

www.vishnuias.com



DECEMBER

22.12.2021

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A MAGAZINE FOR CIVIL SERVICES PREPARATION

JOIN OUR TELEGRAM: <https://t.me/vishnuiasmentor>

Articles of the day
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS

UPSC

General Studies

Test Series

Online &
Offline
classes

One-Stop
Solution

Free daily
materials

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Govt. disagrees with India's rank in World Press Freedom Index

The Centre has shown its disagreement with the conclusions drawn by Reporters Without Borders about press freedom in India for various reasons.

World Press Freedom Index

- The PFI is an annual ranking of countries compiled and published by Reporters Without Borders since 2002.
- It is based upon the organization's own assessment of the countries' press freedom records in the previous year.
- It intends to reflect the degree of freedom that journalists, news organizations, and netizens have in each country, and the efforts made by authorities to respect this freedom.
- It is careful to note that the index only deals with press freedom and does not measure the quality of journalism in the countries it assesses, nor does it look at human rights violations in general.

India's ranking

- India is ranked at 142 out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index 2021.
- In the South Asian neighborhood, Nepal is at 106, Sri Lanka at 127, Myanmar (before the coup) at 140, Pakistan at 145 and Bangladesh at 152.
- China is ranked 177, and is only above North Korea at 179 and Turkmenistan at 178.

What the report said about India

- **Targeting women:** It has been highlighted that the "campaigns are particularly violent when the targets are women".
- **Criminal prosecutions:** Often used to gag journalists critical of the authorities.
- **Draconian laws:** It termed various Indian laws such as – laws on 'sedition,' 'state secrets' and 'national security', draconian.
- **Curb on freedom of expression:** The report has also highlighted the throttling of freedom of expression on social media.

- **Censorship on social media:** It specifically mentioned that in India the “arbitrary nature of Twitter’s algorithms also resulted in brutal censorship”

Reservations held by India

- India along with many nations has reportedly disgusted the outcomes of this report. It stated that media in India enjoy absolute freedom.
- The government does not subscribe to its views and country rankings and does not agree to the conclusions drawn by this organization for various reasons:
 1. Non-transparent methodology
 2. Very low sample size
 3. Little or no weightage to fundamentals of democracy
 4. Adoption of a methodology that is questionable and non-transparent
 5. Lack of clear definition of press freedom, among others

Why is the report biased?

- The report is a subjective measure computed through the prism of western liberals.
- It tends to default to a homogenous view of mass media which then facilitates comparison between countries.
- There are no questions about media ownership or about their economic concentration in private hands.

2. Impact of Reorganisation Act on Ladakh’s autonomy

The article deal with the impact of the passage of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act of 2019 on Ladakh’s autonomy or participatory democracy.

What has changed?

- **Hill Councils:** The **Autonomous Hill Development Councils of Leh and Kargil** read along with the framework of J&K’s special status and its bicameral legislative system gave Ladakh autonomy and participatory democracy.
- The Hill Councils **had the powers over land in Ladakh** while the majority of the bigger concerns regarding land remained protected under Article 370 and J&K’s robust land protection laws.

- **Power to recruit the officers:** Gazetted officers were recruited through the State Public Service Commission.
- The District Service Selection Board made recruitments at the district level.
- But today, there is **no Public Service Commission in Ladakh** and the Hill Councils' power to make recruitments at the district level has also been affected by the Lieutenant Governor (LG)'s presence.
- **No law to protect the jobs:** Technically, there also exists no law in Ladakh now that protects the land or even the jobs.
- **Loss of representation:** the Reorganisation Act has taken away the six seats of the Members of Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council and wakened the functioning of the Hill Councils.
- The only elected representation from Ladakh outside of Ladakh is a lone MP.

Conclusion

Steps need to be taken to address the issues related to the lack of representation in Ladakh in the wake of the passage of the Reorganisation Act of 2019.

3. J&K Delimitation Commission

The J&K Delimitation Commission has proposed to increase six seats for the Jammu division and one for the Kashmir division evoking sharp reactions from the regional parties.

What is Delimitation and why is it needed?

- Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of an Assembly or Lok Sabha seat to represent changes in population over time.
- This exercise is carried out by a Delimitation Commission, whose orders have the force of law and cannot be questioned before any court.
- The objective is to redraw boundaries (based on the data of the last Census) in a way so that the population of all seats, as far as practicable, be the same throughout the State.
- Aside from changing the limits of a constituency, the process may result in a change in the number of seats in a state.

Delimitation in J&K

- Assembly seats in J&K were delimited in 1963, 1973 and 1995.

- Prior to August 5, 2019, carving out of J&K's Assembly seats was carried out under the J&K Constitution and Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957.
- Until then, the delimitation of Lok Sabha seats in J&K was governed by the Constitution of India.
- However, the delimitation of the state's Assembly was governed by the J&K Constitution and J&K Representation of the People Act, 1957.
- There was no census in the state in 1991 and hence no Delimitation Commission was set up by the state until 2001 census.

Why is it in the news again?

- After the abrogation of J&K's special status in 2019, the delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats in the newly-created UT would be as per the provisions of the Indian Constitution.
- On March 6, 2020, the government set up the Delimitation Commission, headed by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, which was tasked with winding up delimitation in J&K in a year. ★
- As per the J&K Reorganization Bill, the number of Assembly seats in J&K would increase from 107 to 114, which is expected to benefit the Jammu region.

Factors considered during Delimitation

- The number of districts had increased from 12 to 20 and tehsils from 52 to 207 since the last delimitation.
- The population density ranged from 29 persons a square km in Kishtwar to 3,436 persons a square km in Srinagar.
- The remoteness of the place, inaccessibility etc are also considered during the exercise.

What's new?

Ans. Reserved constituencies for SC/STs

- For the first time, in Jammu and Kashmir, nine seats are proposed to be allocated for Scheduled Tribes out of 90 seats on the basis of population.
- Seven seats are proposed for Scheduled Castes.

Concerns raised over Delimitation

- **Jammu vs. Kashmir:** Concerns had been expressed over how the delimitation process may end up favoring the Jammu region over Kashmir in terms of the seats.

- **Under-representation of Ladakh:** Arguments have been made on how Ladakh has been underrepresented, with demands for statehood/sixth schedule.
- **Non-proportionate reservations:** It is argued that seats for STs should've been divided in both Jammu province & Kashmir province, as the ST population is almost equal.

4. Phrase 'Anti-national' not defined in statutes: MHA

The phrase 'anti-national' has not been defined in statutes, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has informed the Parliament.

Defining Anti-national Activities

(1) Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

- The UAPA is aimed at the prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
- Its main objective was to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.

(2) Sedition Law

- Section 124A IPC deals with attempts to bring into hatred or contempt or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law in India.
- This law was enacted by the British colonial government in 1870 with the sole object of suppressing all voices of Indians critical of the government.

(3) NCRB Reports

- In 2019, when the National Crime Records Bureau released the annual Crime in India report for year 2017, it included for the first time a new chapter on "Crime Committed by Anti National Elements."
- The chapter listed - "North East insurgents, Left Wing Extremists and Terrorists (including Jihadi terrorists)" as the three anti-national elements.

Attempts for defining

- There are criminal legislations and various judicial pronouncements deal with unlawful and subversive activities which are detrimental to the unity and integrity of the country.
- In this regard, it is relevant to mention that the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976 inserted in the Constitution Article 31D (during Emergency) which defined “anti-national activity”.
- This Article 31D was, later, omitted by the 43rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1977.

Supreme Court guidelines

- In the ultimate analysis, the judgment in Kedar Nath (1962) read down Section 124A and held that without incitement to violence or rebellion there is no sedition.
- It says that ‘only when the words written or spoken etc. which have the pernicious tendency or intention of creating public disorder the law steps in.

Who maintains the data of such individuals?

- The onus of maintenance of such data lies with the respective states.
- ‘Public Order’ and ‘Police’ are State subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- Hence the data about the number of people arrested for indulging in anti-national activities are not maintained centrally.

5. Changing the iconography of power

This article talks about the instances of structural refurbishment carried out by the Central government and its implications.

What is Nationalism of refurbishment?

