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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Two principles of Justice

This newscard is an excerpt of the original article published in TH.

Two principles of Justice

- The concept, so-called, of “two principles of justice”, is synonymous with the name of John Rawls, a highly influential American liberal political philosopher of the last century.
- The concept of two principles forms an encapsulation of the core principles of:
- Freedom and equality embodied in the constitutions of any contemporary liberal democratic society
- As such, they have acquired pre-eminence in a wide range of academic disciplines and in the arena of public policymaking.

What are the two principles?

- The first of Rawls’ two principles says that every citizen has the same claim to a scheme of equal basic liberties, which must also be compatible with those of every other citizen.
- It enumerates an extensive list of basic civil and political rights, including a person’s freedom of conscience, expression and association; the right to a basic income; and the right to exercise the franchise.
- Their resonance with the practical world of politics needs no emphasis; consider the chapter on fundamental rights in any constitution.
- The second of Rawls’ two principles grapples with the underlying inequalities of social and economic institutions.

How can these be reasonably justified to free and equal citizens?

- In order to be morally defensible, the institutions must satisfy two conditions.
1. First, they must guarantee fair equality of opportunities for competition to positions of public office and employment.
 2. Second, social and economic inequalities must be arranged in a manner that they work to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society.

- This latter postulate is Rawls' famous "difference principle".

Significance of this principle

- The political significance of Rawls' two principles of justice obtains equally in the relative weight and primacy he assigns to their different components.
- Between them, the first principle is accorded absolute priority over the second.
- That is to say, the primacy of the equal basic liberties of citizens is non-negotiable in a democratic society.
- The entitlement of each to the various liberties is as critical as they are universal and non-discriminatory.
- Within the second principle, the first part takes precedence over the second.
- In other words, public institutions could not appear legitimate in the eyes of citizens unless everybody could reasonably expect to enjoy the fruits of fair equality of opportunities.

2. Law Commission of India

The Government has informed the Supreme Court that the appointment of Chairperson and Members of the 22nd Law Commission of India is under consideration.

Why in news?

- The setting up of the 22nd Law Commission was constituted by the Government on February 21, 2020.
- However, no progress has been made in the appointments till date.
- The Government invoked the 'doctrine of separation of power', which says that one arm of governance should not encroach into that of another.

Issues over appointment

- The last chairman of the law commission was retired Supreme Court judge, Justice B.S. Chauhan, who completed his tenure on 31 August 2018.
- Subsequently, the Commission has not been reconstituted.
- In February 2020, the Government of India announced its intention to reconstitute the Commission with no visible progress.

About Law Commission

- Law Commission of India is a currently-defunct executive body established by an order of the Government of India.

- The Commission's function is to research and advise the GoI on legal reform, and is composed of legal experts, and headed by a retired judge.
- The commission is established for a fixed tenure and works as an advisory body to the Ministry of Law and Justice.
- The last chairman of the Commission retired in August 2018, and since then, it has not been reconstituted.

Colonial Background

- The first Law Commission was established during colonial rule in India, by the East India Company under the Charter Act of 1833.
- It was then presided by Lord Macaulay.
- After that, three more Commissions were established in pre-independent India.

Post-Independence functioning

- The first Law Commission of independent India was established in 1955 for a three-year term.
- Since then, twenty-one more Commissions have been established.

Major reforms undertaken

- The First Law Commission under Macaulay suggested various enactments to the British Government, most of which were passed and enacted and are still in force in India.
- These include the Indian Penal Code (first submitted in 1837 but enacted in 1860 and still in force), Criminal Procedure Code (enacted in 1898, repealed and succeeded by the Criminal Procedure Code of 1973), etc.
- Thereafter three more Law Commissions were established which made a number of other recommendations the Indian Evidence Act (1872) and Indian Contract Act (1872), etc. being some of the significant ones.

Role in legal reforms

The Law Commission has been a key to law reform in India.

- Its role has been both advisory and critical of the government's policies
- In a number of decisions, the Supreme Court has referred to the work done by the commission and followed its recommendations.
- The Commission seeks to simplify procedures to curb delays and improve standards of justice.
- It also strives to promote an accountable and citizen-friendly government that is transparent and ensures the people's right to information.

3. World Inequality Report

The 2022 World Inequality Report (WIR) has been released.

What you need to know about the WIR?

- Released by **the World Inequality Lab**, a research center at the Paris School of Economics.
- The WIR studies different kinds of financial data to find out how a country's (and the world's) income and wealth are distributed.

Significance of the report- why do we need a study on inequalities?

This is vital information because in most democracies, the wealthy can, and do, transform their economic power into political power, and therefore, the higher the inequality, the greater the likelihood that an affluent minority could end up determining the fate of the majority. Availability of accurate data about levels of inequality can help generate public opinion in favour of policy measures that can mitigate them.

