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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

### 1. Restoration and continuation of MPLAD Scheme

Citing economic recovery, the Union Cabinet has restored the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) till 2025-26.

#### What is the MPLAD scheme?

- The Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is a program first launched during the **Narasimha Rao Government in 1993**.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** fully funded by Government of India.
- It was aimed towards providing funds for developmental works recommended by individual MPs.

#### Funds available

- The MPs then were entitled to recommend works to the tune of Rs 1 crore annually between 1994-95 and 1997-98, after which the annual entitlement was enhanced to Rs 2 crore.
- The UPA government **since 2011-12** raised the annual entitlement to **Rs 5 crore per MP**.

#### Implementation

- To implement their plans in an area, **MPs** have to recommend them to the District Authority of the respective Nodal District.
- The **District Authorities** then identify Implementing Agencies that execute the projects.
- The respective District Authority is supposed to oversee the implementation and has to submit monthly reports, audit reports, and work completion reports to the **Nodal District Authority**.
- The MPLADS funds **can be merged** with other schemes such as MGNREGA and Khelo India.

#### Guidelines for MPLADS implementation

- The document 'Guidelines on MPLADS' was published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in June 2016 in this regard.

- It stated the objective of the scheme to enable MPs to recommend works of developmental nature with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets.
- Durable assets of national priorities viz. drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation, and roads, etc. should be created.
- It recommended MPs to works costing at least 15 percent of their entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 percent for areas inhabited by ST population.
- It lays down a number of development works including construction of railway halt stations, providing financial assistance to recognized bodies, cooperative societies, installing CCTV cameras etc.

### Impact of the scheme continuation

- It will restart the community developmental projects / works in the field which are halted / stopped due to lack of funds under MPLADS.
- It will restart fulfilling the aspirations and developmental requirements of the local community and the creation of durable assets, which is the primary objective of the MPLADS.
- It will also help in reviving the local economy.

### 2. General consent to CBI:

The Supreme Court has expressed concern over a submission by the CBI that since 2018, around 150 requests for sanction to investigate have been pending with eight state governments that have withdrawn general consent to the agency.

The CBI had filed the affidavit after the court inquired last month about the bottlenecks it faced, and the steps it had taken to strengthen prosecutions.

#### Which states have withdrawn general consent, and why?

Eight states have currently withdrawn consent to the CBI: Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, and Mizoram. All except Mizoram are ruled by the opposition.

#### Centre's response:

- State governments do not have any "absolute" power to keep **the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** from investigating crimes inside the State.

- Not even the Union government”, has the authority to rattle the autonomy of the premier agency to conduct investigations.
- Also, withdrawal of general consent would not stand in the way of constitutional courts entrusting the CBI with the cases “where it is found that the State Police would not effectively conduct a fair and impartial investigation”.
- Besides, the CBI was empowered to probe cases concerning any of the Central subjects enumerated in the Union List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.

### Why is consent necessary?

The CBI is governed by **the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act** that makes **consent of a state government mandatory for conducting investigation in that state.**

There are two kinds of consent:

**Case-specific and general-** Given that the CBI has jurisdiction only over central government departments and employees, **it can investigate a case involving state government employees or a violent crime in a given state only after that state government gives its consent.**

- **“General consent”** is normally given to help the CBI seamlessly conduct its investigation into cases of corruption against central government employees in the concerned state.

### What does withdrawal mean?

It simply means that CBI officers will lose all powers of a police officer as soon as they enter the state unless the state government has allowed them.

- The decision means **the CBI will now have to get consent from the state government for every case it registers in Maharashtra.**

### Under what provision can general consent be withdrawn?

In exercise of power conferred by **Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**, the state governments can withdraw the general consent accorded.

### **Can withdrawal mean that the CBI can no longer probe any case?**

No. The CBI would still have the power to investigate old cases registered when general consent existed. Also, cases registered anywhere else in the country, but involving people stationed in states which have withdrawn consent, would allow CBI's jurisdiction to extend to these states.

### **Calcutta High Court verdict:**

Calcutta High Court recently ruled in a case of illegal coal mining and cattle smuggling being investigated by the CBI, that the central agency cannot be stopped from probing an employee of the central government in another state. The order has been challenged in the Supreme Court.

