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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

### 1. Draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2021

The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPP) on the Personal Data Protection Bill of 2019 is said to have adopted the final draft. The Bill will be tabled in the Winter Session of Parliament.

#### Personal Data

- Data can be broadly classified into two types: **personal and non-personal data**.
- **Personal data** pertains to characteristics, traits or attributes of identity, which can be used to identify an individual.
- **Non-personal data** includes aggregated data through which individuals cannot be identified.
- For example, while an individual's own location would constitute personal data; information derived from multiple drivers' location, which is often used to analyse traffic flow, is non-personal data.

#### Data Protection

- Data protection refers to policies and procedures seeking to minimise intrusion into the privacy of an individual caused by collection and usage of their personal data.

#### Why was a bill brought for Personal Data Protection?

- In August 2017, the Supreme Court had held that **Privacy is a fundamental right under Article 21** of the Constitution.
- The Court also observed that **privacy of personal data and facts is an essential aspect** of the right to privacy.
- In July 2017, a Committee of Experts, chaired by **Justice BN Srikrishna**, was set up to examine various issues related to data protection in India.
- The committee submitted its report, along with a **Draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018** to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in July 2018.

## How is personal data regulated currently?

- Currently, the usage and transfer of personal data of citizens is regulated by the **Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2011, under the IT Act, 2000.**
- The rules hold the companies using the data liable for compensating the individual, in case of any negligence in maintaining security standards while dealing with the data.

## Issues with IT Rules, 2011

- The IT rules were a novel attempt at data protection at the time they were introduced but the pace of development of digital economy has shown its shortcomings.
- For instance, (i) the **definition of sensitive personal data** under the rules is narrow, and (ii) some of the **provisions can be overridden by a contract.**
- Further, the IT Act **applies only to companies, not to the government.**

## What does the Personal Data Protection Bill provide?

**Collection and storage:** The bill regulate personal data related to individuals, and the processing, collection and storage of such data.

- **Data Principal:** Under the bill, a data principal is an individual whose personal data is being processed.
- **Data fiduciary:** The entity or individual who decides the means and purposes of data processing is known as data fiduciary.
- **Data processing:** The Bill governs the processing of personal data by both government and companies incorporated in India.
- **Data localization:** It also governs foreign companies, if they deal with personal data of individuals in India.
- **General consent:** The Bill provides the data principal with certain rights with respect to their personal data. Any processing of personal data can be done only on the basis of consent given by data principal.
- **Data Protection Authority:** To ensure compliance with the provisions of the Bill, and provide for further regulations with respect to processing of personal data of individuals, the Bill sets up a DPA.

## Issues with the PDP Bill

- **Exemptions to the govt:** Section 35 of the bill permits the Central Government to exempt any agency of the Government from the provisions of the law.
- **No reasonable exemptions:** There is no sufficient reason for government agencies to be exempted from basic provisions of the Bill.

- **Easy breach:** Though this would be subject to procedures, safeguards, and oversight mechanisms to be prescribed by the Government.
- **Executive hegemony:** There is no scope for oversight over the executive's decision to issue such an order.
- **Arbitrary and intrusive:** As demonstrated by the Pegasus case, the current frameworks for protecting citizens from arbitrary and intrusive State action lack robustness.

### Why is the state given exemption?

- **Biggest needy of Data:** The State is one of the biggest processors of data, and has a unique ability to impact the lives of individuals.
- **Welfare objectives:** It has a monopoly over coercive powers as well have the obligation to provide welfare and services.

### Issues with Exemption to State

- **Grounds of expediency:** the use of this provision on grounds of expediency is an extremely low bar for the Government to meet.
- **Non requirement for exemption order:** There is no requirement for an exemption order to be proportionate to meeting a particular State function.
- **No oversight on executive actions:** There is no scope for oversight over the executive's decision to issue such an order or any safeguards prescribed for this process.
- **State surveillance:** Section 36(a) of the Bill provides for an exception where personal data is being processed against criminal investigation. This provision could therefore encourage vigilantism or enable privatized surveillance.

### Best practices followed across the world

- The **European GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)** is commonly seen as the pinnacle of data protection regulation worldwide.
- The EU law has in place a **separate law that deals with the processing of personal data by law enforcement agencies.**
- **UK's Data Protection Act** dedicates Part 3 that liberalises certain obligations while at the same time ensuring that data protection rights are also protected.

### Way forward

- Balancing privacy interests with those of public needs (such as that of State security) is a difficult task.
- This should undergo rigorous consultations in Parliament taking into confidence all stakeholders.