Key findings of the 2022 report:

- **The gap between the rich and the poor in terms of share of national income is quite large, and growing rapidly** as a result of government policies that favour the affluent elite. The richest 10% of the global population takes home 52% of the global income, whereas the poorest 50% got only 8.5% of it.
- **Global wealth inequities are worse than income inequalities.** While the poorest 50% own just 2% of the global wealth, the richest 10% own 76% of all the wealth.
- **Inequality between countries was narrowing while inequality within countries was increasing.** While the gap between the average incomes of the richest 10% of countries and the average incomes of the poorest 50% of countries has dropped from 50x to less than 40x, the gap between the average incomes of the top 10% and the bottom 50% of individuals within countries has almost doubled, from 8.5x to 15x.

- **Countries are growing richer, governments are becoming poorer:** The share of privately owned wealth in national wealth was rising, while that of public wealth (buildings, universities, roads, hospitals etc) was shrinking.

Inequality across the continents:

While Europe was the region with the least amount of inequality (the income share of the top 10% was 36%), inequality was highest in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where the share of the top 10% was 58%.

Income inequality in India:

India is one of the world's most unequal countries, with the top 1% getting 21.7% of the national income.

Top 10% of Indians capture 57% of the national income, while the share of the bottom 50% is only 13%.

While the average national income of the bottom 50% stood at ₹53,610, the top 10% earned more than 20 times more, ₹11,66,520.

Inequality in India- Before and after 1947:

Income inequality in India today is worse than it was under British rule. Under the British (1858-1947), the top 10% got about 50% of the national income (lower than today's 57%).

- In the decades after India got independence, socialistic economic policies reduced income inequality, bringing the share of the top 10% to 35-40%.
- But starting from the 1980s, the report states, "deregulation and liberalisation policies have led to one of the most extreme increases in income and wealth inequality observed in the world."

Overall learning from the report:

The report points out that inequality and poverty are not inevitable but mainly the effect of policy choices.

It tracks how inequalities burgeoned around the globe from the 1980s onward – in contrast to the previous three decades – following the liberalisation programmes that were implemented in different countries.

- It recommends **wealth taxes on the super-rich and a robust redistribution regime as policy measures** that could arrest, if not reverse, the current trend of rising inequality.

4. Nod for Ken-Betwa link project

The Union Cabinet has approved the funding and implementation of **the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project** at a cost of ₹44,605 crore at the 2020-21 price level.

- The Centre would fund ₹39,317 crore for the project, with ₹36,290 crore as a grant and ₹3,027 crore as a loan.

About the Project:

The project involves **transferring of water from the Ken river to the Betwa river** through the construction of **Daudhan dam** and a canal linking the two rivers, **the Lower Orr Project, Kotha Barrage and the Bina Complex Multipurpose Project.**

Significance of the Project:

- The project is slated to irrigate 10.62 lakh hectares annually, provide drinking water supply to 62 lakh people and generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power.
- The project will be of immense benefit to the water-starved **Bundelkhand region**, spread across Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
- The project is expected **to boost socio-economic prosperity** in the backward Bundelkhand region on account of increased agricultural activities and employment generation.
- It would also **help in arresting distress migration from this region.**

Concerns associated:

Several obstacles have dogged the project.

- The project will partly submerge **the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh** and affect the habitat of vultures and jackals.
- After years of protests, it was finally cleared by the apex wildlife regulator, the National Board for Wildlife, in 2016.

Benefits of interlinking:

1. Enhances water and food security.
2. Proper utilisation of water.
3. Boost to agriculture.
4. Disaster mitigation.
5. Boost to transportation.

Key facts:

- **Ken and Betwa rivers** originate in MP and are the tributaries of Yamuna.
- Ken meets with Yamuna in Banda district of UP and with Betwa in Hamirpur district of UP.
- Rajghat, Paricha and Matatila dams are over Betwa river.
- Ken River passes through Panna tiger reserve.

5. Poshan Abhiyaan

The Government has informed the Lok Sabha that State Governments and Union Territories have utilised only 56% of the total funds released under the **Poshan Abhiyan** or Nutrition Mission in the past three years.

- Out of a total amount of ₹5,312 crore disbursed by the Centre between financial years 2019 to 2021, a sum of ₹2,985 crore was utilised.
- The number of “severe acute malnourished” children in the country has become less than 15 lakh.

About Poshan Abhiyaan:

- The programme seeks to improve nutritional outcomes for **children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.**

- Launched in 2018 with specific targets to be achieved by 2022.

It aims to reduce:

- Stunting and wasting by 2% a year (total 6% until 2022) among children.
- Anaemia by 3% a year (total 9%) among children, adolescent girls and pregnant women and lactating mothers.

The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

Background:

More than a third of the children under five face stunting and wasting and 40% aged between one and four are anaemic. Over 50% of pregnant and other women were found to be anaemic, said the National Family Health Survey 4 released in 2016.

