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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Will you ban convicts from polls, asks SC

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre whether it was “willing” to favour a **lifetime ban on contesting elections for people convicted of offences.**

What’s the issue?

A petition has been filed in the court urging the need for a level playing field. He said if a convicted person cannot be a government clerk, the same rule should apply to a politician.

Centre’s response:

The Government, in an affidavit filed by the Law Ministry in the court in December 2020, had rejected the idea of a lifetime ban on convicted persons contesting elections or becoming an office-bearer of a political party.

Why is the Centre against the lifetime ban?

- The Ministry had reasoned that **MPs and MLAs were not bound by specific “service conditions”**. They are bound by oath to serve citizens and country. They are bound by propriety, good conscience and interest of the nation.
- The Supreme Court in **Public Interest Foundation case of 2019** said “though criminalisation of politics is a bitter manifest truth, which is a termite to the citadel of democracy, be that as it may, the court cannot make the law”.
- The government has maintained that disqualification under **the Representation of the People Act of 1951** for the period of prison sentence and six years thereafter was enough for legislators.

2. Offences against MPs and MLAs- concerns

States have a large number of criminal cases pending against former and sitting legislators. Uttar Pradesh may host the “largest”.

EC’s views:

The Election Commission of India (ECI), in 2017, had endorsed the call for a lifetime ban in the apex court.

- It had argued that such a move would “champion the cause of decriminalisation of politics”.
- The ECI had then agreed in the Supreme Court that a ban would be in the spirit of fundamental rights of the Constitution, including the right to equality.

Need of the hour:

There should not be any delay in complying with a Supreme Court decision to have high courts constitute Special Sessions and Magisterial Courts to quicken the pace of long-pending criminal cases against legislators across the country.

In a series of directions to make **the right of information** of a voter “more effective and meaningful”, the court has ordered:

- The Election Commission of India launched a dedicated mobile app for voters to get details of the criminal history of the candidates at the touch of a button.
- The Commission formed a separate cell to monitor political parties on their compliance with the court’s judgment.

3. NFHS Survey

The **National Family and Health Survey (NFHS)-5**, the most comprehensive survey on socio-economic and health indicators in the country, has been released.

- The previous four rounds of the NFHS were conducted in 1992-93, 1998-99, 2005-06 and 2015-16.

Highlights of the Report:

Women outnumber men, fertility has decreased, and India is getting older: There were 1,020 women for 1000 men in the country in 2019-2021. This is the highest sex ratio for any NFHS survey as well as since the first modern synchronous census conducted in 1881.

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has also come down below the threshold at which the population is expected to replace itself from one generation to next. TFR was 2 in 2019-2021, just below the replacement fertility rate of 2.1.

Children's nutrition improved but at a slower pace: The share of stunted (low height for age), wasted (low weight for height), and underweight (low weight for age) children have all come down since the last NFHS conducted in 2015-16. However, the share of severely wasted children has not, nor has the share of overweight (high weight for height) or anaemic children.

India might be food secure, but nutrition is a problem for adults too: Though India might have achieved food security, 60% of Indians cannot afford nutritious diets.

About NFHS survey:

NFHS is a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India.

- All NFHSs have been conducted under the stewardship of **the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, Government of India, with **the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) Mumbai**, serving as the nodal agency.

NFHS-5 includes some new focal areas, such as death registration, pre-school education, expanded domains of child immunisation, components of micro-nutrients to children, menstrual hygiene, expanded age ranges for measuring hypertension and diabetes among all aged 15 years and above, which will give requisite input for strengthening existing programmes and evolving new strategies for policy intervention.

Every National Family Health Survey (NFHS) has two specific goals to fulfill. They are:

1. To provide essential data needed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other agencies for informed decision making and policy and programme intervention purposes.
2. To provide insight regarding important emerging health and family welfare issues.