- Once debated in Parliament, one can only hope that adequate time and attention is given to finding a better balance between competing interests.

## 2. First ever All India Survey on Domestic Workers

Union Minister for Labour and Employment has flagged off the first ever All India Survey on Domestic workers being conducted by Labour Bureau.

### All India Survey on Domestic Workers

- The Survey is aimed to estimate the number and proportion of domestic workers at National and State level.
- It would help find percentage distribution of domestic workers with respect to Live-in/Live-out, formal/ Informal Employment, Migrant/Non-Migrant, their wages and other socio-economic characteristics.
- The survey will also provide the Household Estimates of Live-in/Live-out domestic workers and average number of domestic workers engaged by different types of households.

### Objectives of the Survey

- Estimate the number/proportion of DWs at National and State level.
- Household Estimates of Live-in/ Live-out DWs.
- Average number of DWs engaged by different types of households.

### Why need such Survey?

- Domestic workers (DWs) constitute a significant portion of total employment in the informal sector.
- However, there is a dearth of data on the magnitude and prevailing employment conditions of DW.
- Hence with the view to have time series data on domestic workers, GoI has entrusted Labour Bureau to conduct an all-India survey on DWs.

### Parameters of the Survey

The Domestic Worker Survey collects information on the following broad parameters:

- **Household Characteristics** such as HH size, Religion, Social Group, Usual Monthly Consumption Expenditure, Nature of Dwelling unit.

- **Demographic Characteristics** such as Name, Age, Relation to Head, Marital Status, General Education Level, Usual Principal Activity Status, Subsidiary Activity Status and Status of DWs.
- **Information on Employer** is also collected such as their preferences of DW regarding Gender and marital status, mode of payment of wages, number of days worked, mode of engagement, whether DW services were availed during ii COVID-19 pandemic, medical support given to DWs.

### Scope of the Survey

- All India States/UTs of India covered are 37 and Districts covered are 742
- Unit of Enumeration is Villages as per Census 2011 and Urban Blocks as per latest phase of UFS.
- At the all-India level, a total number of 12766 First Stage Units (FSUs) i.e., 6190 villages and 6576 UFS blocks will be covered in the survey.
- 1,50,000 Households i.e., the Ultimate Stage Units (USU) will be covered.

### 3. Vehicle scrappage policy:

The Government is considering a proposal to give buyers additional concessions on buying new vehicles after scrapping of their old vehicles.

- The final decision (on providing more incentives under **the National Automobile Scrappage Policy**) will be taken by the finance ministry and the GST Council.

### About the Vehicle Scrappage Policy:

1. Old vehicles will have to pass a **fitness test** before re-registration and as per the policy **government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old and private vehicles which are over 20 years old will be scrapped.**
2. As a disincentive, **increased re-registration fees** would be applicable for vehicles 15 years or older from the initial date registration.
3. The state governments may be advised to **offer a road-tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles and up to 15% for commercial vehicles** to provide incentive to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles.

### Significance:

- The **vehicle scrapping policy** is aimed at creating an eco-system for phasing out unfit and polluting vehicles in an environmentally friendly and safe manner.
- The initiative will promote a circular economy and make the process of economic development more sustainable and environment friendly.
- The policy will also bring in investments of around Rs 10,000 crore and create 35,000 job opportunities.

### Issues with the new policy:

1. Limited incentive and poor cost economics for trucks.
2. Lack of addressable volumes for other segments.
3. The potential benefit from scrapping a 15-year-old, entry-level small car will be ₹70,000, whereas its resale value is around ₹95,000. That makes scrapping unattractive.

### Need of the hour:

With this background, for the scrappage policy to be seamlessly implemented, we should have a comprehensive plan in terms of removing ELV (End of life vehicles) from the road. Freight transporters need stronger financial support. However, that said, it is important to note that unless old fleet vehicles are off the road, the benefits of implementation of **BSVI** vehicles will not be fully leveraged.

### 4. Philippines and China- South China Sea Dispute:

The Philippines will resume a military resupply mission for the country's troops stationed on an atoll (**Second Thomas Shoal**, locally known as **Ayungin Shoal**) in the **South China Sea** will resume this week, after it was aborted last week when it was blocked by Chinese coast guard.

- Philippines was backed by the U.S. State Department, which released a statement calling the Chinese actions an “escalation that directly threatens regional peace and stability, escalates regional tensions, infringes upon freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.”