- The central government has taken on the responsibility of rehabilitating all types of historic places, religious or secular, old or modern.
- The systematic transformation of a number of sites and buildings with strong symbolic value in the nation’s public life has been done.

- The Parliament House on Raisina Hill, the Vishwanath Mandir in Varanasi, Ahmedabad's Sabarmati Riverfront, and the capital's Central Vista Avenue are a few examples.

Arguments in Favour:

- India must move from crumbling Mughal splendour and British Raj relics to its own 21st-century self-image as a growing Asian Giant.
- The administration wishes to alter the iconography of power.
- The Chinese model is chosen, in which everything is spanking new, massively huge, and technologically sophisticated.
- All around the country, Special Economic Zones, Smart Cities, international airports, multi-lane expressways, and glamorous malls have already sprung.
- Refurbished historic structures are the most recent symbol of New India's politically motivated visual and aesthetic makeover.
- We need a staging of Indian democracy, not just a functional polity, society, or religious group.

Arguments Against:

- Instead of renovating the buildings, India should preserve its ancient, diverse, incoherent, complicated, untidy, inclusive, delicate, and durable elegance.
- This has reduced the people's relationship with the nation to that of passive awe-struck observers of spectacular structures.
- The current regime's penchant for monumentality, spectacle, and grandeur is reminiscent of imperialist and fascist governments across the world.
- The reconstruction of structures is being done for political reasons, but it also jeopardises the cultural core of India's varied community.
- This hindrance represents the religious, sectarian, caste, and occupational identities that have emerged through time in defiance of any state's ham-fisted initiatives.

Way Forward

- Individuals and societies must tolerate difference, cohabit with others, respect nature, accept the brevity of life, and, most significantly, keep cognizant of the evanescence of power.
- Better urban infrastructure is critically needed in Indian cities, and Indian waterways must be cleaned up.

6. Shringla for talks with Myanmar military

- Indian Foreign Secretary is on a two-day visit to Myanmar and is scheduled to meet General Min Aung Hlaing, who toppled the elected government last February in a military coup.

Details:

- The visit is being seen as an **outreach to Myanmar's military-backed regime** after the military coup in Myanmar and a tacit acknowledgement of the coup in Myanmar.
- The visit also underscores the **balancing act** that India is trying to maintain on upholding democratic values in the neighbourhood and also maintaining a working relationship with the military-backed regime in Myanmar.
- While India has expressed strong apprehensions over the developments in Myanmar and the sentencing of former State Councillor and Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to four years imprisonment, it has also avoided moves to antagonize the current regime in Myanmar.
 - Recently, India had abstained from endorsing a resolution that sought to prevent arms supplies to the Myanmar military and also appointed a new Ambassador to Myanmar as a sign to show that **India has not "derecognised" the Myanmar government despite the coup.**

Reasons behind India's moves:

- India is expected to speak to the Tatmadaw (military) about **India's growing security concerns** over insurgent groups based along the 1,600-km India-Myanmar border which have carried out attacks in recent months. Militants allegedly take refuge across the border after carrying out attacks in India.
- India believes that it is necessary to **engage with the new regime** to strengthen and deepen democracy in Myanmar.
- The visit is also an attempt to **counter China's influence in Myanmar**, which could grow as the regime gets more isolated.
- The stand being taken by India is in line with ASEAN policy on Myanmar which has been constant engagement with the military regime while pushing for democracy in the country. Hence this stand will help **align India's stand with that of ASEAN** and this augurs well for India's relationship with this critical regional grouping.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

7. Problems within the UDAN scheme

PM launched the UDAN scheme nearly five years back with the aim to take flying to the masses. However, many routes have launched by airlines have been discontinued.

UDAN Scheme

- The Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme is a low-cost flying scheme launched with the aim of taking flying to the masses.
- The first flight under UDAN was launched by the PM in April 2017.
- It is also known as the regional connectivity scheme (RCS) as it seeks to improve air connectivity to tier-2 and tier-3 cities through revival of unused and underused airports.