4. The need for a proper Pre- Legislative Consultation Policy

Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy:

- The Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy was adopted in 2014. It was formulated based on the broad recommendations of the **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2002)**.
- The policy mandates a host of rules for the pre-legislative process.
 - Whenever the Government intends to make any new law (bills, rules, regulations, etc.), it must place a **draft version of the proposed bill in the public domain for at least 30 days**.
 - Along with the draft, a note explaining the law in simple language and justifying the proposal, its **financial implication, impact on the environment and fundamental rights**, a study on the social and financial costs of the bill, etc. should also be provided.
 - The respective departments should upload the summary of all the feedback that they receive on the circulated draft.

Significance:

- The Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy provides a forum for citizens and relevant stakeholders to interact with the policymakers.
- Public consultations **enhance transparency, increase accountability** and could result in the building of an **informed Government** where citizens are treated as partners and not as subjects.
- Thus the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy helps create an **institutionalised space for public participation in lawmaking processes**.

Concerns:

- Despite explicit rules laid out under the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy, a **large number of bills introduced in Parliament have been presented without any prior consultation**. Also, of the few bills that have been placed in the public domain for comment, the **majority of them did not adhere to the 30-day deadline**.
- The **absence of a statutory or constitutional right to pre-legislative consultation** seems to be the major reason behind the lax implementation of the policy.

5. Chinese firms eye Afghanistan's lithium

A number of Chinese companies have already begun “on-site inspections” of possible projects to tap **lithium** deposits in Afghanistan, having received the green light to do so from the Taliban regime.

Background:

Lithium is one of many resources in Afghanistan present in large deposits but as yet untapped, largely because of years of political instability and the lack of infrastructure.

Challenges ahead:

The security situation, not to mention a dire economic crisis including food shortages, are among the many challenges.

About Lithium:

It is a soft, silvery-white metal. Under standard conditions, **it is the lightest metal and the lightest solid element.**

It is highly **reactive and flammable, and must be stored in mineral oil.** It is an alkali metal and a **rare metal.**

Key Characteristics and Properties:

- It has the highest specific heat capacity of any solid element.
- Lithium's single valence electron allows it to be a good conductor of electricity.
- It is flammable and can even explode when exposed to air and water.

Uses:

1. Lithium is a key element for new technologies and finds its use in ceramics, glass, telecommunication and aerospace industries.
2. The well-known uses of Lithium are in Lithium ion batteries, lubricating grease, high energy additive to rocket propellants, optical modulators for mobile phones and as convertor to tritium used as a raw material for thermonuclear reactions i.e. fusion.

Prescribed substance:

The thermonuclear application makes Lithium as “Prescribed substance” under **the Atomic Energy Act, 1962** which permits AMD for exploration of Lithium in various geological domains of the country.

- Under **the Atomic Energy Act, 1962**, “Prescribed Substance” means any substance including any mineral which the Central Government may, by notification, prescribe, being a substance which in its opinion is or may be used for the production or use of atomic energy or research into matters connected therewith and includes uranium, plutonium, thorium, beryllium, deuterium or any of their respective derivatives or compounds or any other materials containing any of the aforesaid substances.

6. More hospital births, but limited gains in childhood nutrition: NFHS

- Results of the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5** were made public recently.

Details:

Decreasing fertility rate:

- As per the latest National Family Health Survey, India’s total fertility rate has slipped below the replacement level for the first time. As per the NFHS 5, India has hit a **Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0**. This marks a decrease from the 2.2 TFR in the NFHS-4. The urban TFR is 1.6 and rural 2.1.
- **A TFR of about 2.1 children per woman is called replacement-level fertility.** The replacement-level fertility is the fertility rate that keeps a population stable over time by balancing births with deaths. If replacement level fertility is sustained over a sufficiently long period, each generation will exactly replace itself. The replacement-level fertility rate is considered essential to

keep population growth in check, and has been linked to better education of women, less unmet need for family planning and reduced child mortality.

- This also marks a significant **success for India's family-planning programme** based on non-coercive measures of population control like the adoption of modern contraceptive methods.

Institutional deliveries:

- The NFHS-5 notes an **increase in the proportion of institutional births** - increased from 78.9% in NFHS-4 to the current level of 88.6%.
- This development augurs well for efforts to decrease the maternal mortality rate.