### Significance of the atoll:

- A small contingent of the Philippine Marine Corps has occupied the atoll, since its navy deliberately grounded World War II landing vessel BRP Sierra Madre to serve as an outpost in 1999.
- The island is about 105 nautical miles off Palawan in the West Philippine Sea – Manila’s term for the eastern portion of the South China Sea that falls within the Philippine exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

### What’s the issue?

Beijing has overlapping territorial claims with several Southeast Asian states in the South China Sea.

- China claims almost all of the resource-rich sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade passes annually, with competing claims from **Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.**
- Beijing has also been accused of deploying a range of military hardware, including anti-ship missiles and surface-to-air missiles there, and ignored a **2016 international tribunal decision** that declared its historical claim over most of the waters to be without basis.

### Where is the South China Sea?

- The South China Sea is **an arm of western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia.**
- It is south of China, east & south of Vietnam, west of the Philippines and north of the island of Borneo.
- It is **connected by Taiwan Strait** with the East China Sea and by **Luzon Strait** with the Philippine Sea.
- **Bordering states & territories:** the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.

### Strategic Importance:

- This sea holds tremendous strategic importance for its location as it is the connecting link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean (**Strait of Malacca**).



- According to the **United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD)** one-third of the global shipping passes through it, carrying trillions of trade which makes it a significant geopolitical water body.

### Contesting Claims Over Islands:

- **The Paracel Islands** are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- **The Spratly Islands** are claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei and Philippines.
- **The Scarborough Shoal** is claimed by the Philippines, China and Taiwan.

Since 2010, China has been converting uninhabited islets into artificial islets to bring it under **UNCLOS** (For example, Haven Reef, Johnson South Reef and Fiery Cross Reef).

### 5. Strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) programme:

India will release 5 million barrels of crude oil from its emergency stockpile in tandem with the U.S., China, Japan, and other major economies to cool oil prices.

- This is the first time ever that India, which stores 5.33 million tonne or about 38 million barrels of crude oil in underground caverns at three locations on the east and west coast, is releasing stocks for such purposes.

### Background:

- The U.S. had last week made an unusual request to some of the largest oil-consuming nations, including China, India and Japan, to consider releasing crude stocks in a coordinated effort to pare global energy prices.
- This after **the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** and its allies rebuffed repeated requests to speed up production increases.

### About the SPR Programme:

Strategic petroleum reserves are **huge stockpiles of crude oil** to deal with any crude oil-related crisis like the risk of supply disruption from natural disasters, war or other calamities.

- The petroleum reserves are **strategic in nature and the crude oil stored in these reserves will be used during an oil shortage event, as and when declared so by the Government of India.**

- The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL)**, a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

### **Phase 1 and phase 2:**

Under **Phase I of strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) programme**, Government of India, through its Special Purpose Vehicle, **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL)**, has established petroleum storage facilities with total capacity of 5.33 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) at 3 locations, namely (i) Vishakhapatnam (ii) Mangaluru and (iii) Padur.

Under **Phase II of the petroleum reserve program**, the Government has approved two additional commercial-cum-strategic facilities at Chandikhol (Odisha) and Padur (TN) on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

### **Need for strategic oil reserves:**

1. In 1990, as the Gulf war engulfed West Asia, India was in the throes of a major energy crisis. By all accounts India's oil reserves at the time were adequate for only three days. While India managed to avert the crisis then, the threat of energy disruption continues to present a real danger even today.
2. To address energy insecurity, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government mooted the concept of strategic petroleum reserves in 1998. Today, with Indian Consumption increasing, the case for creating such reserves grows stronger.

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

### **6. Bharat Gaurav Scheme to promote Tourism**

To tap the huge potential of tourism, the Railways has announced the 'Bharat Gaurav' Scheme.

## Bharat Gaurav Scheme

- Under this Scheme, theme-based tourist circuit trains, on the lines of the Ramayana Express, can be run either by private or State-owned operators.
- Till now, the Railways had passenger segments and goods segments.
- Now, it will have a third segment for tourism under the Bharat Gaurav.
- The scheme has been developed after extensive stakeholder discussions and a lot of State Governments, including Odisha, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, have shown interest.

## Key features

- Service providers, who can be an individual, company, society, trust, joint venture or consortium will be free to decide themes/circuits.
- They will offer an all-inclusive package to tourists including rail travel, hotel accommodation and sightseeing arrangement, visit to historical/heritage sites, tour guides etc.
- They have full flexibility to decide the package cost.
- The service providers will also be able to design/furnish the interior of the coaches based on the theme and put branding or advertising inside and outside of the train.

