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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. The poor conditions of protectors

Context

In memory of these and other colleagues killed, all the police forces of the State and Centre observe October 21 as Police Commemoration Day.

Casualties among the police forces

- As the CRPF is deployed in the **highly disturbed areas** of Jammu and Kashmir, the Northeast and the Left-Wing Extremist-affected States, the highest casualties (82) were seen in this force.
- The **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**, which guards the border from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh at forbidding heights, lost 54 of its personnel.
- The Border Security Force lost 47 personnel.
- Among the State Police forces, Chhattisgarh, which is combating the Maoist menace, lost the most personnel (32) followed by J&K (17) and Karnataka (17).

Neglect of the police and paramilitary personnels

- They get paid low salaries, have a poor quality of life and are often deprived of basic facilities.
- The **morale of the paramilitary personnel** is not of the desired level.
- Those who cleared recruitment exams in 2003 but joined the force in 2004 or later are **not eligible for pension under the old norms**.
- Canteen and medical facilities are dismal.
- Items sold through the Central Police Canteens are not exempted from GST.
- There are notable **variations in the ex-gratia amounts** given to the next of kin of the police who are killed.
- The Centre and the States need to bring about uniformity in the amount paid.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the next of kin are not **deprived of a decent living**.
- Payments from the public exchequer need to be made judiciously.

Conclusion

It is high time the government takes note of the grievances of the police and paramilitary personnel and not let their sacrifices go in vain.

2. SC says farmers have right to protest, but can't block roads

The Supreme Court has said farmers protesting at Delhi borders against the three farms laws have the right to agitate but they cannot block roads indefinitely.

What is Protest?

- When a group, community, or even a person goes up to protest, it is usually to showcase their disapproval or demur against any action, policy, statement, etc of state or government or any organization.
- Mostly the flow of protest is driven through political waves that also demonstrate the collective organization of people to make the government or state address their issues and take steps to overcome them.

Issues with ongoing protest in Delhi

- The question as to the absolute nature of the right to protest is not even a question in the true sense here.
- We have seen the **vandalism protest** at Red Fort last year.
- Hence the rights mentioned above are subject to reasonable restrictions under 19 (2) and 19 (3) on grounds such as **sovereignty and integrity of India, and public order**.

Right to Protest in India

- The right to protest is the manifestation of three FRs:
 1. Right to Freedom of Assembly
 2. Right to Freedom of Association and
 3. Right to Freedom of Speech
- The Constitution of India provides the right of freedom, given in Article 19 with the view of guaranteeing individual rights that were considered vital by the framers of the constitution.
- The Right to protest peacefully is enshrined in Article 19(1) (a) guarantees the freedom of speech and expression; Article 19(1) (b) assures citizens the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.

In detail: Article 19(1)

It states that All citizens shall have the right:

- (a) to freedom of speech and expression;
- (b) to assemble peaceably and without arms;
- (c) to form associations or unions;
- (d) to move freely throughout the territory of India;
- (e) to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; and
- (f) omitted
- (g) to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business

Reasonable restrictions do exist in practice

- Fundamental rights do not live in isolation. The right of the protester has to be balanced with the **right of the commuter**. They have to co-exist in mutual respect.
- **Article 19(2)** imposes reasonable restrictions on this.
- The court held it was entirely the **responsibility of the administration to prevent encroachments** in public spaces.

Conclusion

- Democracy and dissent go hand in hand, but then the demonstrations expressing dissent have to be in designated places alone.
- The present case was not even one of the protests taking place in an undesignated area but was a blockage of a public way which caused grave inconvenience to commuters.

3. Squaring off again in the Himalayan heights

Context

- The article analyses the growing Chinese assertiveness along the India-China border

An aggressive focus on India

- Threat from China has persisted from a long time and it looks like they are not interested in ending the prolonged deployment along the border area

- They have stepped up the border infrastructure, placed advanced military equipment and we have witnessed a sharp increase in the number of military exercises directed towards India.
- These actions are not limited to Ladakh but have also been initiated in the middle and eastern sectors of the 3,488-kilometre long Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Border incidents

1. Barahoti in Uttarakhand

- Barahoti is a disputed area between the two sides but it has been a demilitarised zone. No persons in uniform enter the area.
- This was violated when the Chinese soldiers reportedly crossed over to Barahoti ridge through Tun Jun Pass.
 - The Barahoti ridge lies north of the Nanda Devi National Park
 - The ridge is connected to Joshimath, where the Indian Army and ITBP have camps to counter any major PLA operations.
 - The ITBP monitors the nearly 350 km border in Uttarakhand which is part of the Line of Actual Control that divides India and China.
 - They damaged some infrastructure, including a bridge and is believed that the group stayed in the vicinity for around three hours.