Limited improvements in child nutrition:

- Despite some degree of improvement in childhood nutrition parameters, the gains are limited as compared to National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 4.
- **Stunting and wasting in children** have only dropped by a maximum of three percentage points, as compared to NFHS 4.

Increasing anaemia incidence:

- The **proportion of anaemic children (6-59 months) has increased**. Also, anaemia incidence in women and men has also increased as compared to the previous survey.

Other important observations:

- The proportion of children (12-23 months) who were fully vaccinated and children under six months who were exclusively breastfed also showed a sharp improvement.
- **Overweight (higher Body Mass Index than ideal) women and men (15-49) increased** by around 4 percentage points. Abnormal BMIs are linked to an increase in obesity and other non-communicable diseases.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

7. Trade Unions push for repeal of labour codes

Over a year since Parliament passed **four labour codes (on wages, social security, occupational safety and industrial relations)**, the Centre is still in the process of notifying the rules to implement the laws and has not set a date for the roll-out.

- Trade unions, however, have planned to intensify their agitation this week against the codes in the wake of the government's decision to repeal the three farm laws.

What are the demands by trade unions?

The two codes we accepted – on wages and social security – be implemented immediately and the two to which we had objections – industrial relations and occupational safety – be reviewed.

About the labour codes

The new set of regulations consolidates 44 labour laws under 4 categories of Codes namely, Wage Code; Social Security Code; Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code; and the Industrial Relations Code.

- The Parliament has already passed all the four Codes and it has also received the President's assent.

The 4 codes are:

1. **The Code on Wages, 2019**, applying to all the employees in organized as well as unorganized sector, aims to regulate wage and bonus payments in all employments and aims at providing equal remuneration to employees performing work of a similar nature in every industry, trade, business, or manufacture.
2. **The Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, 2020** seeks to regulate the health and safety conditions of workers in establishments with 10 or more workers, and in all mines and docks.
3. **The Code on Social Security, 2020** consolidates nine laws related to social security and maternity benefits.
4. **The Code on Industrial Relations, 2020** seeks to consolidate three labour laws namely, The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947: The Trade Unions Act, 1926 and The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946. The Code aims to improve the business environment in the country largely by reducing the labour compliance burden of industries.

Issues with these codes:

- The work hours provisions for regular workers do not provide flexibility to fix work hours beyond eight hours a day.
- The codes have also missed laying down uniform provisions for part-time employees.
- There are also provisions that impact employee wages.
- The labour codes also chalk out fines on businesses for non-compliance of provisions, second offences and officer-in-default. In the current pandemic situation, a majority of small businesses are in no position to adopt and implement the labour code changes.

8. Digital Tax pact

India and the US have decided on a “transitional approach” to **digital service tax** imposed by the government.

- The terms of the deal will be the same that were thrashed out between the US and Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK last week.
- The pact provides relief from the proposed American retaliatory action, while comforting tech giants such as Amazon, Google and Facebook that face the levy.

What’s the issue?

- The US had announced in January this year that India’s equalisation levy was discriminatory and actionable, and in March, proposed 25 per cent retaliatory tariffs on about 40 products including shrimps, wooden furniture, gold, silver and jewellery items and basmati rice.
- The levies could add up to about \$55 million which was the approximate amount of the DST payable by US-based companies such as Google, Amazon, LinkedIn and Facebook, as per calculations made by the USTR.

Background:

- In a major reform of the international tax system, on October 8 this year, 136 countries, including India, have agreed to an overhaul of global tax norms to

ensure that multinationals pay taxes wherever they operate and at a minimum 15% rate.

- However, the deal requires countries to remove all digital services tax and other similar unilateral measures and to commit not to introduce such measures in the future.

Significance:

This compromise represents a pragmatic solution that helps ensure that countries can focus their collective efforts on the successful implementation of **the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework's historic agreement on a new multilateral tax regime.**

Two pillars of framework:

1. **Dealing with transnational and digital companies.** This pillar ensures that large multinational enterprises, including digital companies, pay tax where they operate and earn profits.
2. **Dealing with low-tax jurisdictions to address cross-border profit shifting and treaty shopping.** This pillar seeks to put a floor under competition among countries through a global minimum corporate tax rate, currently proposed at 15%.