Suggestions made by NITI Aayog:

- The programme must be stepped up to meet the targets set by the Centre to reduce stunting, wasting and anaemia by 2022.
- Graduate to a **POSHAN-plus strategy** which apart from continued strengthening the four pillars of the Abhiyaan also requires renewed focus on other social determinants in addition to addressing the governance challenges of NHM/ICDS delivery mechanisms.
- Lay as much emphasis on complementary feeding as it does on breastfeeding. This can help avert 60% of the total stunting cases in India.

POSHAN 2.0:

- It is an umbrella scheme covering the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (Anganwadi Services, Poshan Abhiyan, Scheme For Adolescent Girls, National Creche Scheme).
- It was announced in Union Budget 2021-22 by merging supplementary nutrition programmes and the POSHAN Abhiyaan.

- It was launched to strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcome, with renewed focus on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity to disease and malnutrition in the country.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. Cabinet nods for Ken-Betwa Interlinking Project

The Union Cabinet has approved the funding and implementation of the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project at the 2020-21 price level.

Ken-Betwa Interlinking Project

- The Ken-Betwa Link Project is the first project under the National Perspective Plan for the interlinking of rivers.
 - Under this project, water from the Ken River will be transferred to the Betwa River. Both these rivers are tributaries of the river Yamuna.
 - The project is being managed by India's National Water Development Agency (NWDA), under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
 - Implementation of the project
1. Phase-I: Daudhan dam complex and its appurtenances like Low Level Tunnel, High Level Tunnel, Ken-Betwa link canal and Power houses
 2. Phase-II: Lower Orr dam, Bina complex project and Kotha Barrage

Utility of the Project

- **Irrigation:** The project is slated to irrigate 10.62 lakh hectares annually, provide drinking water supply to 62 lakh people and generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power.
- **Water supply:** The project will be of immense benefit to the water-starved Bundelkhand region, spread across Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Agricultural boost:** The project is expected to boost socio-economic prosperity in the backward Bundelkhand region on account of increased agricultural activities and employment generation.
- **Addressing Rural Distress:** It would also help in arresting distress migration from this region.

Many hurdles

- **Submergence of critical wildlife habitat:** The project will partly submerge the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh and affect the habitat of vultures and jackals.
- **Clearance:** After years of protests, it was finally cleared by the apex wildlife regulator, the National Board for Wildlife, in 2016.
- **Water sharing disputes:** Then UP and MP could not agree on how water would be shared, particularly in the non-monsoonal months.

7. Unified payments interface (UPI)

The UPI facility will soon be extended to feature phone users. At the moment, the **unified payments interface (UPI)** – the single largest retail payments system in the country in terms of volume of transactions for small-value payments – is available only for smartphones.

Need for:

RBI is doing this to further deepen digital payments and make them more inclusive, ease transactions for consumers, facilitate greater participation of retail customers in various segments of financial markets and to enhance the capacity of service providers.

What is UPI?

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is an instant real-time payment system, allowing users to transfer money on a real-time basis, across multiple bank accounts without revealing details of one's bank account to the other party.

- UPI is currently the biggest among **the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** operated systems including National Automated Clearing House (NACH), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), Aadhaar enabled Payment System (AePS), Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), RuPay etc.
- **The top UPI apps** include PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and BHIM, the latter being the Government offering.

What is BHIM?

Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) is India's digital payment application (app) that works through UPI, a system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application.

- Developed by **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- Allows real time fund transfer.
- Launched in December, 2016.

The BHIM app has **three levels of authentication**:

1. For one, the app binds with a device's ID and mobile number.
2. Second a user needs to sync whichever bank account (UPI or non-UPI enabled) in order to the conduct transaction.
3. Third, when a user sets up the app they are asked to create a pin which is needed to log into the app. The UPI pin, which a user creates with their bank account is needed to go through with the transaction.

8. PepsiCo patents issue

The **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights (PPV&FR) Authority** has revoked a **PVP (Plant Variety Protection)** certificate granted to PepsiCo India Holding (PIH) on a potato variety (FL-2027) on various grounds.

This included the following:

- The grant of the certificate of registration had been based on incorrect information furnished by the applicant.
- The certificate had been granted to a person not eligible for protection.
- The grant of the certificate of registration was not in the public interest.

What's the issue?

In 2019, PepsiCo sued some Indian farmers based in Gujarat for cultivating the FC5 potato variety, which has a lower moisture content required to make snacks such as potato chips.

- Withdrawing the lawsuits the same year, the New York-based company said it wanted to settle the issue amicably.

- Later, Kavitha Kuruganti, a farmers' rights activist, petitioned the PPVFR Authority for revocation of intellectual protection granted to PepsiCo's FC5 potato variety, saying that **India's rules do not allow a patent on seed varieties.**

Please note that **Section 39 of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001** specifically says that a farmer is allowed to grow and sell any variety of crop or even seed as long as they don't sell branded seed of registered varieties.