2. Arunachal Pradesh

- China has increased the number of military exercises across the contested border in Arunachal Pradesh, denoting the PLA's intention to keep the Indian military under pressure.
- It will carry a risk of triggering an unintended escalation

Reasons for PLA's aggressive approach against India

1. Reestablishing the credibility of China's Army

- The first is its institutional interest as the 'army of the revolution' which is now losing its primacy to the PLA Air Force and PLA Navy when it comes to Taiwan or the South China Sea.
- With China having resolved its boundary disputes with most countries, the only major adversary available for the PLA to reassert its importance is India.

2. India's growing presence and development of Infrastructure in the border area

- India is now expanding its footprint in those areas along the border which it had previously abstained. This expansion is due to better connectivity and development of Infrastructure.
- India's intervention in Doklam to protect its interests, may have allowed China to reconsider its India strategy, reinforcing its apprehensions about territorial losses.
- Western scholars say that there is a strong constituency in the PLA that wants to put India in its place, evoking an eerie parallel to the discourse in Mao's China after 1959.

India's response

- In response to the PLA's actions on the LAC, the Indian military has also inducted more modern military platforms and systems on the China border which has been backed by infrastructure construction.
- Vast operational experience of Indian troops in hostile climactic and terrain conditions can help India to challenge China's Assertiveness.

Weakness

- Demonetization and COVID-19 has affected India's defense spending.
- Technological asymmetry
 - Indian Air Force (IAF) would need about 60 fighter jet squadrons by 2020 for a serious two-front threat from China and Pakistan but it is currently at 30 with numbers further reducing.
 - The Indian Navy Chief proposed for another aircraft carrier but was declined due to dearth of funds
 - The parliamentary standing committee on defence has repeatedly warned about the abnormally high share of vintage equipment in the Indian Army's profile.
- Majoritarian Politics has affected India's Interest
 - India's Policy change in Kashmir may have troubled the United Arab Emirates-brokered backchannel deal with Pakistan
 - Infiltration continues further aggravating violence in the region.
 - Bangladesh's minorities are living in fear because of extreme events in the country
 - India may have put pressure on Dhaka to address violence
 - However, India should also be careful that its influence is not treated as interference
 - lack of institutional checks and balances on the political executive
 - In the Ladakh border crisis, the Government and its supporters were in denial about the Chinese ingress into Indian Territory

- Use of euphemisms like ‘friction points’ for places of Chinese ingress or
- removal of an official report about Chinese presence across the LAC from the Defence Ministry’s website or
- Non-acknowledgement of Indian soldiers in Chinese captivity after the Galwan clash have been done to evade political accountability.
- Parliament has not been allowed to ask questions or seek clarifications; nor has the parliamentary standing committee deliberated upon the issue.
- Large sections of Indian media have been complicit in this cover up, keeping the public in the dark and blocking the feedback loop that keeps democratic governments honest and responsive.

Geopolitics arising out of the great power competition in the Indo-Pacific.

- India’s active participation in Quad has irked China, it sees the grouping as a threat against its expansionist interests in the South China Sea.
- S.-India Defense relations, expanded trade relationship has further made China look at India with suspicion

Way forward

- India has been applying a combination of building up pressure through military presence, economic policies, and diplomatic advances. India needs to keep up and build upon this pressure.
- China’s aggression in Ladakh is an opportunity for India to redefine its security architecture.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Strategic Reserves of Coal and Gas

The Centre has stressed the need to build strategic reserves of imported coal and gas as was being done for petroleum products.

Why need strategic reserves for Coal and Gas?

- Many countries have started keeping strategic reserves, because when it comes to a crunch, every country will meet its needs first.