Expected outcomes:

If implemented, countries such as the Netherlands and Luxembourg that offer lower tax rates, and so-called tax havens such as Bahamas or British Virgin Islands, could lose their sheen.

Impact/implications on India:

India will have to roll back the equalisation levy that it imposes on companies such as Google, Amazon and Facebook when the global tax regime is implemented.

9. Pointers that India is witnessing a K- shaped recovery

An assessment of the type of economic recovery after the ravages of the pandemic.

V-Shaped Recovery: Characteristics

It is a type of economic recession and recovery that resembles a “V” shape. It depicts the shape of a chart of economic measures when examining recessions and recoveries. This type of recovery involves a sharp rise back to an earlier peak after a sharp decline in these metrics. A V-shaped recovery is the quickest and one of the most ideal. In this type of recovery, the economy falls quickly but also recovers quickly – it doesn’t remain stagnant for very long. For example, the recoveries that followed the recessions of 1920-21 and 1953 in the U.S.

The V-Shaped vs K-shaped debate:

- There has been great discussions and speculations about the economic recovery for quite a while, ever since the pandemic.
- However, experts are divided on the type where for some it is more K-shaped than V-shaped, with various groups and industries recovering much quicker than others.
- It is also corroborated by the fact that the pandemic distinctly affected different sectors.

Impacts of Regressive Taxation:

- The decision to lower the corporate tax rate to provide for an ecosystem for economic growth has resulted in recovery in some sectors.
- The high excise duties and tax rates on fuels and consumer items has led to inflation and created more problems for the lower and middle class.
- The combined effects of these policies indicate that a K-shaped recovery could be visible, if at all.

Job loss and MGNREGA:

- The pandemic resulted in huge unemployment in the informal economy and led to further destitution in the country.
- The 34% cut in the allocation for MGNREGA in the Union Budget this year has aggravated the situation.
- The delay in payments reduces the chances of timely purchase of essentials adding salt to the wounds.

Government stimulus and economic growth:

- There is a direct relationship between government stimulus and economic growth and the money multiplier effect shows this phenomenon.

- Providing disposable income to those who have more tendency to spend than save will lead to growth in the economy.
- The Government needs to increase progressive taxes and reduce regressive taxes to ease the financial pressure on lower-income households.

Way forward:

We can observe how the financial situation got worsened due to the rising prices of essential goods affecting the lives of the majority of the population. Therefore, the right economic policies coupled with social security measures will lead to such a recovery which will not benefit only a fraction of the society but the masses and make these V vs K-shaped recovery debates insignificant.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. 'Bangladesh pact example of mutual respect'

- Indian Army chief's speech during the seminar on '**India-Bangladesh: 50 years of friendship**' organised by the Centre for Land Warfare Studies.
 - 2021 marks the diamond jubilee of the **1971 war** and also 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Details:

- Indian Army chief pointed out how the **resolution of the land and maritime boundary issues between India and Bangladesh by mutual agreement** marks a high point of the bilateral relationship but also makes for a good example in international relations on resolving border disputes through mutual negotiations and with a constructive outlook.
 - **Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) 2014 verdict** on the dispute regarding the delimitation of the maritime boundary between India and Bangladesh had awarded Bangladesh a substantial proportion of the disputed territory. This decision was accepted by India.
 - The **2015 Land Boundary Agreement** resulted in the exchange of enclaves between India and Bangladesh. In addition, the choice of

citizenship in either country was offered by states to enclave residents. This played a leading role in resolving the decades-old issue between the two neighbours.

- The Army Chief without naming China also pointed out how some countries are trying to alter the status quo by force, bypassing traditional norms and protocols and with complete disregard to the territorial integrity of others.
 - The comments come in the backdrop of continuing negotiations between India and China for disengagement and de-escalation towards ending the ongoing stand-off in eastern Ladakh.
- The Army Chief called for three 'Ms' – **Mutual respect, mutual trust and mutual commitment to the rules-based order.**

2. What is Pre- Legislative Consultation Policy?

The Union Government has listed 29 Bills (26 new and three pending) to be tabled in the winter session of Parliament.