The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001:

- Enacted by India in 2001 adopting sui generis system.
- It is in conformity with **International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), 1978.**
- The legislation recognizes the contributions of both commercial plant breeders and farmers in plant breeding activity and also provides to implement TRIPs in a way that supports the specific socio-economic interests of all the stakeholders including private, public sectors and research institutions, as well as resource-constrained farmers.

Objectives of the PPV & FR Act, 2001:

- To establish an effective system for the protection of plant varieties, the rights of farmers and plant breeders and to encourage the development of new varieties of plants.
- To recognize and protect the rights of farmers in respect of their contributions made at any time in conserving, improving and making available plant genetic resources for the development of new plant varieties.
- To accelerate agricultural development in the country, protect plant breeders' rights; stimulate investment for research and development both in public & private sector for the development new of plant varieties.
- Facilitate the growth of seed industry in the country which will ensure the availability of high-quality seeds and planting material to the farmers.

Rights under the Act:

Breeders' Rights: Breeders will have exclusive rights to produce, sell, market, distribute, import or export the protected variety. Breeder can appoint agent/ licensee and may exercise for civil remedy in case of infringement of rights.

Researchers' Rights: Researcher can use any of the registered variety under the Act for conducting experiment or research. This includes the use of a variety as an initial source of variety for the purpose of developing another variety but repeated use needs prior permission of the registered breeder.

Farmers' Rights:

1. A farmer who has evolved or developed a new variety is entitled for registration and protection in like manner as a breeder of a variety;
2. Farmers variety can also be registered as an extant variety;
3. A farmer can save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001 in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this Act provided farmer shall not be entitled to sell branded seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001;
4. Farmers are eligible for recognition and rewards for the conservation of Plant Genetic Resources of land races and wild relatives of economic plants;
5. There is also a provision for compensation to the farmers for non-performance of variety under Section 39 (2) of the Act, 2001 and
6. Farmer shall not be liable to pay any fee in any proceeding before the Authority or Registrar or the Tribunal or the High Court under the Act.

9. Chief of Defence Staff

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat, an Army Brigadier, and 10 others were killed when an Indian Air Force helicopter carrying them crashed into a heavily wooded area of the Coonoor ghat in the Nilgiris in western Tamil Nadu recently.

- Investigation has begun into the cause of the crash of the Mi-17V5 helicopter, a "trusted" aircraft.

About CDS:

- He will be the single-point military adviser to the government as suggested by **the Kargil Review Committee in 1999**.
- He will be a **Four-star General**.
- CDS acts as **the permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee** which will also have three service chiefs as members.
- His core function will be to foster greater operational synergy between the three service branches of the Indian military and keep inter-service frictions to a minimum.

Conditions:

- Not eligible to hold any Government office after demitting the office of CDS.
- No private employment without prior approval for a period of five years after demitting the office of CDS.

Roles and functions:

1. CDS will provide “single-point military advice” to the government, inject synergy in planning, procurements and logistics in the armed forces.
2. It will ensure integration of land-air-sea operations through the eventual setting up of theatre commands.
3. The CDS will also function as the military advisor to the PM-led Nuclear Command Authority, as also have direct command of tri-Service organizations to handle the new warfare domains of space and cyberspace.
4. He will function as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister and also as the Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC).
5. The CDS will be member of Defence Acquisition Council and Defence Planning Committee.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. ART and surrogacy

Context Parliament has passed two bills that aim to regulate in vitro fertilization (IVF) clinics and prohibit commercial surrogacy in India.

- Most of the recommendations of the select committee have been incorporated in the surrogacy bill.
- **Objective of the bills:** To curb unethical practices pertaining to issues ranging from sex selection to exploitation of surrogate mothers at the hands of prospective parents and agencies.
 - Ensuring safe and ethical practice of assisted reproductive technology services for addressing the issues of reproductive health
- The provisions include both monetary penalty as well as jail terms for violations
- **The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2020**, proposes to regulate surrogacy in India by establishing a National Surrogacy Board at the central level and state surrogacy boards and appropriate authorities in states and Union territories.
- **The Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill, 2021**, aims to regulate and supervise assisted reproductive technology clinics and assisted reproductive technology banks, and prevent misuse.

Boom of ART services in India

- In past few years, India has become a centre of the global fertility industry, with reproductive medical tourism becoming a significant activity.
- Clinics in India offer nearly all Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) services – gamete donation, intrauterine insemination (IUI), in vitro fertilization (IVF), gestational surrogacy, etc.
- However, There is still no standardisation of protocols and reporting is still very inadequate.

2. Water Quality in lower stretches of the River Ganga found to be alarming: Study

Water Quality in the lower stretches of the River Ganga was found to be in an alarming situation by a team of scientists who developed the much-needed baseline of Water Quality Index (WQI) of the place. They reported a continuous deterioration of water quality.