- In **Vinay Mishra vs the CBI**, Calcutta HC ruled in July this year that corruption cases must be treated equally across the country, and a central government employee could not be “distinguished” just because his office was located in a state that had withdrawn general consent.
- The HC also said that withdrawal of consent would apply in cases where only employees of the state government were involved.

### **3. NSA meet seeks urgent help for Afghans**

- The **Third Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan** was hosted by India in New Delhi.

#### **Details:**

- A joint statement titled the ‘**Delhi Declaration**’ was issued after the National Security Adviser level meeting.
- The statement expressed concerns over the **deteriorating socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan** and called for “**urgent humanitarian assistance**” to the Afghan people. It stressed that the incoming international

aid should be unimpeded, and direct and it should be distributed in a non-discriminatory manner across all sections of the Afghan society.

- Given the implications of the developments in Afghanistan on the neighbouring countries and the region, the statement urged **close cooperation, consultation and coordination among the regional countries over the evolving Afghan scenario.**
- It called for collective **cooperation against terrorism and drug trafficking** in the region.

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

### **4. Does India have a right to burn fossil fuels?**

There has been quite a lot of debate on India's dependence on coal against the backdrop of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) meeting. The crux of the theoretical argument is that India needs to develop, and development requires energy.

#### **Carbon budget framework**

- India has neither historically emitted nor currently emits carbon anywhere close to what the global North has, or does, **in per capita terms.**
- If anything, the argument goes, it should ask for a higher and fairer share in **the global carbon budget.**
- There is no doubt that this carbon budget framework is an excellent tool to understand global injustice but to move from there to our 'right to burn' is a big leap.
- However, the question is do the countries in the global South necessarily need to increase their share in the global carbon budget?

#### **Why should developing countries aim for development without increasing carbon emission**

##### **1) Reducing the cost of renewable energy**

- Normally the argument in favour of coal is on account of its cost, reliability and domestic availability.
- Recent data show that the levelised cost of electricity from renewable energy sources like solar (photovoltaic), hydro and onshore wind **has been declining sharply over the last decade** and is already less than fossil fuel-based electricity generation.

- On reliability, frontier renewable energy technologies have managed to address the question of variability of such sources to a large extent and, with technological progress, it seems to be changing for the better.
- As for the easy domestic availability of coal, it is a myth.
- India is among **the largest importers of coal** in the world, whereas it has no dearth of solar energy.

## 2) Following different development model

- During the debates of post-colonial development in the Third World, there were two significant issues under discussion – **control over technology and choice of techniques** to address the issue of surplus labour.
- India didn't quite resolve the two issues in its attempts of import-substituting industrialisation which worsened during the post-reform period.
- But it can address both today.
- The abundance of renewable natural resources in the tropical climate can give India a head start in this competitive world of technology.
- **South-South collaborations** can help India avoid the usual patterns of trade between the North and the South, where the former controls technology and the latter merely provides inputs.
- And the high-employment trajectory that the green path entails vis-à-vis the fossil fuel sector may help address the issue of surplus labour, even if partially.
- Such a path could additionally provide **decentralised access to clean energy to the poor and the marginalised**, including in remote regions of India.

## 3) Limitation of addressing global injustice in terms of a carbon budget

- The framework of addressing global injustice in terms of a **carbon budget** is quite limiting in its scope in more ways than one.
- Such an injustice is not at the level of the nation-states alone; there is such injustice between the rich and the poor **within nations and between humans and non-human species**.
- A progressive position on justice would take these injustices into account instead of narrowly focusing on the framework of nation-states.
- Moreover, it's a double whammy of injustice for the global South when it comes to climate change.
- Not only is it not primarily responsible, but the global South, especially its poor, will unduly **bear the effect of climate change** because of its tropical climate and high population density along the coastal lines.
- So, arguing for more coal is like shooting oneself in the foot.

## Way forward

- One of the ways in which this can be done is by making the global North pay for the energy transition in the South.
- Chalking out an independent, greener path to development may create conditions for such negotiations and give the South the moral high ground to force the North to come to the table, like South Africa did at Glasgow.

## Conclusion

Even if one is pessimistic about this path of righting the wrongs of the past, at the very least, it is better than the status quo.