## 7. New Crypto Bill:

The **Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021** will introduce in the winter session of Parliament.

## Key Provisions:

- It seeks to regulate cryptocurrency and ostensibly ban all private cryptocurrencies.
- It seeks to create a facilitative framework for creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India.

So far, the precise contours of the Bill are not in the public domain and no public consultations have been held.

### Present status:

- An inter-ministerial panel on cryptocurrency has recommended that all private cryptocurrencies, except any virtual currencies issued by state, will be prohibited in India.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also raised concerns on the cryptocurrencies traded in the market and conveyed them to the Centre.
- Back in March 2020, **the Supreme Court had allowed banks and financial institutions to reinstate services related to cryptocurrencies** by setting aside the RBI's 2018 circular that had prohibited them (Based on **the ground of "proportionality"**).

### What are Cryptocurrencies?

Cryptocurrencies are digital currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank.

**Examples:** Bitcoin, Ethereum etc.

### Why the govt wants to ban cryptocurrencies?

1. **Sovereign guarantee:** Cryptocurrencies pose risks to consumers. They do not have any sovereign guarantee and hence are not legal tender.
2. **Market volatility:** Their speculative nature also makes them highly volatile. For instance, the value of Bitcoin fell from USD 20,000 in December 2017 to USD 3,800 in November 2018.
3. **Risk in security:** A user loses access to their cryptocurrency if they lose their private key (unlike traditional digital banking accounts, this password cannot be reset).
4. **Malware threats:** In some cases, these private keys are stored by technical service providers (cryptocurrency exchanges or wallets), which are prone to malware or hacking.
5. Money laundering.

## 8. Over-valued unicorns in a distressed economy

This editorial talks about the recent failure of the biggest-ever initial public offering (IPO) and the status of unicorns in India.

### What is an initial public offering (IPO)?

- Primary and Secondary Market:
  - The “Primary Market” and the “Secondary Market” are represented by the capital market.
  - New issuers (primary market) and stock (secondary market) are two interrelated and inseparable components of the capital market.
- Initial Public Offering (IPO):
  - An initial public offering (IPO) is the process through which a private company becomes public by selling its stock to the general public (IPO).
  - It might be a startup or an existing business that decides to go public by listing on a stock exchange.
  - A corporation that sells its stock to the public is not obligated to reimburse the funds invested by the public.

### Unicorns in India

- What is a Unicorn?
  - Any privately owned firm with a market capitalization of more than \$1 billion is referred to as a unicorn.
  - It denotes new entities dedicated to offering creative solutions and new business models, among other things.
  - According to RBI reports, India is currently third on the global list of nations with the most unicorns, after only the United States and China.
- Origin:
  - In his 1997 book ‘The Innovator’s Dilemma’, Clayton M. Christensen popularised the concept of disruptive innovations, and the ‘unicorn’ has since become a buzzword for describing start-ups.
  - The concept was that small businesses with little resources might disrupt technology by establishing a completely new way of doing things.
- Characteristics of Unicorn:
  - In the venture capital sector, a unicorn is a startup with a valuation of \$1 billion or more.
  - Only a privately owned startup has the potential to become a unicorn.

- Unicorns are known for their disruptive innovation, high technology, new ideas, and customer focus.

### Reasons behind the rapid growth of unicorns in India

- **Fintech leads:** Digital payment has recently grown in vast popularity. The fintech industry, which has contributed the most to the unicorn list, reflects this increase in digital payment.
- **Investors' push for Get Big Fast (GBF) strategy:** With startups, several investors and venture capital companies have embraced the GBF (Get Big Fast) strategy. Under this approach, businesses strive to develop quickly by raising significant amounts of money and lowering prices in order to outperform their competitors in the market.
- **Company buyouts:** Many startups become unicorns as a result of buyouts from major public corporations who prefer to focus on acquisitions to grow their business rather than investing in internal growth.
- **No plans for IPO:** Funding rounds are a common way for startups to raise financing and increase their total valuation. IPOs also include the danger of a company's value being devalued if the public market believes it is worth less than it is.
- **Easy access to technology:** With easy access to tech-savvy customers, companies can grow their businesses beyond their wildest dreams. As a result, technological advancements might be seen as another driving element behind the rise of unicorns in India.