- Rapid human pressure and anthropogenic activities has resulted in release of untreated municipal and industrial sewages along with other forms of pollutants in the River Ganga.
- In particular, the lower stretches of the River Ganga, close to the megapolis Kolkata, are heavily influenced by anthropogenic factors, mainly due to intense population pressure on both sides of the river banks.
- As a result, there has been marked increase in discharge of untreated municipal and industrial sewages in the lower stretch of River Ganges with consequences for many unique and biodiversity ecosystems such as the Sundarbans mangrove and endangered charismatic species such as the Gangetic Dolphin.

3. Cabinet approves Ken-Betwa Interlinking of Rivers Project

The project will pave the way for more interlinking of river projects in India and also showcase to the world our ingenuity and vision.

- This project involves transfer of water from the Ken to the Betwa River through the construction of Daudhan Dam and a canal linking the two rivers, the Lower Orr Project, Kotha Barrage -and Bina Complex Multipurpose Project.
- The project will provide an annual irrigation of 10.62 lakh ha, drinking water supply to a population of about 62 lakhs and also generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW solar power.
- The Project is proposed to be implemented in 8 years with state of the art technology.

Significance

- The Project will be of immense benefit to the water starved Bundelkhand region, spread across the states of MP and UP.
- Expected to boost socio-economic prosperity in the backward Bundelkhand region on account of increased agricultural activities and employment

generation. It would also help in arresting distress migration from this region.

- This project also comprehensively provides for environment management and safeguards. For this purpose a comprehensive landscape management plan is under finalization by Wildlife Institute of India.

4. World Malaria Report 2021

Each year, WHO's World malaria report provides a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of trends in malaria control and elimination across the globe. It tracks investments in malaria programmes and research as well as progress across all intervention areas: prevention, diagnosis, treatment, elimination and surveillance.

Global efforts to tackle malaria suffered due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in 2020, according to the World Malaria Report 2021 released.

- If expeditious action is not taken, the world is in the danger of seeing an immediate resurgence of the disease, particularly in Africa
- Crucial milestones of the WHO Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016–2030 have been missed in 2020. The 2030 targets will not be met without immediate attention.
- India accounted for 83 per cent of cases in the WHO South-East Asia Region. Sri Lanka was certified malaria-free in 2016 and remains malaria-free.

Some alarming numbers

- There were an estimated 627,000 malaria deaths in 2020, an increase of 12 per cent over 2019.
- Some 47,000 (68 per cent) of the additional 69,000 deaths were linked to disruptions in the provision of malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- An estimated 241 million malaria cases were reported in 2020 in 85 malaria-endemic countries, increasing from 227 million in 2019.

Achievements

- The WHO classified China and El Salvador to be 'malaria-free' in 2020. These countries reported zero cases in three consecutive years to get their certification. Together with them, 23 countries in the world have this status.
- In the world's decades-long fight against malaria, WHO has approved the first vaccine against the disease in October this year, after 30 years of study

and tests. 'Mosquirix' is the first vaccine against any parasite, and saves one life for every 200 children vaccinated. Many children also suffer from repeated episodes of malaria in a single year, and Mosquirix promises to reduce such recurrence by 40%.

Emerging challenges

- Rapid tests to diagnose malaria will be rendered useless if two genes are deleted from the genome from the mutating malaria parasite - and there aren't many feasible alternatives to these tests. The WHO has already asked countries reporting false negative tests to conduct representative baseline surveys first, to understand the extent of the problem. The emergence of resistance to artemisinin and partner drugs is a significant risk for the global effort to reduce the malaria burden.
- In India, a combination of artesunate plus sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine is usually prescribed to treat malaria - but in Chhattisgarh - one of the country's high-malaria-burden states - studies have shown resistance to the latter compound. Insecticide resistance is a similar cause for worry.

The Way Forward

- Even before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, global gains against malaria had levelled off. With the hard work of public health agencies in malaria-affected countries, the worst projections of COVID's impact have not come to pass. Now, we need to harness that same energy and commitment to reverse the setbacks caused by the pandemic and step up the pace of progress against this disease.
- The new strategy should call for tailoring malaria responses to local settings, harnessing innovation, strengthening health systems and ensuring robust global malaria funding.
- There is a need to recognize the need to ensure better and more equitable access to all health services - including malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment - by strengthening primary health care and stepping up both domestic and international investments.
- Innovation in new tools is also a critical strategy for accelerating progress.
- Meeting global targets will also require robust funding. According to the report, current funding levels (estimated at US\$3.3 billion in 2020) will need to more than triple, reaching US\$ 10.3 billion per year by 2030.
- Countries and global partners should contribute their share every year to make Mosquirix better and more widely available.

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5. Ambergris: The Floating Gold

The Crime Branch in Pune and seized 550 grams of ambergris, also known as 'floating gold'.

What is Ambergris?

- Ambergris, which means gray amber in French, is a waxy substance that originates from the digestive system of the protected sperm whales.
- It is incorrectly referred to as 'whale vomit'.
- It is produced in the gastrointestinal tract of some of the sperm whales for the passage of hard, sharp objects that are ingested when the whale eats large quantities of marine animals.