- Russia has curtailed gas supply to Europe because they want more gas to be consumed within their country.
- There is a surge in power demand combined with a fall in imports due to high global coal prices have led to supply disruptions.

What are Strategic Reserves?

- Indian refiners maintain 64.5 days of crude storage, so India has overall reserve oil storage of 74 days
- Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL) is an Indian company responsible for maintaining the country's strategic petroleum reserves.
- ISPRL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB), which functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- It maintains an emergency fuel store of total 5.870 million cubic meters of strategic crude oil enough to provide 9.5 days of consumption.

Why were SPRs created?

- **Gulf War, 1990:** It caused a sharp rise in oil prices and a massive increase to India's imports.
- **Forex fluctuations:** During the subsequent 1991 Indian economic crisis, foreign exchange reserves could barely finance three weeks' worth of imports while the government came close to defaulting on its financial obligations.
- **Price volatility:** India was able to resolve the crisis through policies that liberalized the economy. However, India continued to be impacted by the volatility of oil prices.

How are they constructed?

- The crude oil storages are constructed in **underground rock caverns** and are located on the East and West coasts of India.
- Crude oil from these caverns can be supplied to the Indian Refineries either through pipelines or through a combination of **pipelines and coastal movement**.
- Underground rock caverns are considered the **safest means of storing** hydrocarbons.

5. What are Non-Transgenic Gene Editing techniques?

The Centre is yet to decide on a research proposal from scientists which would allow plants to be genetically modified without the need for conventional transgenic technology.

What is Genome Editing?

- Genome editing (also called gene editing) is a group of technologies that give scientists the ability to **change an organism's DNA**.
- These technologies allow **genetic material** to be **added, removed, or altered** at particular locations in the genome.
- Several approaches to genome editing have been developed.

Techs for Genome Editing

The core technologies now most commonly used to facilitate genome editing are

1. Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR)-associated protein 9 (Cas9)
2. Transcription activator-like effector nucleases (TALENs)
3. Zinc-finger nucleases (ZFNs)
4. Homing endonucleases or meganucleases

Newer technologies

- The Institute has now moved to newer technologies such as **Site-Directed Nuclease (SDN) 1 and 2**.
- They aim to bring precision and efficiency into the breeding process using gene-editing tools such as **CRISPR**, whose developers won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2020.

About CRISPR

- CRISPR-Cas9 was adapted from a **naturally occurring genome editing system in bacteria**.
- The bacteria capture snippets of **DNA from invading viruses** and use them to **create DNA segments** known as **CRISPR arrays**.
- The CRISPR arrays **allow the bacteria to "remember" the viruses** (or closely related ones).
- If the viruses **attack** again, the **bacteria produce RNA segments** from the CRISPR arrays to target the viruses' DNA.
- The bacteria then **use Cas9** or a similar enzyme **to cut the virus DNA apart**, which disables the virus.
- This method is **faster, cheaper, more accurate, and more efficient** than other existing genome editing methods.

What is Non-Transgenic Gene Editing?

- Unlike the older GM technology which involves the introduction of foreign DNA, the new proposal involves the use of gene editing tools to directly tweak the plant's own genes instead.
- It **does not involve inserting any foreign DNA**.

Use in India

- Scientists at the **Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI)** are in the process of developing resilient and high-yield rice varieties using such gene editing techniques.
- However, this proposal has been **pending** with the **Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)** for almost two years.

Why need such technique?

- **Similar to natural mutation:** But in this case, this protein is right there in the plant, and is being changed a little bit, just as nature does through mutation.
- **Faster and cheaper:** It is much faster and far more precise than natural mutation or conventional breeding methods which involve trial and error and multiple breeding cycles.
- **Safe for consumption:** When a protein comes from an outside organism, then you need to test for safety.
- **Pathbreaking:** It is potentially a new Green Revolution.

No approval issues

- The SDN 1 and SDN 2 categories of genome-edited plants **do not contain any foreign DNA** when they are taken to the open field trials.
- The **US, Canada, Australia and Japan** are among the countries which have already approved the SDN 1 and 2 technologies as not akin to GM.
- So, such varieties of rice **can be exported** without any problem.
- The **European Food Safety Authority** has also submitted its opinion that these technologies do **not need the same level of safety** assessment as conventional GM.