## 5. FCRA changes: ease of monitoring vs crippling curbs

The Supreme Court has reserved its judgment on petitions challenging the validity of amendments introduced in 2020 to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, aimed at tightening the curbs on NGOs allowed to receive foreign funds.

### About FCRA

- The FCRA **regulates foreign donations** and ensures that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security.
- **First enacted in 1976**, it was amended in 2010 when a slew of new measures was adopted to regulate foreign donations.
- The FCRA is applicable to all associations, groups and NGOs which intend to receive foreign donations.
- It is **mandatory** for all such NGOs to register themselves under the FCRA.
- The registration is initially valid for **five years** and it can be renewed subsequently if they comply with all norms.

### Why was FCRA enacted?

- The FCRA sought to consolidate the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by individuals, associations or companies.
- It sought to prohibit such contributions from being used for activities detrimental to national interest.

### What was the recent Amendment?

- The FCRA was amended in September 2020 to introduce some new restrictions.



- The Government says it did so because it found that many recipients were wanting in compliance with provisions relating to filing of annual returns and maintenance of accounts.
- Many did not utilise the funds received for the intended objectives.
- It claimed that the annual inflow as foreign contributions almost doubled between 2010 and 2019.
- The FCRA registration of 19,000 organisations was cancelled and, in some cases, prosecution was also initiated.

### How has the law changed?

There are at least three major changes that NGOs find too restrictive.

- **Prohibition of fund transfer:** An amendment to Section 7 of the Act completely prohibits the transfer of foreign funds received by an organisation to any other individual or association.
- **Directed and single bank account:** Another amendment mandates that every person (or association) granted a certificate or prior permission to receive overseas funds must open an FCRA bank account in a designated branch of the SBI in New Delhi.
- **Utilization of funds:** Fund All foreign funds should be received only in this account and none other. However, the recipients are allowed to open another FCRA bank account in any scheduled bank for utilisation.
- **Shared information:** The designated bank will inform authorities about any foreign remittance with details about its source and the manner in which it was received.
- **Aadhaar mandate:** In addition, the Government is also authorised to take the Aadhaar numbers of all the key functionaries of any organisation that applies for FCRA registration or for prior approval for receiving foreign funds.
- **Cap on administrative expenditure:** Another change is that the portion of the receipts allowed as administrative expenditure has been reduced from 50% to 20%.

### What is the criticism against these changes?

- **Arbitrary restrictions:** NGOs questioning the law consider the prohibition on transfer arbitrary and too heavy a restriction.
- **Non-sharing of funds:** One of its consequences is that recipients cannot fund other organisations. When foreign help is received as material, it becomes impossible to share the aid.
- **Irrationality of designated bank accounts:** There is no rational link between designating a particular branch of a bank with the objective of preserving national interest.

- **Un-ease of operation:** Due to Delhi based bank account, it is also inconvenient as the NGOs might be operating elsewhere.
- **Illogical narrative:** ‘National security’ cannot be cited as a reason without adequate justification as observed by the Supreme Court in Pegasus Case.

### What does the Government say?

- **Zero tolerance against intervention:** The amendments were necessary to prevent foreign state and non-state actors from interfering with the country’s polity and internal matters.
- **Diversion of foreign funds:** The changes are also needed to prevent malpractices by NGOs and diversion of foreign funds.
- **Fund flow monitoring:** The provision of having one designated bank for receiving foreign funds is aimed at making it easier to monitor the flow of funds.
- **Ease of operation:** The Government clarified that there was no need for anyone to come to Delhi to open the account as it can be done remotely.

## 6. India’s first Fishing Cat Collaring Project

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII-Dehradun) Conservation Biologists will begin collaring ten Fishing Cats (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) in the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS) in Andhra Pradesh.

### About Fishing Cats

- About twice the size of a typical house cat, the fishing cat is a feline with a powerful build and stocky legs.
- It is an adept swimmer and enters water frequently to prey on fish as its name suggests.
- It is known to even dive to catch fish.
- It is nocturnal and apart from fish also preys on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and scavenges on carcasses of larger animals.
- It is capable of breeding all year round but in India its peak breeding season is known to be between March and May.