What is Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy?

- In 2014, the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy was adopted, mandating a host of rules, including that whenever the Government makes any law, it must place a draft version of it in the public domain for at least 30 days.
- This policy provides a forum for citizens and relevant stakeholders to interact with policymakers.
- The policy also says that along with the draft, a note explaining the law in simple language and justifying the proposal, its financial implication, impact on the environment and fundamental rights, a study on the social and financial costs of the bill, etc. should be uploaded.
- The respective departments should also upload the summary of all the feedback that they receive on the circulated draft.

Why in news?

- Since the inception of the policy, 227 of the 301 bills introduced in Parliament have been presented without any prior consultation.
- Of the 74 placed in the public domain for comment, at least 40 did not adhere to the 30-day deadline.

Inception of the PLCP

- The PLCP was formulated based on the broad recommendations of the National Advisory Council in 2013 and the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2002).
- It aimed to create an institutionalized space for public participation in lawmaking processes.

Significance of the policy

- This policy provides a forum for citizens and relevant stakeholders to interact with the policymakers in the executive during the initial stages of lawmaking.
- Protests in the recent past over laws such as the farm laws, the RTI Amendment Act, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, etc. have all highlighted that there is discontent among relevant stakeholders and the public at large since they were not looped in while framing such laws.
- Public consultations enhance transparency, increase accountability and could result in the building of an informed Government where citizens are treated as partners and not as subjects.

Status of its implementation

- During the 16th Lok Sabha (May 2014 to May 2019) 186 bills were introduced in Parliament, of which 142 saw no consultation prior to introduction.
- From the 44 bills placed in the public domain for receipt of comments, 24 did not adhere to the 30-day deadline.
- During the 17th Lok Sabha (June 2019 to present), 115 bills were introduced in Parliament, of which 85 saw no consultation prior to introduction.
- From the 30 bills placed in the public domain for receipt of comment, 16 of them did not adhere to the 30-day deadline.

Why is implementation difficult?

- Though it is required that the mandates of an approved policy be heeded by all Government departments, the absence of a statutory or constitutional right has watered down its effect.
- The effective implementation of the policy requires subsequent amendments in executive procedural guidelines like the Manual of Parliamentary Procedures and Handbook on Writing Cabinet Notes.

Conclusion

- Incorporation of pre-legislative consultation in the procedures of the Cabinet, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha etc. should be prioritized.

- Similarly, it must be required of ministers while introducing the bill to place an addendum note on the details of the pre-legislative consultation.
- Empowering citizens with a right to participate in pre-legislative consultations through a statutory and constitutional commitment could be a gamechanger.

3. 'India first responder in Indian Ocean Region'

- Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the 5th World Congress on Disaster Management, the Indian Defence Minister highlighted how **India had been the “first responder” in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** in Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) situations.
 - India’s unique position in the IOR, complemented by the capability of its armed forces, enables India to be the first responder in the region. India has also been regularly conducting exercises to deepen the HADR co-operation and coordination with neighbouring countries with a focus on sharing expertise and building capabilities.
- Highlighting how the COVID-19 pandemic had reaffirmed the **“centrality of multilateralism” in the interconnected world**, the Defence Minister called for strengthening multilateralism not only for matters of international security but also disaster management.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. A multi-pronged approach to end child marriage

Reports suggest that more child marriages have been noticed during the Covid pandemic.

Consequences of child marriage

- **Violation of human rights:** Child marriage violates girls’ human rights. It makes them almost invisible to policy.
- **Impact on education and health:** It cuts short their education, harms their health, and limits their ability to fulfil themselves as productive individuals participating fully in society.
- The low domestic status of teenage wives typically condemns them to long hours of domestic labour; poor nutrition and anaemia; social isolation;

domestic violence; early childbearing; and few decision-making powers within the home.

- **Malnutrition:** Poor education, malnutrition, and early pregnancy lead to **low birth weight of babies**, perpetuating the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.
- The costs of child marriage include **teenage pregnancy, population growth, child stunting, poor learning outcomes for children and the loss of women's participation in the workforce.**

What should be the policy interventions to end child marriage?