6. Pakistan, Turkey on FATF greylist

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) kept Pakistan on the grey list yet again since 2018. The FATF also announced the 'greylisting' of Jordan, Mali and Turkey.

What is the FATF?

- FATF is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1989 on the initiative of the G7 to develop policies to combat money laundering.
- The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.
- It holds three Plenary meetings in the course of each of its 12-month rotating presidencies.
- As of 2019, FATF consisted of 37 member jurisdictions.

India and FATF

- India became an Observer at FATF in 2006. Since then, it had been working towards full-fledged membership.
- On June 25, 2010, India was taken in as the 34th country member of FATF.
- The EAG (Eurasian Group) is a regional body comprising nine countries: India, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus.

What is the role of FATF?

- **Watchdog on terror financing:** The rise of the global economy and international trade has given rise to financial crimes such as money laundering.
- **Recommendation against financial crimes:** The FATF makes recommendations for combating financial crime, reviews members' policies and procedures, and seeks to increase acceptance of anti-money laundering regulations across the globe.

What is the Black List and the Grey List?

- **Black List:** The blacklist, now called the "Call for action" was the common shorthand description for the FATF list of "Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories" (NCCTs).
- **Grey List:** Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list. This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

Consequences of being in the FATF grey list:

- **Economic sanctions** from IMF, World Bank, ADB
- **Problem in getting loans** from IMF, World Bank, ADB and other countries
- **Trade sanctions:** Reduction in international trade
- **International boycott**

Pakistan and FATF

- Pakistan, which continues to remain on the “grey list” of FATF, had earlier been given the deadline till June to ensure compliance with the 27-point action plan against terror funding networks.
- It has been under the FATF’s scanner **since June 2018**, when it was put on the Grey List for terror financing and money laundering risks.
- FATF and its partners such as the Asia Pacific Group (APG) are reviewing Pakistan’s processes, systems, and weaknesses on the basis of a standard matrix for anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) regime.

7. India’s race to secure Lithium

Context: First traces of Lithium in India were discovered in Karnataka’s Mandya district recently.

- The discovery is being given importance at the highest levels of government. This also shows the amount of effort and investment that lithium is likely to garner in the years ahead.

Why is Lithium so significant for India?

- **Climate change mitigation:** Technologies such as lithium-ion batteries are slated to play a key role in India’s plan to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030.
- **Energy Transition:** The transition from an internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicle to an electric vehicle involves the battery, which accounts for at least 30% of the vehicle’s cost.
- **Electric mobility:** By 2030, nearly three-fourth of Indian two-wheelers and all new cars are expected to be EVs and a bulk of them will be powered by lithium-based (battery packs) in the near term.
- **Energy security:** According to the Central Electricity Authority, the country will need 27 GW of grid-scale battery energy storage systems by 2030. This will require massive amounts of lithium.

What are the issues and challenges faced by India with respect to Lithium?

- **Negligible lithium resource base In India:** Chile, Australia, Argentina, Bolivia and China have almost all the lithium reserves which have been explored so far globally.
- **India's high import dependence:** Almost all EVs in the country run on imported batteries, mostly from China. Between 2016 and 2019, the amount of foreign exchange spent on importing lithium batteries tripled, according to the Union science and technology ministry.
- **Geo-political rivalry with China:** China is known to house large lithium reserves and has also secured many lithium mines across multiple countries in order to ensure steady sources of supply for both lithium and cobalt. Hence, India's quest for energy security could be easily derailed by a hostile neighbour.

What steps have been taken by govt to secure Lithium?

- India had recently unveiled its strategy for developing a battery storage ecosystem. It involves setting up at least 50-gigawatt hour manufacturing capacity for advanced chemistry cell batteries.
- **₹18,100-crore Production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme** to manufacture lithium-ion cells within the country has been introduced. With the government's PLI scheme, demand for lithium is bound to increase and it opens new opportunities for domestic exploration.
- Government formed **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL)** – a joint venture comprising National Aluminium Co. Ltd, Hindustan Copper Ltd and Mineral Exploration Co. Ltd. it is looking to acquire cobalt and lithium mines overseas. KABIL is also exploring the direct purchase of cobalt and lithium.
- The government is also trying to secure **government-to-government (G2G) deals**. For instance, India's bilateral agreement with Argentina for securing strategic minerals.
- **Lithium exploration:** The Geological Survey of India has taken up seven other lithium exploration projects in Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan.
- **Role of the private sector:** Several automobile majors are planning to jointly develop a manufacturing facility in Gujarat, which could eventually morph into a global export hub for lithium-ion cells.
- India is working on the **world's largest grid-scale battery storage programme**, which includes a 13 gigawatt-hour (GWh) facility in Ladakh and a 14 GWh system in Kutch.