Working of the Scheme

- Airlines are awarded routes under the programme through a bidding process and are required to offer airfares at the rate of ₹2,500 per hour of flight.
- At least 50% of the total seats on an aircraft have to be offered at cheaper rates.
- In order to enable airlines to offer affordable fares they are given a subsidy from the govt. for a period of three years.

Present status of working

- A total of nine rounds of bidding have taken place since January 2017.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation has set a target of operationalizing as many as 100 unserved and underserved airports and starting at least 1,000 RCS routes by 2024.
- So far, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has awarded 948 routes under UDAN, of which 403 routes have taken off that connect 65 airports.
- Out of the total 28 seaplane routes connecting 14 water aerodromes, only two have commenced.

Issues with the working

- **Discontinuance:** In reality, some of the routes launched have been discontinued as most of the routes awarded under UDAN are not active.

- **On-paper Ambitions:** UDAN was expanded to provide improved connectivity to hilly regions and islands through helicopters and seaplanes. However, they mostly remain on paper.
- The reasons include:
 1. Failure to set up airports or heliports due to lack of availability of land
 2. Airlines unable to start flights on routes awarded to them or finding the routes difficult to sustain
 3. Adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Various challenges

- **Lack of funds:** Many small airlines await infusion of funds, to be able to undertake maintenance of aircraft, pay rentals to lessors, give salaries to its staff, etc.
- **Maintenance issue:** Many players don't have more than one or two planes and they are often poorly maintained. New planes are too expensive for these smaller players.
- **Availability of pilots:** Often, they also have problems with the availability of pilots and are forced to hire foreign pilots which costs them a lot of money and makes the business unviable.
- **Competition:** Only those routes that have been bagged by bigger domestic players such as IndiGo and SpiceJet have seen a better success rate.

Way forward

- The govt offers subsidies for a route for a period of three years and expects the airline to develop the route during this time so that it becomes self-sufficient.
- Airlines need an extension of the subsidy period for their operational continuity.
- Due to the rise in COVID cases, travel restrictions and passenger safety too needs to be taken into consideration in the loss-making of such airlines.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. India is keeping an eye on Central Asia

The government is inviting the leaders of the five Central Asian countries – Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – as guests for Republic Day on January 26.

Significance of Central Asian region for India

- **Return of Taliban in Afghanistan:** The Taliban takeover in Afghanistan has made Central Asia a region where great **contestations for influence are unfolding**.
- There is a growing awareness that for **leveraging influence in Kabul** and harvesting that influence in the form of material gains, a firm footing in Central Asia is a prerequisite.
- **Economic dimension:** Given the vast untapped mineral wealth of the region encompassing the five Central Asian countries and Afghanistan – estimated to be worth a few trillion dollars – there is a **significant economic dimension to the unfolding saga**.
- **Geopolitical angle:** Washington hopes to create in Central Asia a vector of its Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China and Russia. At the same time, governments in Moscow and Beijing are circling the wagons.

Suggestions for India

- India needs to work on an intricate network of relationships with the regional states while remaining mindful of the “big picture”.
- Delhi’s non-aligned mindset needs to be turned into a strategic asset to navigate its long-term interests.
- India’s membership of the BRICS and SCO will help.
- **Cooperation of Russia and China:** The deepening of the traditional Indo-Russian mutual understanding has injected dynamism into Delhi’s regional strategy on the whole.
- It is bound to have a **calming effect on India’s tensions with China**.
- Delhi cannot have an **effective Central Asia strategy** without the cooperation of these two big powers.

- **Regional connectivity:** India can use the card of regional connectivity to stimulate partnerships.
- The time may have come to reopen the files on the **TAPI and IPI gas pipeline projects**. Both involve Pakistan.
- **Normalisation of India-Russia ties:** Russia is well-placed to act as guarantor and help build both these pipelines, while China too will see advantages in the **normalisation of India-Pakistan ties**.

New geoeconomic partnership

- Recently concluded third meeting of the **India-Central Asia Dialogue** in Delhi served a purpose to sensitise the Central Asian interlocutors that it attaches primacy to geoeconomics.
- But India will have a challenge on its hands to flesh out the “**4Cs**” concept that External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar presented at the event – **commerce, capacity enhancement, connectivity, and contact** being the four pillars of a new geoeconomic partnership.
- The key areas are transit and transport, logistics network, regional and international transport corridors, free trade agreements, manufacturing industry and job creation.
- They ought to be **front-loaded into India’s Central Asian strategy**.
- Certainly, the EAEU integration processes must be speeded up.