### Concerns with Failures of Unicorns:

1. **Edtech Companies:** The novel coronavirus pandemic has turned out to be a boon in disguise for EdTech companies, since it is this external environment that is propelling the sector forward by four to five years. Due to the abundance of liquidity, EdTech companies with reasonable business ideas are highly priced.
2. **Technology firms:** Technology companies try to persuade clients who have lived in a certain way to modify their behaviour. Consumers will begin to use such services only once this path of behavioural transformation has begun.
3. **Behavioural changes:** Inducing such changes is costly for new businesses since they must incentivize clients. Firms spend a lot of money to offer huge discounts to clients in the hopes that people would become so used to these platforms that they will continue to use them even if the prices are raised.
4. **Consumption of Services:** It appears that corporations and valuation experts overestimate the Indian economy's potential to consume services by assuming exponential demand growth over longer time periods.

## Case Study: Paytm IPO

Recently, the largest-ever initial public offering (IPO) in India collapsed on the stock exchange, with shares trading for less than 27% of the IPO price. In his own estimate of the company, valuation specialist Aswath Damodaran termed it “India’s leading cash burning machine.”

### Conclusion:

We are witnessing the emergence of new unicorns every month, which is the result of exaggerated valuations in order to tap more investors and burn more capital. These values are completely based on future earnings, with no gains to display in the short term.

**THE INDIAN EXPRESS**

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

### 1. Mysuru Declaration on Service Delivery by Panchayats

The Participants from 16 States signed the Mysuru Declaration and resolved to roll out the Common Minimum Service delivery by Panchayats across the country from April 1, 2022.

#### Mysuru Declaration

- The Mysuru declaration is aimed at recognising Citizen Centric Services as the “Heart of Governance”.
- It provides key inputs on various aspects of service delivery that are either provided by the panchayats directly or services of other departments that are facilitated by panchayats.

#### Highlights of the Declaration

**WE, the Representatives and Officials** recognise the efforts to promote inclusive and accountable Local Self Governments in delivery of services, in consonance with the priorities and the aspirations of our citizens.

**We accept responsibility** for seizing this moment to strengthen our commitments to promote transparency, empower citizens, and harness the power of new technologies towards timely and quality delivery of services; enhancing citizen service experiences

**We uphold the value of openness** in our engagement with citizens to improve services, incorporating diverse views when designing and delivering services. We embrace principles of transparency and open government with a view towards achieving greater prosperity, well-being, and human dignity for sustainable development of local communities.

## **2. Andhra Pradesh Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act**

### **Key takeaways**

- More comprehensive legislation will be brought in now.
- No timeframe has been laid out for the exercise.
- The repeal was intended to undertake further study and consultations to impart more clarity to the policy of decentralisation.

### **Three- capitals**

- Andhra Pradesh had notified the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act, 2020, and the AP Capital Region Development Authority (Repeal) Act, 2020 in July.
- This law paves the way for three capitals for the state.
  - Amaravati- legislative capital.
  - Visakhapatnam- executive capital.
  - Kurnool- judicial capital.

## **3. India & World Bank sign loan agreement**

**In News:** The Government of India, Government of Andhra Pradesh and the World Bank signed the legal agreements for \$250 million for a project which aims to improve quality of learning for over 50 lakh students in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

The beneficiaries are about 40 lakh students (between the age of six and fourteen) in over 45,000 government schools, and over 10 lakh children (between the age of



three and six) enrolled in Anganwadis (Integrated Child Development Centers), and about 1,90,000 teachers, and more than 50,000 Anganwadi workers.

### **The Supporting Andhra's Learning Transformation Project will**

- Encourage professional development of teachers;
- Provide remedial learning courses for children impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Pay special attention to students from marginalized groups, including children with special needs, scheduled tribes, and girls.

### **Focus Areas**

- Developing physical learning kits and content for television and radio broadcasts to reduce the learning losses that children are likely to face due to school closures
- Short-term in-service training courses for Anganwadi workers and early grade (Grade 1 and 2) teachers and the supply of pedagogically appropriate Teaching Learning Material (TLM) across these centres and schools
- The new competency-based teaching-learning approach will improve teaching practices through classroom-based mentorships, need-based teacher training for teachers of all grades and subjects, Personalized Adaptive Learning (PAL) methods, and other forms of remedial education linked to standardized school-based assessments.

## **4. Launch of the inaugural SDG Urban Index & Dashboard (2021-22)**

**In News:** In its journey towards localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and instituting robust SDG progress monitoring systems at the national, State/UT, and local levels, NITI Aayog has launched SDG Urban Index & Dashboard (2021-22).

Shimla tops the Index followed by Coimbatore and Chandigarh.