Way forward

- **Concentrate on other advanced battery technologies:** As China dominates the space of lithium-ion cell manufacturing, India has to take alternative steps

to avoid a repeat of how things played out with solar equipment manufacturing.

- A section of experts and policymakers believe that one way to avoid a lithium conundrum and a possible Chinese trap is to concentrate on other advanced battery technologies.
- **Aluminium-based battery technology:** Aluminium-based battery technology holds great promise. India has huge bauxite reserves, which gives it access to aluminium at a cheap price. This technology, as and when it matures commercially, will insulate India from dependence on global import.
- **Early adoption of other battery technologies:** Further, India should strive to be an early adopter of other battery technologies such as **hydrogen fuel cells and solid-state batteries** as well.
 - Solid-state batteries are being explored using metals such as aluminium. India holds an upper hand with respect to the availability of different materials. Thus, the country may witness faster adoption of these alternate technologies as compared to lithium.
- India should also try to intensify exploration within as well and exploit the opportunity to repurpose and recycle used lithium-ion batteries.

8. BharatNet project:

Context:

Tamil Nadu FibreNet Corp signs agreement for BharatNet project implementation.

- The project aims at providing 1 Gbps bandwidth connectivity to all Gram Panchayats.

About BharatNet:

1. BharatNet Project was originally launched in 2011 as **the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)** and renamed as Bharat-Net in 2015.
2. It seeks **to provide connectivity to 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs)** through optical fibre.
3. It is a flagship mission **implemented by Bharat Broadband Network Ltd. (BBNL)**.
4. The objective is **to facilitate the delivery of e-governance, e-health, e-education, e-banking, Internet and other services to rural India.**

The larger vision of the project is:

- To establish a highly scalable network infrastructure accessible on a non-discriminatory basis.
- To provide on demand, affordable broadband connectivity of 2 Mbps to 20 Mbps for all households and on demand capacity to all institutions.
- To realise the vision of Digital India, in partnership with States and the private sector.

Implementation:

The project is a **Centre-State collaborative project**, with the States contributing free Rights of Way for establishing the Optical Fibre Network.

The entire project is being funded by **Universal service Obligation Fund (USOF)**, which was set up for improving telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country.

9. UDAN scheme:

Context:

The Government of India has identified 21st October as **UDAN Day**, the day on which the scheme document was first released.

About UDAN scheme (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme:

- The scheme is aimed at enhancing connectivity to remote and regional areas of the country and making air travel affordable.
- It is a key component of Centre's **National Civil Aviation Policy** led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and launched in June 2016.
- Under the scheme, nearly half of the seats in Udan flights are offered at subsidised fares, and the participating carriers are provided a certain amount of **viability gap funding (VGF)** - an amount shared between the Centre and the concerned states.

- The scheme will be **jointly funded by the central government and state governments.**
- The scheme will run for 10 years and can be extended thereafter.

UDAN 4.0:

- The 4th round of UDAN was launched in December 2019 with a special focus on North-Eastern Regions, Hilly States, and Islands.
- The airports that had already been developed by **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** are given higher priority for the award of VGF (Viability Gap Funding) under the Scheme.
- Under UDAN 4, the operation of helicopters and seaplanes is also been incorporated.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

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2. Why Covaxin is yet to win WHO's emergency approval?

Context:

The World Health Organization's (WHO's) approval for WHO pre-qualification, or Emergency Use Listing (EUL) for Bharat Biotech International Ltd's covid-19 vaccine is moving according to procedure and the Indian government's haste in pushing through the process is only adding to speculation about the alleged delay.

What's the issue?