Why is it so expensive?

- Investigating agencies from across India who have seized ambergris in the recent past estimate its value to be somewhere between Rs 1 to 2 crores per kilogram, depending on the purity and quality.
- Being extremely rare contributes to its high demand and high price in the international market.

Its uses

- Traditionally, ambergris is used to produce perfumes that have notes of musk.
- While there are records of it being used to flavor food, alcoholic beverages and tobacco in some cultures in the past, it is rarely used for these purposes presently.

Legalities and recent cases of seizure in India

- While there is a ban on possession and trade of ambergris in countries like the USA, Australia and India, in several other countries it is a tradable commodity.
- In the Indian context, the sperm whales are a protected species under Schedule 2 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and possession or trade of any of its by-products, including Ambergris is illegal.

- It has been observed that the gangs smuggling the ambergris procure it from coastal areas and ship it to destination countries via some other countries with whom India has comparatively less stringent sea trade.

6. Chief of defence staff

India's first Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat, and 12 others were killed when an Indian Air Force helicopter carrying them crashed into the Coonoor ghat, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu.

Who is Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)?

- The CDS is a high military office that oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services.
- He offers seamless tri-service views and single-point advice to the Executive on long-term defence planning and management.

'Dual-hatted role'

- CDS is a 'dual-hatted role' which refers to the two hats the CDS wears:
 - One of the permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee which has the three service chiefs as members
 - The other is the head of the newly created **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** in the ministry.
- The former is a military role while the latter is a role in the government

7. AFSPA and the Northeast

Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958 be repealed from the state after the incident in the Mon district of the state in which **security forces gunned down 13 civilians**.

- This has been a long-standing demand in the North eastern states. After the firing, Nagaland CM and Meghalaya CM have both called for **repeal of AFSPA**

What is AFSPA?

- **Colonial Legacy continued:** The Act in its original form was promulgated by the British in response to the Quit India movement in 1942. After

Independence, government decided to retain the Act, which was first brought in as an ordinance and then notified as an Act in 1958.

- **Power of imposition:** AFSPA can be imposed by the Centre or the Governor of a state, on the state or parts of it, after it is declared “disturbed” under Section 3. The Act defines these as areas that are “disturbed or dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary”.
- **Special Power to Armed Forces:** The Act, which has been called draconian, gives sweeping powers to the armed forces. It allows them to open fire, even causing death, against any person in contravention to the law or carrying arms and ammunition. It gives them powers to arrest individuals without warrants, on the basis of “reasonable suspicion”, and also search premises without warrants.
- **Immunity to Armed Personnel:** The Act further provides blanket impunity to security personnel involved in such operations: There can be no prosecution or legal proceedings against them without the prior approval of the Centre.
- **Areas of Operation:** AFSPA has been imposed on the Northeast states, Jammu & Kashmir, and Punjab during the militancy years. Punjab was the first state from where it was repealed, followed by Tripura and Meghalaya. It remains in force in Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, J&K, and parts of Arunachal Pradesh.

Are there safety nets?

- **Prior Warning:** While the Act gives powers to security forces to open fire, this cannot be done without prior warning given to the suspect.
 - In the recent firing in Nagaland, it has been an issue of discussion whether the security forces gave prior warning before opening fire at the vehicle carrying coal miners, and then later at a violent mob.
- **Handing over to Local Police:** The Act further says that after any suspects apprehended by security forces should be handed over to the local police station within 24 hours.
- **Coordination with District administration:** It says armed forces must act in cooperation with the district administration and not as an independent body. In the recent Nagaland operation, local law-enforcement agencies have said they were unaware of the operation.

What are the criticisms of AFSPA?

- **Social Fallout:** Nagaland and Mizoram faced the brunt of AFSPA in the 1950s, including air raids and bombings by the Indian military. Allegations have been made against security forces of mass killings and rape.

- The Malom massacre in 2000, and the killing and alleged rape of Thangjam Manorama led to the subsequent repeal of AFSPA from the Imphal municipal area.
- In 2012, the Extrajudicial Execution Victim Families Association of Manipur filed a case in the Supreme Court alleging 1,528 fake encounters between 1979 and 2012.
- **Culture of Impunity:** Activists note that AFSPA creates an atmosphere of impunity among even state agencies such as the Manipur Police and their Manipur Commandos, believed to be responsible for most encounters in the state, some of them jointly with Assam Rifles.
- **Proliferation of militant groups despite act:** Manipur had two groups when the State was brought under the Act. Today, Manipur has more than twenty such groups, Assam has not less than fifteen, Meghalaya has five of them and other States have more groups.
- **Misuse of Act:** Human rights activists have said the Act has often been used to settle private scores, such as property disputes, with false tip-offs provided by local informants to security forces.
- **Federal Issues:** The Centre had also imposed AFSPA in Tripura in 1972 despite opposition from the then state government. The Centre can take a decision to repeal AFSPA after getting a recommendation from the state government. However, Nagaland, which has freshly recommended a repeal, had raised the demand earlier too, without success.
- **Creates Hurdles in Peace Process:** Mr R. N. Ravi, former head of the Intelligence Bureau for the North East is on record that AFSPA is the biggest obstacle to peace in the region. Former Home Secretary Mr G. K. Pillai has come out openly against the Act. These statements come from persons who have worked in the system and know the dynamics of the Act and of running the Government.

