected in geographical groups to ensure even representation.

About UNHRC:

UNHRC was reconstituted from its predecessor organisation, **the UN Commission on Human Rights** to help overcome the “credibility deficit” of the previous organisation.

- **Headquartered** in Geneva, Switzerland.

Composition:

- The UNHRC has 47 members serving at any time with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions across the world to ensure geographical representation.
- Each elected member serves for a term of three years.
- Countries are disallowed from occupying a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

Functions:

- The UNHRC passes **non-binding resolutions on human rights issues** through a periodic review of all 193 UN member states called **the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**.
- It oversees expert investigation of violations in specific countries (Special Procedures).

Challenges and Need for reforms:

- The human rights record of the member-states such as Saudi Arabia, China and Russia in the council has also not been in line with the aims and mission of the UNHRC, which has led to critics questioning its relevance.
- Despite the continued participation of several western countries in the UNHRC, they continue to harbour misgivings on the understanding of Human rights.

- Non-compliance has been a serious issue with respect to the UNHRC's functioning.
- Non-participation of powerful nations such as the US.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

8. Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

A tiger believed to have been responsible for the death of two herders in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve was finally captured.

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

- Mudumalai National Park is a national park in the Nilgiri Mountains in Tamil Nadu.
- It is located in the Nilgiri District and shares boundaries with the states of Karnataka and Kerala.
- It is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and was declared a tiger reserve in 2007.
- It harbours several endangered and vulnerable species including Bengal tiger, Indian leopard, Indian elephant and gaur.

9. Commission for Air Quality Management report

Context According to a report by the Commission for Air Quality Management, there is a 70% reduction so far in instances of stubble burning in Punjab and 18% in Haryana from last year.

- This, however, is a preliminary analysis as harvesting is still under way and the day-to-day variation in the number of fires is extremely high.

Key takeaways

- There are several initiatives taken to decrease stubble burning such as the increased use of happy seeder [harvesting equipment] and the use of bio-decomposers but this will take time for results to show.

- Over the years it has been observed that fire counts increase when there is too little time between the paddy being ready for harvesting and the right time to sow wheat.
- This year, excessive moisture in northern India due to an overhanging monsoon and a delay in the markets opening for trading, may further squeeze the time available for farmers to harvest and sow, further forcing them to set their fields alight (fire).

What is Stubble Burning?

- Stubble burning is the act of setting fire to crop residue to remove them from the field to sow the next crop
- It is a traditional practice in Punjab and Haryana to clean off the rice chaff to prepare the fields for winter sowing
- It begins around October and peaks in November, coinciding with the withdrawal of southwest monsoon.
- On December 10, 2015, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had banned crop residue burning in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab

10. Disinvestment of Air India

In News: The government announced its decision to sell all its stake in Air India (AI) as well as AI's stake in two other businesses – Air India Express Ltd (AIXL) and Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt Ltd (AISATS). The Tatas will own 100% stake in AI, as also 100% in its international low-cost arm Air India Express and 50% in the ground handling joint venture, AI SATS.

Why was Air India sold?

The sale of Air India to a private player has been in the offing for a long time. AI was started by the Tata Group in 1932, but in 1947, as India gained Independence, the government bought 49% stake in AI. In 1953, the government bought the remaining stake, and AI was nationalised.

For the next few decades, the national carrier dominated Indian skies.

- However, with economic liberalisation and the growing presence of private players, this dominance came under serious threat.
- The government running an airline did not quite gel with the mantra of liberalisation.

- By 2007, AI (which flew international flights) was merged with the domestic carrier, Indian Airlines, to reduce losses. It has never made a profit since 2007.
- In fact, since 2009-10, the government (and indirectly the taxpayer) has spent over Rs 1.1 lakh crore to either directly make up the losses or raise loans to do so.
- As of August 2021, AI's debt was Rs 61,562 crore. Moreover, every additional day that AI remains operational, the government suffers a loss of Rs 20 crore – or Rs 7,300 crore per year.
- The first attempt to reduce the government's stake – disinvestment – was made in 2001 under the then NDA government. But that attempt – to sell 40% stake – failed.

How did the Government sell it this time?