- The index and dashboard are a result of the NITI Aayog-GIZ and BMZ collaboration focused on driving SDG localization in our cities, under the umbrella of Indo-German Development Cooperation.
- Ranks 56 urban areas on 77 SDG indicators across 46 targets of the SDG framework
- The index and dashboard will further strengthen SDG localization and institute robust SDG monitoring at the city level. It highlights the strengths and gaps of ULB-level data, monitoring, and reporting systems.

- Tools such as this index and dashboard will contribute to the creation of an ecosystem in which all stakeholders will be equipped to adopt and implement data-driven decision making. This transformative change is quite essential, given the increasing prominence of our cities and urban areas in charting the future of development in India.
- The statistical methodology for the SDG Urban Index is drawn from the globally accepted methodology developed by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).

NITI Aayog seeks to empower local administrations to adopt a measurement-based approach to decision making. Only if the SDG agenda is adopted by the last mile stakeholders can we hope to achieve the global 2030 Agenda. The SDG Urban Index is one more step towards localising the SDGs further.

## 5. India-USA Trade Policy Forum (TPF)

India - USA have reaffirmed their commitment to take economic relationship between the two countries to the next high level - to integrate the economies across sectors and relaunched the U.S.-India Trade Policy Forum (TPF) that was convened four years ago.

- Instead of progress, there were setbacks, including raised import tariffs and the withdrawal of benefits to Indian exporters under the U.S.'s Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) which triggered retaliatory trade barbs.

### Bilateral trade matters

- **Frequent Meetings:** TPF Working Groups on agriculture, non-agriculture goods, services, investment, and intellectual property to be activated to meet frequently
- **Robust growth in Trade:** Both India and USA expressed satisfaction over the robust rebound in bilateral merchandise trade this year 2021 (January - September 2021), which showed almost 50% growth; bilateral merchandise trade in the current year poised to surpass US\$ 100 billion mark.
- **Economic reforms** rolled out by India including liberalization of FDI in the insurance sector, elimination of a retrospective provision in income tax, and launching of the "Single Window System" for facilitating investment helped relaunch TPF.

- **Multilateral Collaboration:** Emphasis on Collaboration and constructive engagement in various multilateral trade bodies including the WTO, the G20 etc for achieving a shared vision of a transparent, rules-based global trading system among market economies and democracies will be part of cooperation in TPF.
- **Collaborating on Global Value Chain:** Significance of creating resilient and secure supply chains and in this regards India and the United States may work with like-minded partners in developing secure supply chains in critical sectors of trade and technology.
- **Health Cooperation:** India highlighted the importance of cooperation in health sector, and expressed interest in partnering with the U.S. and allies in developing a secure pharmaceutical manufacturing base for augmenting global supply chains.
- **Business Cooperation:** Emphasis on participation and collaboration of the private sector in both countries in building stronger linkages in critical sectors (including cyberspace, semiconductors, AI, 5G, 6G and future generation telecommunications technology), and supporting resilient and secure global supply chains.
- **IPR Protection:** Significance of IP protection and enforcement for promotion of innovation as well as bilateral trade and investment in IP-intensive industries noted.
- **Agricultural Cooperation:** Emphasis on tangible benefits to farmers and businesses of both countries by resolving outstanding market access issues through continuous engagement.
  - Agreement on market access facilitation for mangoes and pomegranates, pomegranate arils from India, and cherries and alfalfa hay for animal feed from the United States.
  - Agreed to work to resolve market access for grapes from India and pork/ pork products from USA.
  - Both sides to continue engagement on exploring enhanced market access for products including Distillers' Dried Grains with Solubles from the US and market access for water buffalo meat and wild caught shrimp from India.

## Future Work

- **Restoring GSP:** India highlighted the significance of restoration of GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) benefits as it would help industries from

both sides in integrating their supply chain efficiently. United States noted it for suitable consideration.

- **Service Sector:** Services including digital services has significant potential for increasing bilateral services trade and investment. India underlined the importance of movement of professional and skilled workers, students, investors and business travelers between both countries, as it contributes immensely to enhancing bilateral economic and technological partnership.
- **Social Security:** Agreed on the significance of negotiating a Social Security Totalization Agreement in the interest of workers from both sides, and further engagement on pursuing such an agreement welcomed.

## Conclusion

India & US finally emphasized that the TPF should deliver continually concrete outcomes to generate mutual confidence.

## 6. Road to data protection law

On Monday, the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPP) on the Personal Data Protection Bill of 2019 is said to have adopted the final draft. The Bill is slated to be tabled in the Winter Session.