- **CCTs: Conditional cash transfers (CCTs)** have been the main policy instrument introduced by most states in the last two decades to end child marriage.
- CCTs alone cannot change social norms. We need a **comprehensive approach.**
- **Legislative measures:** Legislation is one part of the approach.
- Karnataka amended the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2017**, declaring every child marriage, making it a **cognisable offence.**
- **Expansion of education:** These include **expansion of secondary education**, access to safe and affordable public transport, and support for young women to apply their education to earn a livelihood.
- Expansion of education goes beyond access. Girls must be able to attend school regularly, remain there, and achieve.
- States can leverage their network of residential schools, girls' hostels, and public transport, especially in underserved areas, to ensure that teenage girls do not get pushed out of education.
- Teachers should hold regular gender equality conversations with high school girls and boys to shape progressive attitudes that will sustain into adulthood.
- **Empowerment measures:** Empowerment measures, too, are required to end child marriage, such as community engagement through programmes like **Mahila Samakhya.**
- **Children's village assemblies in the 2.5 lakh gram panchayats** across India can provide a platform for children to voice their concerns.
- **Government actions driving social change:** Field bureaucrats across multiple departments, including teachers, anganwadi supervisors, panchayat and revenue staff, all of whom interact with rural communities, should be notified as child marriage prohibition officers.
- **Decentralising birth and marriage registration:** Most important of all, decentralising birth and marriage registration to gram panchayats will protect women and girls with essential age and marriage documents, thus better enabling them to claim their rights.

Conclusion

We need to adopt a comprehensive approach to deal with the problem of child marriage. The approach should include focus on education and along with legal measures.

5. The growth and inclusion potential of India's telecom sector

Shortly after the Cabinet announced nine structural and procedural reforms in September to address the deep financial woes of telcos, Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel hiked their tariff.

About the package for telecom sector

- The telecom relief package announced by the government in September supports proposals that have been repeatedly presented to the government by the regulator, industry associations and think tanks.
- **Risk of duopoly:** With the risk of a duopoly looming large, the government was pushed to take up these long-pending decisions that **included nine key changes**.
- **Provisions in the package:** Besides providing immediate **relief on payment of licence fee** and penalties due to the government, the package **increased FDI limits**, extended licence tenure to **30 years from 20**, removed **charges on spectrum-sharing** and proposed timelines for spectrum auctions.
- The package will undoubtedly have a **positive short-term impact** and perhaps **safeguard competition** in the future.

Reforms and challenge of addressing the inequality

- **From socialist to market-oriented economy:** In July this year, we celebrated three decades of India's 1991 reforms, one that catapulted India from being a **socialist economy with a heart but no trickle-down**, to a market-oriented economy with a mind but also very little trickle-down.
- **Inequality** has been a feature of both models.
- The 2018 Oxfam report showed that **10 per cent of the richest Indians took home 77.4 per cent of wealth** (compared to 73 per cent the year before).
- Moreover, 58 per cent of India's wealth was in the hands of 1 per cent of the country's population.
- **Changes in the modes of distribution:** In the pre-1991 period, the principal modes of redistribution were taxation and public sector operations.

- In the post-1991 period, it has been a **combination of taxation, technology, smartphones** and the associated direct benefit transfers.

Role of telecom sector in addressing the challenge of achieving growth and inclusion

- **High growth dividend of telecom sector:** Every 10 per cent increase in investment in telecom, for example, leads to a 3.2 per cent increase in GDP growth for India.
- Not only is the growth dividend positive, **it is large.**
- **Mobile as a mean of financial integration:** At the same time, the mobile phone has become a means for sophisticated financial integration, as shown by the expanding usage of pre-paid payment instruments and mobile banking.
- The Jan-Dhan Yojana (JDY) attempts to include the **marginalised and unbanked** through technology.
- As of October 2021, a total of 440 million bank accounts have been opened and more than 310 million RuPay cards have been issued under the latter, indicating the large unmet demand for banking services.
- **Making transfers predictable and targeted:** The **Jan-Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM)** trinity ties the Aadhaar number to an active bank account, making income transfers **predictable and targeted.**
- There is already evidence that payments through Aadhaar-linked bank accounts have increased efficiency and reduced leakages.