- As long as the government kept a certain shareholding of AI, private players did not seem interested. That's because the mere idea of government ownership, even if it was as little as 24%, made private firms wonder if they would have the operational freedom needed to turn around such a heavy loss-making airline. Unlike all the past attempts, this time the government put 100% of its stake on sale.
- This time, the government let the bidders decide the amount of debt they wanted to pick up (earlier the Government expected the bidders to pick up a certain amount of the debt along with the airline)

Both of the above changed stances worked.

Significance: Disinvestment of Air India

Positive:

- Underscores PM Modi's commitment to **reducing the government's role** in the economy; he can claim to have **saved taxpayers from paying for daily losses** of AI.
- A message from the Government to the markets and global investors that it has the **political will to bite the reform bullet**.
- Given the historical difficulties in AI's disinvestment, or any disinvestment at all (see table), this is a significant achievement.

Negative:

However, purely in terms of money, the deal does not result in as big a step towards achieving the government's disinvestment target of the current year.

- Of the total AI debt of Rs 61,562 crore, the Tatas will take care of Rs 15,300 crore and will pay an additional Rs 2,700 crore in cash to the government. That leaves Rs 43,562 crore of debt.
- The assets left with the government, such as buildings, etc., will likely generate Rs 14,718 crore. But that will still leave the government with a debt of Rs 28,844 crore to pay back.
- So, it can be argued that **if the government had run AI well**, it could have made profits and paid off the debts – instead of selling the airline (that can make profits) and still be left with a lot of debt.

Challenges before TATA Group

From the Tatas' perspective, apart from the emotional aspect of regaining control of an airline that they started, AI's acquisition is a long-term bet. The Tatas are expected to invest far more than what they have paid the government if this bet is to work for them.

- **At the brand level:** What will Air India stand for? Its greatest challenge will be to bring together the three airlines now under its control – Air India, Air Asia and Vistara. There will be a need to oversee core synergies that include buying parts for aircraft common to its full-service carriers Vistara and Air India, engineering services, repairs and maintenance, and consolidation of busy slots during festive season. Plus, the matter of staff, pilots and ground officials, and ensuring there is enough communication going on between trade unions and the group.
- **Up and running again?** The responsibility of managing and turning it around will be the sole responsibility of the conglomerate. If that is something that the group has taken into account, it may have an edge when it comes to dominating the sector. If not, finding answers may become a burden. The benefit of moving from a fragmented industry dominated by one player to a race where there is a second strong airline group could well inculcate discipline in pricing and contribute to a market that also grows and sustains.
- **COVID-19:** The Tatas will be flying into an aviation market reeling from the coronavirus pandemic that has left India's airlines bleeding cash. This will make restoring Air India's fortunes even tougher.
- **The Logistics:** One of the immediate challenges facing the new owners will be to find office space. The deal does not include the airline's other assets and the buildings like the Air India building at Nariman Point and Airlines House in Delhi. As a result, one of the Tata Group's first jobs will be to locate office accommodation for Air India's roughly 12,000 employees. The Tata Group will also have to launch a global manhunt for top personnel who will need to pick up the reins very quickly.

Can you answer the following questions?

1. Recent budgetary announcement regarding disinvestments and privatisation? Discuss.
2. The disinvestment process is a proof of government realising its true role in democracy. What is this role and how does it affect the democratic functioning? Critically analyse.

11. Aim is to make India a military power on its own strength: PM

Context:

Seven new Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU) have been incorporated after the dissolution of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).

Background:

Earlier, the Union Cabinet had approved a long-awaited reform plan to corporatize the OFB, which has 41 factories, into seven fully government-owned corporate entities on the lines of DPSUs.

Details:

- The Defence Ministry had issued an order for the dissolution of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) with effect from October 1, 2021.
- The government had decided to convert OFB from a Government Department into seven 100 per cent Government-owned corporate entities as a measure to improve self-reliance in the defence preparedness of the country.
- OFB's assets, employees and management have now been transferred to seven newly constituted defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs).
- the seven new defence companies are: Munitions India Limited (MIL); Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (AVANI); Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited (AWE India); Troop Comforts Limited (TCL) (Troop Comfort Items); Yantra India Limited (YIL); India Optel Limited (IOL) and Gliders India Limited (GIL).
- These 7 new companies would form a strong base for the military strength of the country in the times to come.
- The objective of this restructuring is to:
 - transform Ordnance Factories into productive, and profitable assets
 - improve expertise in product range
 - increase competitiveness

- improve quality
- enhance cost-efficiency
- ensure self-reliance in defence preparedness

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. India's quest for a road to Central Asia

In his speech at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meet last month, PM Modi stressed on commitment for increasing its connectivity with land-locked Central Asia.