What attempts have been made to repeal AFSPA in the past?

- In 2000, Manipur activist Irom Sharmila began a hunger-strike, which would continue for 16 years, against AFSPA.
- In 2004, the UPA government set up a five-member committee under a former Supreme Court Judge. **The Justice Jeevan Reddy Commission** submitted its report in 2005, saying AFSPA had become a symbol of oppression and recommending its repeal.
- The Second Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by Veerappa Moily, endorsed Jeevan Reddy Commission recommendations.
- Former Home Secretary G K Pillai too supported the repeal of AFSPA, and former Home Minister P Chidambaram once said the Act, if not repealed, should at least be amended. But **opposition from the Defence Ministry stalled** any possible decision.

Conclusion

The problems in the North East and in Kashmir should be solved through a political process and not through a law that violates people's right to life and dignity with impunity.

8. Turkey's currency crisis

Turkey's official currency, the lira, has been in a free fall recently, losing about a quarter of its value against the U.S. dollar in November.

- It took two liras to buy a U.S. dollar in 2014. Today, it takes more than 13 liras to buy a U.S. dollar.
- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's unconventional economic policies have been blamed for the country's currency crisis.

Why is the lira losing value so rapidly?

- The value of any currency or any good for that matter depends on, among other factors, how scarce it is compared to other things.
- For example, if there is an unlimited supply of liras in the market but only a limited supply of food, each lira will buy you very little food.
- The same logic applies when we compare currencies. The **supply of Turkish liras in the market has been rising rapidly** when compared to relatively harder currencies like the U.S. dollar.
- According to World Bank data, **Turkey's broad money supply rose by about three and a half times** between 2014 and 2020 while broad money supply in the U.S. rose by around 50% during the same period. Not surprisingly, this has caused the value of the Turkish lira to drop against the U.S. dollar.
- The **demand for a currency too can affect its value**. Turkey has one of the largest current account deficits in the world, which means that the value of its imports is much larger than the value of its exports.
- As the **Turkish central bank becomes erratic** in how it regulates the supply of liras, the exchange value of the lira has become increasingly unpredictable. So, **foreign investors have become reluctant to purchase liras** to invest in Turkey, which in turn has led to a drop in the demand for the currency.

What has caused the rapid rise in the supply of liras?

- Mr. Erdogan's **unconventional monetary policy beliefs** have been the main culprit behind the rising supply of the lira.

- The Turkish President has been an ardent advocate of **low interest rates**, which he thinks is crucial to boosting economic growth and bringing down inflation.
- It should be noted that the central bank influences interest rates by regulating the money supply. To lower interest rates, it flushes the loan market with fresh money which in turn causes inflation.
- However, Erdogan has argued that high interest rates are the reason prices in the economy rise as they add to costs. His regime also believes that low interest rates will bring down inflation by boosting growth which increases the supply of goods.
- So, according to Mr. Erdogan's logic, a central bank can print unlimited amounts of currency and still avoid hyperinflation by sufficiently boosting growth.
- Mr. Erdogan believes so much in the power of low interest rates that he has **removed three central bank chiefs since 2019** because they tried to raise interest rates to boost the value of the lira.
- The current central bank chief has cut interest rates and has even gone on record to defend his decision to cut interest rates despite high inflation.
- Turkey's official data suggest that the country's inflation rate is at around 20% while unofficial estimates peg the inflation rate at 40%. This has led to serious doubts about the **independence of the Turkish central bank and caused people to lose confidence in the lira.**

Why does it matter?

- The rising supply of liras matters for at least two reasons.
- One, the creation of fresh currency usually leads to **significant redistribution of wealth among citizens**. This is because the fresh currency that is created by the central bank generally gets distributed among citizens in an arbitrary manner. So, some people may end up with greater purchasing power than before while others are left worse off.
- Secondly, a currency that is rapidly losing value can debilitate economic activity. People have very **little incentive to produce new stuff** when they are unsure about the stability of the real value of the currency.
- A lira might buy five loafs of bread today but only one loaf of bread tomorrow. This is why people tend to move towards accepting **alternative currencies such as gold and silver** which better maintain value or resort to some form of barter when high inflation has rendered the official currency worthless.
- Turkish citizens have been converting their liras into gold, the U.S. dollar, and other assets to prevent further erosion of their wealth. Many have also begun to flee the country.

What lies ahead?