The delay in India's indigenous vaccine getting emergency use authorisation is because WHO has raised some more questions on Covaxin and the queries have been sent to Bharat Biotech for further clarification.

- As per the World Health Organisation, it is waiting for an additional piece of information from the Hyderabad-based biotechnology company before it evaluates the vaccine.

Why WHO's approval is necessary?

If Bharat Biotech's Covaxin gets the approval, those inoculated with the vaccine can travel to countries that permit entry of fully vaccinated people. The company can also export it to countries that use vaccines approved by WHO.

About WHO's Emergency Use List (EUL):

The WHO Emergency Use Listing Procedure (EUL) is a risk-based procedure for assessing and listing unlicensed vaccines, therapeutics and in vitro diagnostics with the ultimate **aim of expediting the availability of these products to people affected by a public health emergency.**

To be eligible, the following criteria must be met:

1. The disease for which the product is intended is serious or immediately life threatening, has the potential of causing an outbreak, epidemic or pandemic and it is reasonable to consider the product for an EUL assessment, e.g., there are no licensed products for the indication or for a critical subpopulation (e.g., children).
2. Existing products have not been successful in eradicating the disease or preventing outbreaks (in the case of vaccines and medicines).
3. The product is manufactured in compliance with current Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) in the case of medicines and vaccines and under a functional Quality Management System (QMS) in the case of IVDs.
4. The applicant undertakes to complete the development of the product (validation and verification of the product in the case of IVDs) and apply for WHO prequalification once the product is licensed.

3. NGOs and their right to foreign funds

Context The Centre has told the Supreme Court that NGOs have no fundamental right to receive uncontrolled foreign contributions without regulations.

- The Centre said the amendments were meant to ensure that foreign funds were not used to impinge upon the functioning of parliamentary institutions, political associations and other organisations in India.
- It was responding to petitions challenging amendments made in the Foreign Contributions Regulations law in 2020.

The background

- The petitions had argued that the amendments severely restricted the use of foreign funds by the NGOs for their activities.
- They found it cumbersome that the new law expected 23,000 NGOs to open accounts in the main branch of the State Bank of India (SBI) in the capital to receive their foreign funds.

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)

- Foreign funding of persons in India is regulated under FCRA Act and is implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Act ensures that the recipients of foreign contributions adhere to the stated purpose for which such contribution has been obtained.

- Registered NGOs can receive foreign contributions for five purposes – social, educational, religious, economic and cultural.

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020

- **Prohibition to accept foreign contribution:** The Act bars public servants from receiving foreign contributions.
- **Transfer of foreign contribution:** The Act prohibits the transfer of foreign contribution to any other person not registered to accept foreign contributions.
- **Aadhaar for registration:** The Act makes Aadhaar number mandatory for all office bearers, directors or key functionaries of a person receiving foreign contribution, as an identification document.
- **FCRA account:** Foreign contribution must be received only in an account designated by the bank as FCRA account in such branches of the State Bank of India, New Delhi.
- **Reduction in use of foreign contribution for administrative purposes:** Not more than 20% of the total foreign funds received could be defrayed for administrative expenses. In FCRA 2010 the limit was 50%.
- **Surrender of certificate:** The Act allows the central government to permit a person to surrender their registration certificate.

4. Pakistan retained on FATF's 'greylist' again

Context The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Thursday retained Pakistan in the 'greylist' yet again.

- FATF observed that Pakistan needed to further demonstrate that investigations and prosecutions were being pursued against the senior leadership of UN-designated terror groups, which include the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- The FATF is an inter-governmental body set up in 1989.
- **Objective:** To combat money laundering, terror financing and other related threats to the international financial system.
- Currently, it has 39 members.
- Pakistan has been on the grey list since June 2018.

5. Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

In News: In case the constituency is comprised in State Capital/Metropolitan Cities/Municipal Corporations, then MCC instructions would be applicable in the area of concerned Constituency only.

Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

- A **set of guidelines** issued by the Election Commission of India for conduct of political parties and candidates during elections mainly with respect to speeches, polling day, polling booths, portfolios, election manifestos, processions and general conduct. This is in keeping with **Article 324** of the Constitution, which gives the Election Commission the power to supervise elections to the Parliament and state legislatures.
- **Philosophy:** Parties and candidates should show respect for their opponents, criticise their policies and programmes constructively, and not resort to mudslinging and personal attacks. The MCC is intended to help the poll campaign maintain high standards of public morality and provide a level playing field for all parties and candidates.
- **Comes into force** immediately on announcement of the election schedule by the commission for the need of ensuring free and fair elections. At the time of the Lok Sabha elections, both the Union and state governments are covered under the MCC.
- The MCC is not enforceable by law.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. International trade is not a zero-sum game

Context

India's efforts for deepening India's trade ties with several countries could be scuttled by rising trade protectionism at home.

Increasing protectionism by India

- **Increase in average tariffs:** As Arvind Panagariya has argued, the simple **average of India's tariffs** that stood at 8.9 per cent in 2010-11 has increased by almost 25 per cent to 11.1 per cent in 2020-21.

- These increases in tariff rates have reversed the political consensus on tariff liberalisation that India followed since 1991.
- **Initiator of anti-dumping measures:** India is the **highest initiator of anti-dumping measures** aimed at shielding domestic industry from import competition.
- According to the WTO, from 2015 to 2019, India initiated 233 anti-dumping investigations, which is a sharp increase from 82 initiations between 2011 and 2014 (June).
- The anti-dumping initiations by India from 1995 (when the WTO was established) till 2020 stand at 1,071.
- **Expanding the scope of Article 11(2)(f):** India recently amended Section 11(2)(f) of the Customs Act of 1962, giving the government the power to ban the import or export of any good (not just gold and silver, as this provision applied earlier) if it is **necessary to prevent injury to the economy**.
- Expanding the scope of Article 11(2)(f) to cover any good is inconsistent with India's WTO obligations.
- WTO allows countries to impose restrictions on imports in case of injury to domestic industry, not to the "economy".
- **Restrictive rules of origin:** Finance Minister in her budget speech of 2020 said that undue claims of FTA benefits pose a threat to the domestic industry.
- Subsequently, India amended the rules of origin requirement under the Customs Act.
- Rules of origin determine the **national source of a product**.
- This helps in deciding whether to apply a preferential tariff rate (if the product originates from India's FTA partner country) or to apply the most favoured nation rate (if the product originates from a non-FTA country).
- But India has imposed onerous burdens on importers to ensure compliance with the rules of origin requirement.
- The intent appears to be to dissuade importers from importing goods from India's FTA partners.
- **Impact of vocal for local:** The clarion call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be "vocal for local" is creating an ecosystem where imports are looked at with disdain, upsetting competitive opportunities and trading partners.

Conclusion

India can't maximise its interests at the expense of others. Its experiment with trade protectionism in the decades before 1991 was disastrous. We should recall Winston Churchill's warning: "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it."

7. Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee

Context The Central government is yet to decide on a research proposal from Scientists at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) which would allow plants to be genetically modified without the need for conventional transgenic technology.

The better quality rice variety

- Scientists at the IARI are in the process of developing resilient and high-yield rice varieties using gene editing techniques, which have already been approved by many countries.
- They hope to have such rice varieties in the hands of the Indian farmers by 2024.
- This technique is equivalent to conventional breeding methods, since it does not involve inserting any foreign DNA.
- The proposal, however, has been pending with the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee for almost two years.
- **Benefits:**
 - They aim to bring precision and efficiency into the breeding process using gene editing tools such as CRISPR.
 - It is much faster and far more precise than natural mutation or conventional breeding methods which involve trial and error and multiple breeding cycles.

What is Genetic engineering appraisal committee?

- Regulatory Framework for approval of GM crops is covered under the Environment protection Act 1986
- Genetic engineering appraisal committee under Ministry of Environment, forest and climate change is Apex body that allows for commercial release of GM crops in India
- Cartagena protocol on biosafety provides well-defined mechanism of regulation of GM crops including biosafety evaluation and environmental release.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following:

1. No change in Walker Circulation
2. Push of Pacific Jet Stream towards north
3. Better monsoon rains in India

Which of the events mentioned above is/are associated with La Nina?