Central Asia Region

- Central Asia is a region in Asia which stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west to China and Mongolia in the east, and from Afghanistan and Iran in the south to Russia in the north.
- It includes the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

India-Central Asia Ties

- India has decades-old wish to connect with the resource and fuel-rich Central Asian nations.
- Since the emergence of the Central Asian Republics as independent countries in the early 1990s, New Delhi has been trying to establish ties with them.

Trade and collaboration

- India's trade with the five Central Asian Republics – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – was below \$ 2 billion in 2018.
- The potential areas for collaboration include construction, sericulture and pharmaceuticals to IT and tourism.
- Much of this trade was routed through Iran, Russia or the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Efforts for connectivity

1. Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline
2. Development of Iran's Chabahar Port
3. Zaranj-Delaram Highway
4. International North-South (Transit) Corridor (INSTC)

About INSTC

- In 2000, India, Iran and Russia agreed on a new route for trade that later came to be known as INSTC.
- It was aimed at cutting the costs and time in moving cargo between Russia and India.
- The pact was ratified in 2002 and the original multi-modal route linked Mumbai in India to Bandar Abbas and Bandar-e-Anzali in Iran, then across the Caspian Sea to Astrakhan, Moscow and St. Petersburg in Russia.
- Over the years, more countries joined the INSTC.
- In 2003, India and Iran announced the development of the Chabahar port in the Sistan-Balochistan province.

China's opportunism: Based on proximity

- China's trade with Central Asia was \$50 billion-\$60 billion in the same period.
- The obvious advantage in China's favour is geographical proximity.

Hurdles for India

- **Lack of mutual trust:** Unfortunately, many connectivity options are not open to them today due to the lack of mutual trust.
- **Pakistan factor:** Tensions with Pakistan mean there is no viable land route towards Central Asia.
- **Iran and the US sanctions:** Efforts to look for a circuitous route via Iran (and Afghanistan) have stalled due to US sanctions on Iran.

Issues in Iran-Afghanistan bypass route

Recent events acquire broader geopolitical relevance for India in this route:

- **Taliban takeover of Afghanistan:** The takeover of Afghanistan by the Pakistan-backed Taliban has severely set back India's plans in Central Asia.
- **Iran's bypassing of India:** Iran's overtures has been clearly visible after itself allocating Farzad-B Gas exploration contract to another company bypassing India.

Central Asia's importance for India

- **Fossil fuels:** While Central Asia is seen as fuel-rich and, hence, important for an energy-starved India.
- **Mineral richness:** Central Asian states are also mineral-rich, and Kazakhstan, for one, has been a source of uranium for India's nuclear power plants.
- **Market for India:** A country like India which is seen as a major economy has to have a presence in these markets. INSTC also offers a safe and cost-effective route to the EU (European Union) market.
- **Convergence against Terrorism:** India can forge a common position on terrorism and radicalization, which is a matter of concern to the region as much as it is to India.

India's recent engagement

- **Defence collaboration:** In recent years, New Delhi has engaged with Central Asian Republics in the defence sphere through military exercises (say Ex Kazind).
- **Engagement at UN:** Political and economic engagement is also important, given the imperatives of working together at a body such as the United Nations (UN).
- **Technological ties:** India has set up universities there – Sharda and Amity are examples.

Scope for expansion

- **Dairy Sector:** There is scope for collaboration in the dairy sector.
- **Pharma:** Indian firms have been setting up pharmaceutical units in Russia that can serve these countries as well.
- **Info Technology:** IT and IT-enabled services are two other areas.
- **Cultural connect:** Bollywood movies are quite famous in these countries.

Way forward

- India needs to develop into stronger bonds of trade and commercial bonds which will be possible once the INSTC crystallizes.

Conclusion

- The road ahead in the short term is difficult as India doesn't seem to have any real leverage to get the connectivity projects with Central Asia going.
- India has been negotiating with individual bilateral partners though.

2. Daylight lynching and law to prevent it:

In News :

The recent **lynching** of a man at Singhu, at the site of the farmers' protest on the Delhi-Haryana border, the brutality of the hate crime captured and replayed on video, calls for the full force of the law to step in, to bring swift and sure punishment to the guilty.