### Why does India need a data protection law?

- Amid the proliferation of computers and the Internet, consumers have been generating a lot of data, which has allowed companies to show them personalised advertisements based on their browsing patterns and other online behaviour.
- Companies began to **store a lot of these datasets** without taking the consent of the users, and did not take responsibility when the data leaked.
- To **hold such companies accountable**, the government in 2019 tabled the Personal Data Protection Bill for the first time.

### What is said to be in the final draft?

- One of the major changes that the final draft of the PDP Bill is believed to have pushed for is to include **non-personal data within its ambit**, which changes the nature of the Bill from personal data protection to just data protection.
- The final draft is also said to have **sought additional compliance for companies** that deal exclusively with children's data, by asking them to

register with the Data Protection Authority – a regulatory body that will have powers to decide on implementing the law's various provisions.

- A third key aspect that the committee is said to have pushed for is to consider all **social media companies as publishers**, and to hold them accountable for the content on their platform if they are not acting as intermediaries.
- It is said to have recommended that no social media company be allowed to operate in India unless the parent company handling the technology **sets up an office in India**.
- Other aspects such as setting up of an **indigenous architecture**, which can be an alternative to the internationally accepted SWIFT payment system, are also said to have been suggested.
- A key suggestion said to be made by the JCP, which also received the most dissent from members, is **wide-ranging powers for the government** such as exempting any agency from application of the law.
- From the private sector, executives from Visa, MasterCard India, Google India, PayTM, Facebook India, Twitter India, Amazon Web Services as well as Amazon India, among others, have made submissions to the panel.

### What were their submissions?

- In their meeting with the JPC, Google's representatives had said India should avoid making data localisation a requirement, which had upset the members of the committee.
- Paytm, on the other hand, had said data generated in India should be parked in the country.
- Cab aggregators such as Ola and Uber, whose representatives appeared before the JPC earlier this month, have **supported data localisation norms**.
- Companies, tech policy groups and even JCP members had also called for **reconsideration of the one-size-fits-all approach** based on binary age threshold for children, given the vast geographic and cultural diversity of children across the country and their varying maturity levels and needs.
- Companies and policy groups had also expressed apprehensions about the possible inclusion of certain **clauses related to non-personal data** and had told the JCP that it carried a very high **risk of re-identification** and may lead to legal complications for stakeholders.
- Policy groups had repeatedly **objected to the blanket exemptions** to the central and state governments along with allied agencies.
- The functional and structural **independence of India's first data regulator** is a key aspect considering the crucial role it plays as the mediator between all vested stakeholders that is citizens, businesses and the government themselves

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

### 7. James Webb Space Telescope:

The launch of **the James Webb Space Telescope**, which astronomers hope will herald a new era of discovery, has been delayed until December 22 after an accident at its launch facility in French Guiana.

- The space telescope was originally supposed to launch on December 18.

#### About JSWT:

JWST is a joint venture between the US (Nasa), European (Esa) and Canadian space agencies (CSA).

- It is an orbiting infrared observatory that will complement and extend the discoveries of **the Hubble Space Telescope**, with longer wavelength coverage and greatly improved sensitivity.
- Webb was formerly known as **the “Next Generation Space Telescope” (NGST)** and it was renamed in 2002 after a former NASA administrator, James Webb.
- It will be a large infrared telescope with an approximately 6.5 meter primary mirror.

#### Objectives and functions of the telescope:

1. It will look deeper into the cosmos - and thus further back in time - than is possible with Hubble.
2. It will do this with a much bigger mirror (6.5m in diameter versus 2.4m) and instruments that are tuned to the infrared.
3. Scientists hope this set-up can detect the light from the very first population of stars in the Universe to switch on more than 13.5 billion years ago.

#### Orbit:

- **The Hubble Space Telescope** orbits around the Earth at an altitude of ~570 km above it.
- Webb will not actually orbit the Earth, instead it will sit at **the Earth-Sun L2 Lagrange point**, 5 million km away.

- At the L2 point Webb's solar shield will block the light from the Sun, Earth, and Moon which will help Webb stay cool, which is very important for an infrared telescope.

## 8. AK-203 deal approved

**Context** The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved the long-pending deal for the manufacture of 6.71 lakh AK-203 Russian assault rifles in India.

### Key takeaways

- The two countries had signed an **Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)** in 2019.
- A joint venture was later set up at Korwa in Uttar Pradesh for manufacturing the rifles.
- **Igla-S Very Short Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) systems** may receive clearance soon.
- A proposal for the procurement of the GSAT-7C communication satellite for the Indian Air Force (IAF) has also been approved.
  - **Advantage:** Induction of the GSAT-7C satellite and ground hubs for Software Defined Radios (SDRs) will enhance the ability of the armed forces to communicate beyond Line of Sight (LoS).