Way forward

- **Predictable and less erratic telecom policy:** The benefits of digitalisation could have been much larger and more widespread had telecom policy been more predictable and less erratic.
- That Indian reforms more often than not happen on the back of a crisis is true for the telecom sector.
- The principal motive of the **New Telecom Policy of 1999** was to rescue the deeply indebted sector of its own reckless bidding by replacing the fixed licence fee system with a revenue-sharing regime.
- In hindsight, it was the right thing to do since it threatened business continuity.
- The move to auction spectrum “for all times to come” in 2008 was necessitated by the administrative bungling in spectrum assignment.
- **Quick adaptation:** A question we pose is why did it take a crisis – a grave one at that – to push the needle on policy change?
- It is a reasonable expectation of policy to adapt quickly and not wait for a crisis to emerge.

Conclusion

The seemingly naïve question about the adaptation in policies may not be as credulous for the intensely dynamic digital markets. For there is no point shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted.

6. Trilateral Exercise 'Dosti'

The 15th edition of the biennial trilateral coast guard exercise 'Dosti' involving India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka is underway in the Maldives.

Exercise Dosti

- The aim of this exercise is to further fortify the friendship, enhance mutual operational capability, and exercise interoperability and to build cooperation.
- Both the Maldives and Sri Lanka are of strategic importance to New Delhi and to its maritime security interests.
- 2021 marks 30 years since these exercises were first launched.

Significance of the exercise

- These exercises help during joint operations and missions undertaken by countries and also help enhance interoperability.
- Although piracy is not a major issue in this part of the Indian ocean, these kinds of exercises also help coast guards with training for possibilities.
- These exercises help develop a better understanding of the other nation's coast guard operations and how to enhance coordination during different kinds of missions.

What it involves

- The scope of these exercises are wide-ranging.
- India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives have agreed to work on what they called the "four pillars" of security cooperation.
- These involved the areas of marine security, human trafficking, counter-terrorism and cyber security.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. He started a movement called 'Ulgulan', or 'The Great Tumult'. Popularly known as Dharti Abba, he also started a new faith. His birth anniversary is recognised as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

Who is the Tribal Leader being talked about?

- Bhagwan Birsa Munda
- Tirut Singh
- Kanhu Murmu
- Sidhu Murmu

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Birsa Munda was an Indian tribal freedom fighter and religious leader who belonged to the Munda tribe. He spearheaded a tribal religious movement that arose in the Bengal Presidency (now Jharkhand) in the late 19th century and even started his own faith. He was popularly known as Dharti Abba or the Earth Father among his followers.
- Birsa started a movement called 'Ulgulan', or 'The Great Tumult'. His struggle against the exploitation and discrimination against tribals led to a big hit against the British government in the form of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act being passed in 1908. The Act restricted the passing on of land from the tribal people to non-tribals.
- In honour of his contributions to India's freedom struggle, his birth anniversary is recognised as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

2. With reference to the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996, consider the following statements:

1. It was enacted after Bhuria Committee recommendations in 1995.
2. It empowers gram sabhas to play a key role in approving development plans.

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

- After the Bhuria Committee recommendations in 1995, PESA Act 1996 came into existence for ensuring tribal self-rule for people living in scheduled areas of India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- PESA empowers gram sabhas to play a key role in approving development plans and controlling all social sectors. This includes management of:
 - Resources over jal, jangal, zameen (water, forest and land)
 - Minor forest produce
 - Human resources: Processes and personnel who implement policies
 - Managing local markets
 - Preventing land alienation
 - Regulating intoxicants among other things
 - **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

3. With reference to the Gallantry Award, consider the following statements:

1. Gallantry Awards were instituted by India after the Indo-China War.
2. Maha Vir Chakra is India's highest military decoration award during wartime
3. Ashok Chakra is the highest military award during peacetime.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : C