What happened?

The victim, Lakhbir Singh, an SC labourer who belonged to a village in Tarn Taran, was reportedly accused of an act of **beadabi or desecration** by his killers, allegedly a group of **Nihangs**, who tortured him and tied the mutilated body to a police barricade.

What needs to be done now?

Thugs and lumpens should not be allowed to find any cover. They have played judge, jury, executioner, and the state must urgently identify them and bring them to book.

Any act or series of acts of violence or aiding, abetting (encouraging) such act/acts thereof, whether spontaneous or planned, by a mob on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation, ethnicity or any other related grounds.

How are these cases handled?

There is **"no separate" definition for such incidents under the existing IPC**. Lynching incidents can be dealt with under **Section 300 and 302 of IPC**.

- **Section 302** provides that whoever commits murder shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine. Offence of murder is a cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable offence.

SC guidelines:

- There should be a **“separate offence” for lynching and the trial courts must ordinarily award maximum sentence** upon conviction of the accused person to set a stern example in cases of mob violence.
- The state governments will have to **designate a senior police officer in each district** for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.
- The state governments need to **identify districts, sub-divisions and villages where instances of lynching** and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.
- The **nodal officers shall bring to the notice of the DGP about** any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy to tackle lynching and mob violence related issues.
- Every police officer shall **ensure to disperse the mob that has a tendency to cause violence** in the disguise of vigilantism or otherwise.
- **Central and the state governments shall broadcast** on radio, television and other media platforms about the serious consequences of mob lynching and mob violence.
- Despite the measures taken by the State Police, if it comes to the notice of the local police that an incident of lynching or mob violence has taken place, **the jurisdictional police station shall immediately lodge an FIR.**
- The State Governments shall prepare a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme in the light of the provisions of Section **357A of CrPC.**
- If a police officer or an officer of the district administration fails to fulfill his duty, it will be considered **an act of deliberate negligence.**

Need of the hour:

- Every time there is a case of honor killing, hate crimes, witch hunting or mob lynching we raise demands for special legislation to deal with these crimes.
- But, the fact is that these crimes are nothing but murders and the existing provisions under IPC and CrPC are sufficient to deal with such crimes.
- Coupled with the guidelines laid down in Poonawala’s case, we are sufficiently equipped to deal with mob lynching. However, what we lack is due enforcement of the existing laws and accountability of the enforcement agencies.

Attempts by various states in this regard:

- **Manipur** government came up first with its Bill against lynching in 2018, incorporating some logical and relevant clauses.
- **Rajasthan** government passed a bill against lynching in August 2019.
- **West Bengal** too came up with a more stringent Bill against lynching.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

3. PM GatiShakti – National Master Plan

The PM has inaugurated the GatiShakti – National Master Plan for infrastructure development aimed at boosting multimodal connectivity and driving down logistics costs.

GatiShakti – National Master Plan

- PM GatiShakti is a digital platform that **connects 16 ministries** – including Roads and Highways, Railways, Shipping, Petroleum and Gas, Power, Telecom, Shipping, and Aviation.
- It aims to ensure holistic planning and execution of infrastructure projects.
- The objective is to ensure that every department now has visibility of each other's activities providing critical data while planning and execution of projects.
- Through this, different departments will be able to prioritize their projects through cross-sectoral interactions.

Notable features

- **Geospatial data:** The portal will offer 200 layers of geospatial data, including on existing infrastructure such as roads, highways, railways, and toll plazas.
- **Protected areas management:** It would also geographic information about forests, rivers, and district boundaries to aid in planning and obtaining clearances.
- **Realtime monitoring:** The portal will also allow various government departments to track, in real-time and at one centralized place, the progress of various projects.

Monitoring mechanism

- The National Master Plan has set targets for all infrastructure ministries.

- A project monitoring group under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will monitor the progress of key projects in real-time.
- It would report any inter-ministerial issues to an empowered group of ministers, who will then aim to resolve these.