### What is the Defence Acquisition Council?

- It is the highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry.
- It decides new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the Indian Coast Guard.
- **Chairman:** Minister of Defence
- It was formed, after the Group of Ministers recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System', in 2001, post Kargil War (1999).

## Prelims Practice Questions

### 1. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 22 of the Constitution deals with protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.
2. All laws in India assume an accused to be innocent until proven otherwise.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- Article 22 of the Constitution deals with protection against arrest and detention in certain cases. It states that no person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest nor shall he be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by, a legal practitioner of his choice.
- Not all laws in India assume an accused to be innocent until proven otherwise. Example – Atrocity act.

**2. Consider the following statements regarding Hypersonic Technology**

1. Missiles based on this technology have at least 10 times the speed of sound.
2. Most hypersonic vehicles primarily use dual mode ramjet (DMRJ) technology.

**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**

**Hypersonic Technology**



- Missiles based hypersonic technology **speed at least 5 or more times the Mach** or speed of sound.
  - Missiles based on **high-hypersonic technology have mach number at least 10** (or 10 times the speed of sound). **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- Most hypersonic vehicles **primarily use the scramjet technology**, which is a type of Air Breathing propulsion System. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
  - A scramjet engine is an improvement over the ramjet engine.
    - Dual Mode Ramjet (DMRJ) is a mix of ramjet and scramjet.
  - Scramjet is an extremely complex technology, which also needs to be able to handle high temperatures, making the hypersonic systems extremely costly.

**3. Committee of Experts under the Chairmanship of Justice B.N. Srikrishna deals with:**

- a. Agricultural reforms and the MSP
- b. Privatization of Public Sector Banks
- c. Adoption of a Uniform Civil Code
- d. Personal data protection

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- The draft Bill on personal data protection was prepared by the Justice Srikrishna Committee and submitted to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in 2018.

**4. Which of the following outcomes is not correct regarding Consolidation of Banks?**

- A The consolidation of Banks helps in strengthening its presence globally and nationally.
- B It has the potential to reduce operational costs.
- C It generally increases the pace of decision making at the top level.
- D Larger banks have a better ability to raise resources.

Answer : C

Explanation

- The consolidation of Banks helps in strengthening its presence globally, nationally and regionally.
- It has the potential to reduce operational costs due to the presence of shared overlapping networks. And this enhanced operational efficiency will reduce the lending costs of the banks.
- Larger banks have a better ability to raise resources from the market rather than relying on State exchequer.
- The banks that are getting merged **are expected to see a slowdown in decision making at the top level** as senior officials of such banks would put all the decisions on the back-burner and it will lead to a drop in credit delivery in the system.
- **Hence, option C is not correct.**

**5: Under the Indian Constitution, concentration of wealth violates**

- a. the Right to Equality
- b. the Directive Principles of State Policy
- c. the Right to Freedom
- d. the Concept of Welfare

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The concentration of wealth violates the directive principles of state policy. Under Article 39 of the Constitution of India, the State shall direct its policy towards securing that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.

**6. Consider the following statements:**

1. The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development was instituted in 2015.
2. Pratham, a civil society organisation has been conferred the Prize for 2021.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer : B

Explanation

- The **Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development** was instituted in the memory of the former prime minister by a trust (Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust) **in her name in 1986. Hence statement 1 is not correct.**
- It consists of a monetary award of Rs 25 lakh along with a citation.
- The award is given to individuals or organisations who work towards ensuring international peace and development, ensuring that scientific discoveries are used to further the scope of freedom and better humanity, and creating a new international economic order.
- In 2021, **Pratham**, a civil society organisation was conferred the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development. **Hence statement 2 is correct.**

### **Mains Practice Questions**

**1. What are the salient features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan launched by the Government of India for water conservation and water security?**

**Approach**

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the Jal Shakti Abhiyan
- Discuss the salient features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan.
- Conclude suitably.

**2. The strength sustenance of local institutions in India has shifted from their formative phase of 'Functions, Functionaries and Funds' to the contemporary**

**stage of 'Functionality'. Highlight the critical challenges faced by local institutions in terms of their functionality in recent times.**

### **Approach**

- Start the answer by briefly mentioning the establishment of local bodies in India.
- Discuss the various challenges faced by local institutions with respect to its functionality.
- Discuss some remedial measures.
- Conclude suitably.