### Conservation status

- IUCN Red List: **Endangered**
- CITES: **Appendix II**
- Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: **Schedule I**

## Various threats

- One of the major threats facing the fishing cat is the destruction of wetlands, which is its preferred habitat.
- As a result of human settlement, drainage for agriculture, pollution, and wood-cutting most of the wetlands in India are under threat of destruction.
- Another threat to the fishing cat is the depletion of its main prey-fish due to unsustainable fishing practices.
- It is also occasionally poached for its skin.

## 7. Climate finance is insufficient, says Glasgow draft document

- The member countries participating at the COP 26 at Glasgow are in the process of preparing a draft document for the climate agreement to be adopted at the conference.
- **Climate finance for mitigation and adaptation of the impact of global warming** has emerged as a major point of difference between the developing and developed nations.

### Failed promises of climate finance:

- Developed nations like the United States, Canada, several countries of the European Union, the United Kingdom and others have repeatedly reneged on their commitment to provide **\$100 billion of climate finance annually by 2020**.
- Developing countries like India have argued for unhindered **climate finance and transfer of green technology as major provisions for continued climate action by the developing countries**. This it argues is in line with the core **principle of equity and climate justice** as envisaged under the Paris Climate Deal.

### Details:

#### Increasing climate finance:

- A draft document under discussion observes that the promised climate finance by the developed countries would be insufficient to respond to the intensifying climate change impacts in developing countries. It **urges the developed countries to urgently scale up climate finance**.
- Addressing the COP 26, the Indian Prime Minister had stressed that nearly a **trillion dollars in finance** were needed from the developed countries.

### Mitigating GHG emission:

- The draft document recognises that limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100 requires **rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions**, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45% by 2030, relative to the 2010 level, and to net zero around mid-century.
- It calls upon the member nations to **accelerate the phasing out of coal and subsidies for fossil fuels**.

## 8. The case of demonetisation in India

An assessment of popular narratives vs economic facts on the fifth anniversary of Demonetisation in India.

### A popular narrative - What does it mean?

Narratives are the description of events, processes or stories often intertwined in the cultural belief systems of the society. These may be grounded more in myth than reality and thereby policy decisions based on these have devastating impacts at times on society.

### Demonetisation - The story so far

The November 8, 2016 decision to demonetise large denomination currency to flush out undeclared hoards of cash was nothing new. It was experimented earlier on two previous occasions, in 1946 and 1978, with dismal results.

### The stated objectives

1. Eliminating black money and corruption;
2. Moving towards “less cash and more digital economy”;
3. Increased tax compliance;
4. A windfall gain of ₹2 trillion – ₹3 trillion.

### Results and the impacts

- Unlike the limited impact of similar events in 1946 and 1978, the latest demonetisation in 2016 resulted in widespread disruption in the economy, whose aftershocks are still being felt by society.
- The majority of observers have opined that this policy was a failure as only a fraction of its declared objectives could be achieved.

- Interestingly, more than 99.3% of cash returned to the system, pointing towards money laundering routes.
- Rubbing more salt to the wound, data shows that the cash in circulation now exceeds even the pre-demonetisation levels.

### **The euphoria surrounding the crackdown on “Black Money”**

- The deeply satisfying idea of striking a powerful blow through dramatic action against black money has always been in the psyche of the public. More often than not, it has been influenced by the stuff of epics, cinematic experiences and moral terms.
- Contrary to the popular belief, the lion’s share of black money is earned through perfectly legal activities rather than income from corruption or criminal activities.
- Moreover, black money is not mostly kept, in stacks of currency notes and gold, hoarded in safes, boxes, or secret cupboards, except in small quantities, but is mostly accumulated through real estate and other assets.
- We observed seemingly the narrative getting changed and focus from black money and fake currency to digital/cashless payments being elevated and taking the centre stage.

### **Capitalising on the moral economy of the poor**

- The ideals of collective sacrifice, nationalism and patriotism have always been at the deeply entrenched soft corners among the masses and invoking high moral values is a low hanging fruit for policymakers.
- For the poor, any endeavour towards penalising the rich is far more attractive than achieving social justice and equity.

### **Conclusion**

Falling prey to the popular narratives has shown to influence a much bigger role in economic policymaking historically than economists acknowledge. The case of demonetisation adds to the long list of such decisions which demonstrates that popular narratives can trump economic facts. An auto-immune shock for the otherwise steady and growing economy, leading to a plethora of hardships being faced to date, presents a case of pondering upon and learning a lesson for the future.