Need for such Project

- **Avoiding poor infrastructure planning:** Examples of poor infrastructure planning included newly-built roads being dug up by the water department to lay pipes.
- **Creating a multi-modal network:** The government expects the platform to enable various government departments to synchronize their efforts into a multi-modal network.
- **Timely completion of infra projects:** It is also expected to help state governments give commitments to investors regarding timeframes for the creation of infrastructure.
- **Inefficient connectivity:** Currently, a number of economic zones and industrial parks are not able to reach their full productive potential due to inefficient multi-modal connectivity.
- **Easy clearance:** The portal allows stakeholders to apply for these clearances from the relevant authority directly.

Logistics costs in India

- Studies estimate that logistics costs in India are about 13-14% of GDP as against about 7-8% of GDP in developed economies.
- High logistics costs impact cost structures within the economy by making it more expensive for exporters to ship merchandise to buyers.

Benefits offered by PM-GatiShakti

- **Collaborative planning:** It would incorporate infrastructure schemes under various ministries and state governments, including the Bharatmala and inland waterways schemes, and economic zones.
- **Logistics boost:** It would boost last-mile connectivity and thus bring down logistics costs with integrated planning and reducing implementation overlaps.

4. Maharatna status accorded to Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC)

The Centre has accorded 'Maharatna' status to the state-owned Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), thus giving PFC greater operational and financial autonomy.

About PFC Ltd.

- Power Finance Corporation Ltd. (PFC) is an Indian financial institution under the ownership of Ministry of Power.
- Established in 1986, it is the financial backbone of Indian Power Sector.
- PFC is the 8th highest profit making Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) as per the Department of Public Enterprises Survey for FY 2017-18.
- It is India's largest NBFC and also India's largest infrastructure finance company.

Benefits of Maharatna Status

- This new status will enable PFC to offer competitive financing for the power sector, which will go a long way in making available affordable & reliable 'Power For All 24x7'.
- This will also impart enhanced powers to the PFC Board while taking financial decisions.
- It can make equity investments to undertake financial joint ventures and wholly-owned subsidiaries and undertake mergers and acquisitions in India and abroad.
- It can also structure and implement schemes relating to personnel and Human Resource Management and Training.
- It can also enter into technology Joint Ventures or other strategic alliances among others.

5. Securing the States

In News :

The Ministry of Home Affairs recently issued a notification extending the jurisdiction of the Border Security Force from 15 km to a depth of 50 km along the international borders in three states – Punjab, Assam and West Bengal.

Background of the notification about jurisdiction of BSF

- The last notification of the MHA (July 3, 2014), which defined the jurisdiction of the BSF, stated that the force could operate in the entire states of **Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya without any restrictions whatsoever.**
- In Gujarat, it had jurisdiction up to a depth of 80 km and in Rajasthan up to 50 km.
- In Punjab, Assam and West Bengal, the BSF jurisdiction was up to a depth of 15 km only.
- Under the latest notification issued on October 11, 2021, there is no change in the northeastern states and Rajasthan.
- In Gujarat, jurisdiction has been reduced from 80 km to 50 km.
- The controversial change is in Assam, West Bengal and Punjab, where the BSF jurisdiction has been extended from 15 km to 50 km.
- It is this part of the notification which has generated controversy, though the criticism has been made by leaders of Punjab and West Bengal.

Why the government of India decided to extend the jurisdiction of BSF?

- Assam, West Bengal and Punjab have **international borders.**
- **Changed threat perception:** The **threat perception from across the international borders** has undergone a sea change in the context of recent developments in the Af-Pak region.
- **Efforts to destabilise Punjab:** Radical groups of different shades are feeling emboldened and are going to make a determined attempt to destabilise Punjab.
- Pakistan-sponsored terrorist groups, particularly the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, will almost certainly renew their onslaught in the border states.
- West Bengal has already undergone a huge demographic change.
- Assam faces multiple problems of ethnic insurgencies, smuggling, counterfeit currency, drug trafficking, etc.
- **Police need assistance:** The police across the country are in a state of atrophy and they need the assistance of central armed police forces even for maintaining normal law and order.
- As such, their effectiveness against the emerging trans-border threats is suspect.

Implications for powers of police and federalism

- The home ministry's latest notification only seeks **to reinforce the capabilities of the state police** in securing the states under **section 139 of the**

BSF Act, which empowers the members of the force to discharge certain powers and duties within local limits of the areas specified in the schedule.