Conclusion

A host of new possibilities open up if India’s initiative on Central Asia runs on a parallel track with an improvement in relations with China.

2. Standing committee

The Lok Sabha has sent the Bill which seeks to raise the age of marriage for women to 21 to a standing committee.

What are Parliamentary Committees?

- The parliamentary committee is a committee which is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker.
- It works under the direction of the Speaker and presents its report to the House or to the Speaker and the Secretariat.

Different types of committees:

- **‘Standing’ committees:** They are usually reconstituted on an annual basis.
 - It is a permanent and regular committee which is constituted from time to time according to the provisions of an Act of Parliament or Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business
 - They are further divided into financial committees and departmentally-related standing committees (DRSCs).
 - The three financial committees are the Public Accounts Committee, the Estimates Committee and the Committee on Public Undertakings.
- **‘Select’ committees** are formed for a specific purpose. That select committee ceases to exist once the Bill is disposed of.

3. Anti-national

The word ‘anti-national’ has not been defined in statutes, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has informed the Lok Sabha.

Key pointers from the Ministry

- It added that ‘anti-national activity’ was inserted in the Constitution during the Emergency in 1976 but was removed later.
- There are criminal legislation and various judicial pronouncements to sternly deal with unlawful and subversive activities which are detrimental to the unity and integrity of the country.
- Public Order’ and ‘Police’ were State subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- The responsibility of maintaining law and order rested primarily with the respective State government.

NCRB data

- In 2019, when the National Crime Records Bureau released the annual Crime in India report for 2017, it included for the first time a new chapter on “Crime Committed by Anti National Elements”.
- The chapter listed “North East insurgents, Left Wing Extremists and Terrorists (including Jihadi terrorists)” as the three anti-national elements.

4. Linking voter rolls to Aadhaar

Rajya Sabha passed by voice vote The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021, enabling “the linking of electoral roll data with the Aadhaar ecosystem” as the Opposition walked out in protest. The Bill had been passed by Lok Sabha.

- The Bill amends the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to implement certain electoral reforms.
- The 1950 Act provides that a person may apply to the electoral registration officer for inclusion of their name.
- The amendment Bill says the electoral registration officer may require a person to furnish their Aadhaar number for establishing their identity. If their name is already in the electoral roll, then the Aadhaar number may be required for authentication of entries in the roll, but people will not be denied inclusion in the electoral roll or have their names deleted, if they are unable to show their Aadhaar cards.

What is the government’s argument for bringing the Bill? ★

- The government says the Bill incorporates various electoral reforms that have been discussed for a long time.
- The government says linking Aadhaar with electoral rolls will **solve the problem of multiple enrolments** of the same person at different places. This will consequently reduce **electoral malpractices**.
- Once Aadhaar linkage is achieved, the electoral roll data system will instantly alert the existence of previous registration(s) whenever a person applies for new registration.
- This will help in **cleaning the electoral roll** to a great extent and facilitate elector registration in the location at which they are ‘ordinarily resident’.
- Indeed, this can also allow for remote voting, a measure that could help migrant voters.
- The four qualifying dates for **revision of rolls will help in faster enrolment** of those who turn 18.
- The incidence of multiple entry could also be eliminated which is required in **participative democracy**.
- In Parliament, Law Minister said linking Aadhaar with the voter ID card is voluntary. It is **not compulsory or mandatory**.
- Government held “many meetings” with the Election Commission before the Bill was brought.

What are the Opposition’s objections?