## 9. India, U.S. monitoring defence trade projects

### Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI):

- The initiative aims to **facilitate co-production and co-development of defence equipment between India and the U.S.**
- It aims to **enhance the bilateral defence trade relationship** between the two countries.
- The 11th Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) meeting was held between India and the U.S.

### Additional information:

- India and the U.S. have recently signed the first project agreement for **Air-Launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicle** under the Joint Working Group Air Systems of the DTTI.

**THE INDIAN EXPRESS**

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

## 1. Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

The Union Cabinet has restored the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) that was suspended in April 2020 during the remaining part of Financial Year 2021-22 and to continue MPLADS up to 2025-26, co-terminus with the period of 15th Finance Commission.

- Currently, It is a partial rollback. The MPs will get Rs. 2 crore instead of the annual approved Rs. 5 crore.
- **Criticism of suspension:** Opposition leaders had pointed out that the Government so far has not given a record of how it spent the savings from suspending the scheme for a year.

### Impact

- Will restart the community developmental projects / works in the field which are halted / stopped due to lack of funds under MPLADS.
- Will restart fulfilling the aspirations and developmental requirements of the local community and creation of durable assets, which is the primary objective of the MPLADS.
- Help in reviving the local economy.

### **What is MPLADS (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) Scheme or Sansad Nidhi Yojana?**

- It is a central sector scheme for MPs to recommend works of developmental nature in their constituencies
- It was launched in December, 1993
- The emphasis is on creating durable community assets based on locally felt needs.
- **Parent Body/Ministry:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI)
- The funds – Rs. 5 crore/annum/MP – under the scheme are non-lapsable.
- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- MPs have only recommendatory role and the district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works, select the implementing agencies and monitor it.

## **2. Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)**

As part of efforts for co-production and co-development of defence equipment under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), India and the U.S. agreed on a revised Statement of Intent (SOI) to strengthen the dialogue by “pursuing detailed planning and making measurable progress” on several specific projects.

### **Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)**

- Created in 2012, under the Obama administration.
- **Aim:** To enhance cooperation between India and the USA in the defence production and trade sectors by overcoming impediments due to “unique national bureaucratic structures, acquisition models, and budget processes.
- It involves bilateral dialogues and engagements between senior-level representatives from India and the US.

### **Four Joint Working Groups**

- Four Joint Working Groups focused on land, naval, air and aircraft carrier technologies had been established under the DTTI to promote mutually agreed projects.
- The two sides recently signed the first project agreement for Air-Launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicle under the Joint Working Group Air Systems.

### **Defence Industry Collaboration Forum**

- A virtual expo of the Defence Industry Collaboration Forum was also conducted
- This forum offers an opportunity for Indian and U.S. industries to be directly involved in DTTI and facilitates dialogue between government and industry on issues that impact industrial collaboration.

### **3. Nutrition Smart Village**

**Aims** to reach out to 75 villages across India through the network of All India Coordinated Research Project on Women in Agriculture (AICRP-WIA) which is in operation at 13 centres in 12 States of India to strengthen the Poshan Abhiyan - Malnutrition free villages

- Promoting nutritional awareness, education and behavioural change in rural areas involving farm women and school children,
- Harnessing traditional knowledge through the local recipe to overcome malnutrition
- Implementing nutrition-sensitive agriculture through homestead agriculture and Nutri-garden
- Awareness among the women farmers will also be created about their legal rights in all walks of life.

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

### **4. NASA's DART mission to hit and deflect an Asteroid**

NASA will launch the agency's first planetary defense test mission named the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART).



## DART Mission

- The main aim of the mission is to test the newly developed technology that would allow a spacecraft to crash into an asteroid and change its course.
- It is a suicide mission and the spacecraft will be completely destroyed.
- The target of the spacecraft is a small moonlet called Dimorphos (Greek for “two forms”).
- It is about 160-metre in diameter and the spacecraft is expected to collide when it is 11 million kilometres away from Earth.
- Dimorphos orbits a larger asteroid named Didymos (Greek for “twin”) which has a diameter of 780 metres.

## Is there any threat from this asteroid?

- The asteroid and the moonlet do not pose any threat to Earth and the mission is to test the new technology to be prepared in case an asteroid head towards Earth in the future.
- The spacecraft will navigate to the moonlet and intentionally collide with it at a speed of about 6.6 kilometres per second or 24,000 kilometres per hour.