- The jurisdiction of the state police has neither been curtailed nor its powers reduced in any manner.
- It is just that the BSF will also be exercising powers of search, seizure and arrest in respect of only the **Passport Act 1967, Passport (Entry into India) Act 1920** and specified sections of the Criminal Procedure code.
- The power to register FIR and investigate the case remains with the state police.
- The Indian Constitution, no doubt, fulfils some conditions of a federation, **but it leans towards a strong Centre.**

Conclusion

National security is a paramount consideration. It is unfortunate that the BSF is being dragged into political controversy when it would actually be over-stretching itself to strengthen national security.

6. Fast forward (Gati Shakti National Master Plan)

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched a national master plan for multi-modal connectivity that aims to develop infrastructure to reduce logistic costs and boost the economy.

Details

- It is a digital platform that will bring Ministries including Railways and Roadways together for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects.
 - The plan aims to lend more power and speed to projects by connecting all concerned departments on one platform.
- It will incorporate the infrastructure schemes of various Ministries and State Governments like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, UDAN, etc.
- Economic Zones like textile clusters, pharmaceutical clusters, defence corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters, agri zones will be covered to improve connectivity & make Indian businesses more competitive.

- It will also leverage technology extensively including spatial planning tools with ISRO imagery developed by BiSAG-N (Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics).

Role of States

- States have a crucial role, considering that key pieces of the plan such as port linkages and land availability for highways, railways, industrial clusters and corridors depend on political consensus and active partnership.

Why was it launched?

- According to PM Modi, there was a lethargic approach to development work, with departments working in silos and there was no coordination on projects.
 - Example: A new good quality road is constructed by one department, and a few days later another department digs that very road to lay water pipelines. This shows a lack of coordination.
- To overcome the difficulties, Gati Shakti joins different departments for the **coordinated development of projects** from road to railways, aviation to agriculture.
- India has a high logistics cost at 13-14 per cent of GDP.
 - It was impacting competitiveness in exports. Gati Shakti is aimed at **reducing logistic costs and turnaround time**.
- Currently, any inter-ministerial issues that arise relating to a project are addressed in regular meetings of infrastructure-related ministries. These issues will be raised in advance, and then taken up for execution.

How will progress under the National Master Plan be monitored?

- The National Master Plan has set targets for all infrastructure ministries.
- A project monitoring group under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will monitor the progress of key projects in real-time, and report any inter-ministerial issues to an empowered group of ministers, who will then aim to resolve these.

Significance

- The multi-modal connectivity will provide integrated and seamless connectivity for the movement of people, goods and services from one mode of transport to another. It will facilitate the last mile connectivity of infrastructure and also reduce travel time for people.
- It will help improve global competitiveness, promote manufacturing and modernize infrastructure in the country.

- Gati Shakti plan will help raise the global profile of local manufacturers and help them compete with their counterparts worldwide.
- The project can generate employment opportunities for the youth in future.
- Gati Shakti portal would help reduce the human intervention required as ministries will be in constant touch, and projects will be reviewed by the project monitoring group in real-time.
- The portal will also highlight all the clearances any new project would need, based on its location – and allow stakeholders to apply for these clearances from the relevant authority directly on the portal.

Way forward

- Delay in the completion of infrastructure projects can often be traced to incompatible and hostile land acquisition. It has resulted in alienating communities and threatening environmental integrity.
- Given the Centre's inclination towards Geographic Information Systems and remote sensing to identify potential industrial areas, policymakers should reclaim lands already subjected to degradation and pollution, rather than alienate controversial new parcels.

Conclusion

- Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Union Government to convince the citizens that such a policy initiative will benefit them, help in improving efficiency leading to better outcomes in social welfare and the centre should respect States' autonomy, take them into confidence to achieve desired results.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Shyamji Krishna Varma was associated with which of the following organisations?

1. Indian Home Rule Society
2. India House
3. The Indian Sociologist

4. Arya Samaj

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A 1 and 4 only
- B 2 and 3 only
- C 3 and 4 only
- D 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer : D

Explanation

- **Shyamji Krishna Varma** was born on 4th October, 1857 in Mandvi town of Kachchh district of Gujarat.
- He founded the **Indian Home Rule Society, India House** and **The Indian Sociologist** in London.
 - Indian Home Rule Society and the India House worked towards inspiring youngsters in Britain to take up revolutionary activities against their own representatives in India.
 - The monthly Indian Sociologist became an outlet for nationalist ideas and through the Indian Home Rule Society, he criticised the British rule in India.
- Varma became the **first President of Bombay Arya Samaj**. He inspired Veer Savarkar who was a member of India House in London. Verma also served as the Divan of a number of states in India.
- **Hence, option D is correct.**

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The trustee holds assets on behalf of individuals or organisations that are to benefit from trust.
2. The Indian Societies Registration Act of 1860 gives legal basis to the concept of trusts.