- The Turkish President is expected to continue pushing for lower interest rates as he prepares to fight elections next year.
- It is generally believed that low interest rates boost the economy and make voters happy, although some economists do raise concerns about the sustainability of such **artificial debt-fuelled growth**.
- Lower interest rates are likely to lead to a further rise in the supply of liras in the market and cause a further drop in the currency's value.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. World Inequality Report 2022 has been recently in the news. It is published by which of the following institutions?

- A World Inequality Lab
- B World Justice Report
- C Oxfam International
- D United Nations Development Program

Answer : A

Explanation

About World Inequality Report 2022

- The report was released by the **World Inequality Lab**, which **aims to promote research** on global inequality dynamics. **Hence, option A is correct.**
- This report presents the **most up-to-date synthesis of international research efforts** to track global inequalities.
- The **poorest half of the global population** “barely owns any wealth” **possessing just 2% of the total**, whereas the richest 10% of the global population own 76% of all wealth.
- India stands out as a **poor and very unequal country**. The top 1% of the population **hold more than one-fifth of the total national income** in 2021 and the bottom half just 13%.

2. What is the significance of NASA's LCRD mission?

- a. It aims to deflect an asteroid by intentionally crashing a spacecraft into it.
- b. It is NASA's first-ever laser communications system that will help the agency test optical communication in space.
- c. It is aimed at understanding the concentration of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere.
- d. It is designed to robotically expand the existing International Space Station.

Answer: b

Explanation:

NASA launched its new Laser Communications Relay Demonstration (LCRD). LCRD is NASA's first-ever laser communications system which will demonstrate all of the advantages of using laser systems. **Hence Option B is correct.**

3. Consider the following statements:

1. Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA) are ecologically fragile areas which are located within 10 km of protected areas.
2. ESAs are notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change under Environment Protection Act 1986.

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

- **Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESAs) are located within 10 kms around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. Hence, statement 1 is correct.**

- ESAs are notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under **Environment Protection Act 1986**. Hence, **statement 2 is correct**.
- The basic aim is to regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to minimize the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.

4. Consider the following:

1. Calcutta Unitarian Committee
2. Tabernacle of New Dispensation
3. Indian Reform Association

Keshab Chandra Sen is associated with the establishment of which of the above?

- a. 1 and 3 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: b

Explanation:

Calcutta Unitarian Committee:

- The Calcutta Unitarian Committee was founded in 1823 by **Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, and William Adam**.
- The Calcutta Unitarian Committee aimed to gather together influential Brahmins as well as European citizens of Calcutta who were Unitarian Christians, to promote religious monotheism. **Hence Statement 1 is incorrect.**

Tabernacle of New Dispensation:

- In 1868, Keshub Chandra Sen laid the foundation stone of his new church, the Tabernacle of New Dispensation.
- He introduced into the church the Pilgrimage to saints, the Homa ceremony, the Baptismal ceremony, the Lord's supper, etc.

Indian Reform Association:

- On October 29, 1870, the Indian Reform Association was founded, with Keshub Chunder Sen as its first president. It represented the secular side of the Brahmo Samaj and had many non-Brahmo Samaj members.

Hence statements 2 and 3 are correct.

5. Consider the following statements:

1. The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system.
2. The Universal Periodic Review is a mechanism to review the human rights records of all UN member states once every four years.

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

- The Human Rights Council is an **inter-governmental body within the United Nations system** responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights. It is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The most innovative feature of the Human Rights Council is the **Universal Periodic Review**. This unique mechanism involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN member states once every four years. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
 - The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) serves as the secretariat for the Human Rights Council.

6. Which of the following committees is/are set up to study the ecological sensitivity of the Western Ghats?

1. Kasturirangan committee
2. Gadgil committee

3. TSR Subramanian committee

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer : A

Explanation

- The **Ministry of Environment and Forests** of India set up in March 2010 an expert panel (**Gadgil commission**) to find a strategy for conserving these Ghats.
 - The Gadgil report, published in 2011 highlighted the ecological sensitivity of the Western Ghats and the need to protect the region by restricting activities there.
- The central government-appointed **Kasturirangan committee** had come up with a **comprehensive report on the Western Ghats in 2013**, proposing several measures that six states must take to protect the Western Ghats mountain range.
- **T. S. R Subramanian Committee** was constituted under the **Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)** in October, 2015. The report proposes an Education Policy, which seeks to address challenges faced by the current education system.
- **Hence, option A is correct.**

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. The double burden of undernutrition and obesity needs to be tackled as part of India's national nutrition strategy. Discuss (250 words)

Approach

- State the facts related to double burden of malnutrition and obesity as introduction.
- What are factors responsible for double burden.
- Describe the consequences of double burden of malnutrition and obesity.
- Describe the national nutrition strategy to tackle double burden of malnutrition and obesity.
- Give conclusion.

2Q. What do you understand by Moral Emotions and what is their role? How are they different from basic emotions? (250 words)

Approach

- Define moral emotions and their role with examples.
- Differentiate between moral emotions and basic emotions with suitable examples.