## Why Dimorphos?

- Didymos is a perfect system for the test mission because it is an eclipsing binary which means it has a moonlet that regularly orbits the asteroid.
- It is observable when it passes in front of the main asteroid.
- Earth-based telescopes can study this variation in brightness to understand how long it takes Dimorphos to orbit Didymos.
- NASA states that DART is a low-cost spacecraft, weighing around 610 kg at launch and 550 kg during impact.
- The main structure is a box ( $1.2 \times 1.3 \times 1.3$  metres). It has two solar arrays and uses hydrazine propellant for manoeuvring the spacecraft.

## 5. E-Amrit Portal for E-Vehicles

India today launched ‘E-Amrit’, a web portal on electric vehicles (EVs), at the ongoing COP26 Summit in Glasgow, UK.

## E-Amrit Portal

- E-Amrit is a one-stop destination for all information on electric vehicles – busting myths around the adoption of EVs, their purchase, investment opportunities, policies, subsidies, etc.
- The portal has been developed and hosted by NITI Aayog under a collaborative knowledge exchange programme with the UK government.

## Features of the portal

- It intends to complement initiatives of the government on raising awareness about EVs.
- It aims to sensitize consumers on the benefits of switching to electric vehicles.

## Need for E-Amrit

- In the recent past, India has taken many initiatives to accelerate the decarbonization of transport and adoption of electric mobility in the country.
- Schemes such as FAME and PLI are especially important in creating an ecosystem for the early adoption of EVs.

## 6. Reserve Bank - Integrated Ombudsman Scheme

The PM will launch two innovative customer-centric initiatives of the Reserve Bank of India.

### What are the schemes?

#### [A] Integrated Ombudsman Scheme

- It aims to further improve the grievance redress mechanism for resolving customer complaints against entities regulated by RBI.
- The central theme of the scheme is based on 'One Nation-One Ombudsman' with one portal, one email and one address for the customers to lodge their complaints.
- There will be a single point of reference for customers to file their complaints, submit the documents, track status and provide feedback.
- A multi-lingual toll-free number will provide all relevant information on grievance redress and assistance for filing complaints.

## [B] RBI Retail Direct Scheme

- It is aimed at enhancing access to government securities market for retail investors.
- It offers them a new avenue for directly investing in securities issued by the Government of India and the State Governments.
- Investors will be able to easily open and maintain their government securities account online with the RBI, free of cost.

## 7. Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) 2021: Closing remarks

The Navy demonstrated its submarine rescue capability, available with very few countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), to delegations of Indian Ocean countries during the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) 2021.

### Closing remarks at GMC

- Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral proposed “four guiding principles for the future editions:
  - iterative and incremental gains,
  - harnessing complementarities,
  - synchronisation and focussed operations,
  - upskilling and upscaling the existing capabilities.

### Common Maritime Priorities

- India and 12 other nations have adopted a declaration on “Common Maritime Priorities” that will include surveillance, patrolling and common goals of ensuring safe seas.

### MoU between India and Singapore

- India and Singapore have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to exchange practices on submarine rescue and discussions were on with more countries to have arrangements for them to utilise this mechanism.

### Deep-submergence rescue vehicle

- The Navy has procured two DSRVs from the U.K., of which the first one was operationalised at the end of 2018 in Mumbai and the second at Visakhapatnam in early 2019.

- The system can go to a maximum depth of 650 metres and rescue 14 people in one go.
- The DSRVs are designed to be agile and easily transportable to far-off places
- The DSRV, attached to mother ship INS Sabarmati, could be transported by heavy transport aircraft like IL-76 and C-17

## 8. Demonetisation: Narratives & Failure

### Popular Narratives & Economic Policies

- Narratives are often intertwined in the cultural belief systems of the society. They create myths which endure despite rational appeal to facts.
- Thus, the Great Depression of the 1930s came to be associated with the excesses of the “roaring twenties”, though many economic factors were responsible.
- The Weimar hyperinflation of 1921-24 is so deeply embedded in the German consciousness, that even now, nearly 100 years after the event, German society treasures financial stability and distrusts public debt.
- Fiscal conservatism remains the dominant narrative and has inhibited the post-2008 recovery in Europe.