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

- A trust can be described as a **fiduciary arrangement** where a third party, referred to as the **trustee, holds assets on behalf of individuals or organisations** that are to benefit from it. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- A trust is not a separate legal entity, but its legal nature comes from the 'trustee'. At times, the 'settlor' appoints a 'protector', who has the powers to supervise the trustee, and even remove the trustee and appoint a new one.
- The **Indian Trusts Act, 1882**, gives legal basis to the concept of trusts. Indian laws recognise the trust as an obligation of the trustee to manage and use the assets settled in the trust for the benefit of 'beneficiaries'. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

3. Which of the statements best describes the Astro Robot?

- A It is designed to search water on the Lunar surface.
- B It is designed to help customers with a range of tasks like home monitoring.
- C It is designed to study the surface of asteroid Bennu.
- D It is designed to explore earth-like planets outside the solar system.

Answer : B

Explanation

- Recently, Amazon has unveiled its '**Astro**' home robot, which is **designed to help customers with a range of tasks like home monitoring** and keeping in touch with family.
- Astro is primed to be a home security device. It is designed to move around the home and keep a check on pets, and detect something unusual in the absence of the owner.
 - It comes with a "periscope" camera that pops up from its head and can be used to keep an eye on the home.
 - The device captures live videos, recognises faces, plays music or videos, and delivers a beer across the home.
 - It can recognise the faces of people and analyse them until it figures out if it's a family member or an outsider.
- **Hence, option B is correct.**

4. Consider the following statements regarding the Indian Peafowl:

1. They are known to grow and thrive in dry conditions.
2. They are listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : A

Explanation

- The **Indian peafowl** is a native of India and some parts of Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
 - The species are currently habituated more in central Kerala, followed by southeast and northwest parts of the state.
- Concerns:
 - They are a threat to paddy farmers in Kerala. They destroy its seeds and cause man-animal conflict.
 - Agriculture expansion and deforestation have caused other species to 'invade human territory'.
 - The growing population of peafowls **signals climate change. They are known to grow and thrive in dry conditions. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Protection Status:
 - **IUCN: Least Concern. Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
 - Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Somatosensation are proteins that serve both as sensors and effectors.
2. Mechanosensitive channels is a collective term for the sensations of touch, temperature, body position, and pain.

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

- **Somatosensation** is a collective term for the sensations of touch, temperature, body position, and pain recognized through neural receptors in the skin and certain internal organs.
 - It includes processes such as mechanoreception, thermoreception, proprioception. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- **Mechanosensitive channels** are fascinating proteins, being able to serve both as sensors and effectors.
 - Embedded in membranes, they convert mechanical stimuli such as in-plane membrane tension and curvature into electrical or biochemical signals, leading to regulation of a wide repertoire of cellular processes allowing adaptive response. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

6. Who among the following acts as the 'Residual Legatee' at the Central level?

- a. Prime Minister
- b. Cabinet Secretary
- c. Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister
- d. Secretary to Ministry of Home Affairs

Answer : c

Residual Legatee

- It deals with all such subjects that are not allotted to any ministry/department.
- The Residual Legatee, at the central level is performed by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister who is the administrative head of the PM office (PMO).
- The Chief Secretary is the Residual Legatee at the state level, while the Cabinet Secretary does not perform this legal function at the Centre.

Mains Practice Questions

1. Climate change, overexploitation, and policy measures have combinedly turned India into a water-stressed economy. Discuss.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing about the condition of water scarcity in India.
- Discuss the reasons for water stress in India.
- Suggest some measures to address the problem of water scarcity.
- Conclude Suitably.

2. Hydrogen is being dubbed as the alternative fuel. However, there are many problems associated with the leveraging of hydrogen technology. Discuss.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the context of using hydrogen as an alternate fuel.
- Discuss the pros and cons of hydrogen as a source of energy.
- Conclude suitably.