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

Answer : B

Explanation

- La Nina is one part of the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle. In a la Nina event, ocean water from off the coast of South America to the central tropical Pacific cools to below average temperatures.
 - This cooling occurs because of stronger than normal easterly trade winds, which churns cooler, deeper sea water up to the ocean's surface.
 - Sea temperatures can warm above average in the far western Pacific when this happens.
- **Impacts of La Nina**
 - **On Walker Circulation:** The unusually cool water in the eastern Pacific **influences the Walker Circulation** and suppresses cloud, rain, and thunderstorms. This change impacts weather patterns around the world, but in a different way than El Niño does.
 - **On the Pacific Jet Stream:** These cold waters in the **Pacific push the jet stream northward**. This tends to lead to drought in the southern US and heavy rains and flooding in the Pacific Northwest and Canada. It can also lead to a more severe hurricane season.
 - **On the Indian Ocean:** There are increased temperatures in Western Pacific, Indian Ocean and off the Somalian coast. It also leads to heavy floods in Australia and a **comparatively better monsoon rains in India**.
- **Hence, option B is correct.**

2. Kushinagar is a significant place in Buddhism since

- a. It is Gautam Buddha's final resting place
- b. Gautam Buddha spent 24 rainy seasons here
- c. Gautam Buddha gave his first sermon here
- d. Gautam Buddha attained enlightenment here

Answer: a

Explanation:

Buddhist pilgrims consider Kushinagar a sacred site where, they believe, Gautama Buddha delivered his last sermon and attained 'Mahaparinirvana' or salvation. It is believed to be the final resting place of Gautama Buddha.

3. Which of the following nations share a boundary with the Black Sea?

1. Russia
2. Romania
3. Greece
4. Turkey
5. Bulgaria

Options:-

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

Black Sea is bordered by Bulgaria, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, Turkey.

4. Consider the following statements:

1. Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) is the most commonly used fertilizer in India.
2. The DAP is high in phosphorus content that stimulates root development.

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

- Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) is the second most commonly used fertilizer in India after urea. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- Farmers normally apply this fertiliser just before or at the beginning of sowing, as it is high in phosphorus (P) that stimulates root development. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- DAP (46% P, 18% Nitrogen) is the preferred source of Phosphorus for farmers.
- This is similar to urea, which is their preferred nitrogenous fertiliser containing 46%

5. Consider the following statements:

1. Brent crude oil originates from oil fields in the North Sea between the Shetland Islands and Norway.
2. Brent is the benchmark for oil prices in India.
3. Cost of shipping for Brent crude is typically lower.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : D

Explanation

- **Brent crude oil** originates from oil fields in the North Sea between the Shetland Islands and Norway. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- West Texas Intermediate (WTI) is sourced from US oil fields, primarily in Texas, Louisiana, and North Dakota.
- Cost of shipping for **Brent crude is typically lower**, since it is produced near the sea and it can be put on ships immediately. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Shipping of WTI is priced higher since it is produced in landlocked areas like Cushing, Oklahoma where the storage facilities are limited.
- **Brent crude price** is the international **benchmark price used by OPEC** while WTI crude price is a benchmark for US oil prices.
 - Since India imports primarily from OPEC countries, Brent is the benchmark for oil prices in India. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

6. With reference to the Production Gap Report, consider the following statements:

1. It is released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. It measures the gap between Aggregate Demand and Supply for employment.

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

About Production Gap Report:

- The **Production Gap Report 2021** was released by the leading research institutes and the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**. **Hence statement 1 is correct.**
- The Production Gap Report, first launched in 2019, tracks the discrepancy between governments' planned fossil fuel production and global production levels consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C or 2°C. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**

Mains Practice Questions

1. Explain the significance of the Eastern Ghats for India. Suggest steps that can be taken to conserve the biodiversity of the region .

Approach

- Introduce by giving general information (like location, biodiversity) about the Eastern Ghats.
- Explain the significance of the Eastern Ghats for India.
- Write about increasing threat to the Eastern Ghats and degrading forest cover and biodiversity.
- Suggest steps that can be taken to conserve the biodiversity.
Conclude suitably in brief.

2. How will the melting of Himalayan glaciers have a far-reaching impact on the water resources of India?

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the importance of the Himalayas.
- Discuss the effect of melting Himalayan glaciers on water resources.
- Conclude suitably.