### Demonetisation & Popular Narrative

The demonetisation of high-value currency in India in 2016 is a classic case of policy based on faulty narratives.

- The demonetisation story in India is based on popular myth that ill-gotten wealth is stored in stacks of currency notes and gold, hoarded in safes, boxes, or concealed cupboards. The dramatic action of demonetisation was considered powerful blow against this wealth because it was believed that this money was now rendered useless.
- Such an action on black money was deeply satisfying psychologically as the narrative of black money is almost always in **deeply moral terms**.
- The narrative ignores the fact black money is not really kept in cash except in small quantities but mostly accumulated through real estate and other assets.
  - Although income from corruption or criminal activities is by definition black money, most black money is earned through perfectly legal activities though not declared to the tax authorities.
- Also, the narrative included that such a measure will **solve terrorism** by stopping terror financing (old notes no more valid & terrorists cannot exchange it)

- The way the narrative was framed made it hard for critics to explain their opposition. To denounce it outright would suggest that they have a vested interest in defending **black money and corruption**.
- The narrative started to change the focus from black money and fake currency to **digital/cashless payments**, as time passes and it was realised that it was a failure.
- **Appeals to nationalism and patriotism** was also invoked to sustain the narrative.
- The act (of demonetisation) was considered as an act of **collective sacrifice**. The people in long queues were reminded of the sacrifices of the soldiers guarding the nation's borders and not to think of their own suffering.
- The **moral high ground** claimed by the demonetisation narrative overshadowed the economic criticism of the policy and the observed reality.
- Paradoxically, the **failure of demonetisation policy** does not appear to alter the narrative and, consequently, there is very little price to pay for its failure

### Why is demonetisation considered as failure?

- Demonetisation was done on two previous occasions, in 1946 and 1978, with poor results. But, unlike the limited impact of the previous events, the demonetisation in 2016 caused **widespread disruption in the economy**.
- Very little of 2016 demonetisation's **declared objectives** – of eliminating black money, corruption, moving towards a “less cash and more digital economy”, or increased tax compliance – were achieved.
- Expectations of windfall **gains of some ₹2 trillion-3 trillion failed** to materialise as more than **99.3% of the cancelled notes returned** to the banks.
  - According to RBI report, after verification and reconciliation, the total value of the ₹ 500 and ₹,1000 as on November 8, 2016, the day before note ban came into effect, was ₹15,417.93 lakh crore. The total value of the such notes returned from circulation was ₹15,310.73 lakh crore by August 2018.
- If black money had existed as stockpiles of illegal cash, clearly all of it was very **efficiently laundered**.
- By every measure, demonetisation as economic policy was a gross failure. But, as a narrative, it succeeded in creating a favourable or positive view of the policy.
- Despite personal hardship, long queues, and the loss of income and savings, there was a **degree of ambiguity in criticising the decision**.
- Most tended to distinguish the intention from the reality. That the policy was good but perhaps not implemented well seemed to be the main theme.

### Conclusion

- It is clear that where narratives succeed there is very little political cost. A failed policy that carries no cost is likely to generate more such policies.

### Prelims Practice Questions

**1. Sports person Emma Raducanu became famous throughout the world for which of the following achievements?**

- a. She became the youngest tennis player to get to the world number 1 rank
- b. She became the first female tennis player to win both singles and doubles titles at Wimbledon
- c. She became the first singles qualifier to win a Grand Slam title
- d. She became the first female tennis player to win all the four grand slams in one single year

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Emma Raducanu is a British professional tennis player.
- Raducanu is the reigning US Open champion. By winning the US Open Championship, Raducanu became the first singles qualifier in the Open Era to win a Grand Slam title.

**2. With reference to the Chicago Convention, consider the following statements:**

1. It sets the standards for freedom of airspace.
2. It established the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : C

Explanation

- Freedom of air rule emanates from the **Chicago Convention** in 1944.
- The signatories to the convention decided to set rules that would act as fundamental building blocks to **international commercial aviation**. Hence **statement 1 is correct**.
- It also **established the core principles permitting international transport by air**, and also led to the creation of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).
  - ICAO is a **United Nations (UN)** specialized agency, established in 1944, which laid the foundation for the standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation.
  - Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.