Explanation

- Post-Independence, first three gallantry awards namely Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra and Vir Chakra were **instituted by the government of India on January 26th 1950** which were deemed to have effect from 15th August, 1947. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**

- Param Vir Chakra is India's highest military decoration awarded for displaying distinguished acts of valour during wartime whether on land, at sea or in the air. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- Maha Vir Chakra is the second highest gallantry award for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy.
- Ashok Chakra is the highest military award during peacetime for valour, courageous action or sacrifice. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

4. With reference to the White dwarfs, consider the following statements:

1. Every Star when it uses all its hydrogen fuel turns into white dwarfs.
2. Stars fuse hydrogen in their cores into helium through nuclear fusion reactions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : B

Explanation

- White dwarfs are **stars that have burned up all of the hydrogens** they once used as nuclear fuel.
 - When the hydrogen, used as fuel, vanishes and fusion slows, **gravity causes the star to collapse** in on itself into white dwarfs.
 - The stars which are less massive than **Chandrasekhar Limit** will turn into white dwarfs. The stars are more massive than **Chandrasekhar Limit, will turn into a thermonuclear supernova. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- **In a nuclear fusion reaction, the nuclei of two atoms combine to create a new atom.** Stars fuse hydrogen in their cores into helium through nuclear fusion reactions. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

5. "Bharat Gaurav" scheme was recently in news, it is related to-

- A To tap the huge potential of tourism
- B To empower the Panchayats

C To achieve the ODF+ across the different states in India
D To increase the access of services for the migrants

Answer : A

Explanation

- Recently, the Indian Railways has announced the new scheme 'Bharat Gaurav' to tap the huge potential of tourism. **Hence, option A is correct.**
- Under the scheme, now trains have a third segment for tourism. Till now, the Railways had passenger segments and goods segments.
- These trains are not regular trains that will run as per a timetable but will be more on the lines of the Ramayana Express being run by the IRCTC.

6. Arrange the following stages of budget enactment in the correct sequence:

1. General discussion
2. Passing of Appropriation Bill
3. Passing of Finance Bill
4. Voting on demands for grants
5. Presentation in Parliament

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

A 1-2-3-4-5

B 5-1-4-2-3

C 5-1-4-3-2

D 5-1-3-4-2

Answer :B

Explanation

- The budget goes through the following six stages in the Parliament:
 - **Presentation of budget:** Since 2017, the presentation of the budget has been advanced to 1st of February.
 - **General discussion:** The general discussion on budget takes place in both the Houses of Parliament.

- **Scrutiny by departmental committees:** After the general discussion on the budget is over the 24 departmental standing committees of Parliament examine and discuss in detail the demands for grants of the concerned ministers and prepare reports on them.
- **Voting on demands for grants:** The Lok Sabha takes up voting of demands for grants. The voting of demands for grants is the exclusive privilege of the Lok Sabha.
- **Passing of appropriation bill:** An appropriation bill is introduced to provide for the appropriation, out of the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **Passing of finance bill:** The Finance Bill is introduced to give effect to the financial proposals of the Government of India for the following year. **Hence, option B is correct.**

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. Peasant movements of the twentieth century in India were deeply influenced by the ongoing struggle for national freedom. Discuss the important features of these movements.

Approach

- Briefly explain the change in the characteristics of peasant movements in the 20th century as compared to earlier peasant movements.
- Discuss the features of peasant movements with respect to the development of national freedom struggle.
- Discuss the role of national leaders in the formation of peasant organisation and their influence on peasant movements.
- Highlight the nature of important peasant movements in twentieth-century across India.
- Conclude the answer by summarising the overall influence of the peasant movement.

Q2. The Jurisdiction of the Supreme court under Article 142 supersedes the executive and the legislature. Discuss (150 words)

Approach

- Explain the provision of Article 142 highlighting the extent of jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under it.

- Discuss how this article enables judicial overreach citing some examples like verdicts in the Coal block case and the Supreme Court's intervention in the conservation of Taj Mahal.
- Briefly mention the pros and cons of Article 142 on the basis of the principle of check and balance.
- Conclude by highlighting the need to strike a balance between three pillars of government without encroaching on each other's area.