3. As per NASA's definition, a meteor storm must have at least

- a. 100 meteors per hour
- b. 1,000 meteors per hour
- c. 10,000 meteors per hour
- d. 1,00,000 meteors per hour

Answer: b

Explanation:

- As per NASA's definition, a meteor storm must have at least 1000 meteors per hour.

4. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Global Drug Policy Index 2021'

1. It is released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
2. The first edition of index was released in 2019.
3. India is ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in the index.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 and 3 only

C 3 only

D 1, 2 and 3

Answer : C

Explanation

- Recently, the **inaugural Global Drug Policy Index 2021** was released by the **Harm Reduction Consortium**. Hence, **statement 1 is not correct**.
  - The **Harm Reduction Consortium** is a **global consortium of networks** aiming to challenge the global “**war on drugs**”, scale up access to harm reduction services, and advocate for increased resources for harm reduction.
  - It is a **first of its kind index** that ranks 30 countries drawn from across regions. Hence, **statement 2 is not correct**.
- The index is a unique tool that documents, measures and compares national-level drug policies.
  - It provides each country with a score and ranking that shows how much their drug policies and their implementation align with the **United Nations principles of human rights, health and development**.
  - The Index provides an essential accountability and evaluation mechanism in the field of drug policy.
  - It evaluates the performance of 30 countries covering all regions of the world.
- **India’s rank is 18 out of 30 countries**. It has an overall score of 46/100. Hence, **statement 3 is correct**.

**5 The Ninth Schedule was introduced in the Constitution of India during the prime ministership of**

- a. Jawaharlal Nehru
- b. Lal Bahadur Shastri
- c. Indira Gandhi
- d. Morarji Desai

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**



- The Ninth Schedule became a part of the Constitution in 1951 when the Indian Constitution was amended for the first time.
- It was introduced by the Jawaharlal Nehru Government.
- It was created by the new Article 31B, which along with 31A was brought in by the government to protect laws related to agrarian reform and for abolishing the Zamindari system. While A. 31A extends protection to 'classes' of laws, A. 31B shields specific laws or enactments.
- The Ninth Schedule contains a list of central and state laws which cannot be challenged in courts.

**6. Consider the following statements regarding Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report 2021:**

1. It is released by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
2. It ranks the states on the basis of quality and capacity of key infrastructure such as road, rail and warehousing etc.
3. Gujarat has remained on top of the rankings for consecutively three years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : D

Explanation

- Recently, the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** has released the **Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report (Index) 2021**. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.
  - It was launched in 2018.
- The LEADS report is aimed at gauging the logistics performance of states and Union Territories (UT) and identifying areas where they can improve logistics performance.
  - States are **ranked based on quality and capacity of key infrastructure** such as road, rail and warehousing as well as on operational ease of logistics including security of cargo, speed of terminal services and regulatory approvals. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.
  - The report is structured along the three dimensions which collectively influence logistics ease- Infrastructure, Services, and Operating and

Regulatory Environment which are further categorised into 17 parameters.

- Ranking of States:
  - Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab have emerged as the top performers in the LEADS 2021 index respectively.
    - This is the **third year in a row that Gujarat remained on top** of the rankings. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
    - Delhi stands at the top rank among Other UTs.
  - Jammu and Kashmir is the top ranker among the north-eastern states and Himalayan region followed by Sikkim and Meghalaya.

### Mains Practice Questions

**1. More than a year after the e-waste management rules were notified, there is little evidence that it is being implemented. Examine the causes behind India's problem of e-waste and the reasons due to which rules have been ineffective. (250 words)**

#### Approach:

- Explain what is e-waste and state key features of the e-waste management rules in India.
- State causes behind e-waste generation.
- List the loopholes in the rules and their implementation.
- Suggest steps that can be taken to manage increasing e-waste in the country.

**2. Even though child mortality in India has reduced significantly, the numbers are still the highest in the world. Discuss the reason behind the persistence in high rate of child mortality in the country and highlight the steps taken by the government in this regard. (250 words)**

#### Approach:

- Explain child mortality with latest child mortality figures and improvement in them.
- Give reasons for persistence of high rate of child mortality.
- Mandate- constitutional obligation, SDGs
- Discuss steps taken by government
- Conclude with how better monitoring and implementation will help improve the situation