- **Violation of Right to Privacy:** There is criticism that the linking of voter IDs and Aadhaar violates the fundamental right to privacy as defined by the Supreme Court in the judgment. There is a view that the Bill could violate secrecy of the vote undermining the principle of secret ballots.
- **May not solve problem of voting by non-Citizens:** Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship and it is said so very clearly in the Aadhaar Act. There are doubts on how this will prevent non-citizens (especially Nepalis & Bangladeshis) from voting because non-citizens can have an Aadhaar card. The goal of preventing non-citizens from voting will not be solved with Aadhaar.
- **Mirco-Targeting using leaked data:** The other concern is that there is a documented case that Aadhaar data was being leaked. It could lay the foundation of targeted political propaganda which is against the model code of conduct as well.
 - In April 2019, the UIDAI complained to police about a Hyderabad-based software company, IT Grids (India) Private Limited, accusing it of illegally procuring details of 7,82,21,397 Aadhaar holders in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and storing these in its databases
- **Voluntary Provision:** One of the concerns is whether the Bill's implementation will be successful if the linkage is not compulsory. The Bill says the election registration officer may require the submission of the Aadhaar number both for new enrolments and those already enrolled. The choice not to submit is linked to a "sufficient cause", which will be separately prescribed.
- **Judicial Scrutiny:** The tests laid down by the Supreme Court – a permissible law, a legitimate state interest and proportionality has not been rigorously examined due to lack of deliberation in Parliament.
 - If an individual's refusal to submit the detail is deemed unacceptable, it may result in loss of franchise. Therefore, the measure may fail the test of proportionality.
- **Profiling Concerns:** There are allegations that the government would be able to use voter identity details for "profiling the citizens".

Can individual votes be tracked that way?

- While individual identification of voting choices may not be possible with the linkage of Aadhaar with voter IDs, it will lead to profiling.
- Verification of a person's identity is separate from the capturing of the identity which is already happening in booths when a person goes to vote.
- But it may help the government link it to other services where larger schemes may be designed based on the data

Conclusion

If the Government really has no ulterior motive in the form of triggering mass deletions from the electoral rolls, it must invite public opinion and allow deeper parliamentary scrutiny before implementing the new provisions that now have the approval of both Houses of Parliament.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. What rising inequality means

In the aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic, evaluating the state of inequality serves as an eye-opener on the income/wealth divides prevailing across regions.

Income and wealth inequality in the world

- The top 10% of the global population share 52% of the total income, while the **bottom half survives with a mere 8.5% of it.**
- This leaves the 40% in the middle with 40% of the income.
- This distribution shows the tendency of a rising middle class with lower disparity in income, but it also shows that the status of the poor is worsening day by day.
- **Inequality of wealth:** In terms of wealth, the top 10% of the global population own 76% of the total wealth, **while the bottom 50% share a mere 2%.**
- Some additional features of this exposition of inequality also relate to **imbalance of women's share in income** as well as the ecological inequities indicated by the **differential carbon emission levels.**

Factors responsible for rising inequality

[1] Absence of effective measures of redistribution

- Inequality varies across regions. It is moderate in Europe and sharp in Africa.
- The top 10% have an income share of 36% in Europe vis-à-vis the top 10% with a share of 58% of the total income in West Asia and North Africa.
- **Measures for redistribution:** This disparity shows that worsening inequalities are avoidable with appropriate measures in place.

[2] The absence of measures discouraging undue accumulation

- **Kuznet's curve not follower everywhere:** While there is an argument in literature that inequalities are a manifestation of the average level of income, as explained by the **Kuznets' theory**, the prevailing pattern across countries does not follow the same.
- **Average income level is poor predictor of inequality:** The **average income levels** seem to be poor predictors of the levels of inequality, with high-income countries such as the U.S. having higher levels of inequality as against countries such as Sweden, which have moderate levels of inequality.
- Similar contradictions are also seen when we contrast middle-income nations such as Brazil, India and China as against Malaysia and Uruguay.
- Hence, emerging inequalities are not necessarily **an outcome of rising levels of income** in the post-liberalisation era, but a depiction of poor redistributive policies towards discouragement of accumulation by governments with due sensitivity towards inequalities.

How inequality hurts government finances

- This prevailing pattern of wealth concentration and differential levels of income around the world has also resulted in rich nations having poor governments.
- Such a situation has two underpinnings: one, governments have a **limited capacity to act on inequality** aversion measures and two, **private interests overshadow the distributional fairness of wealth.**

Way forward

- Focus also needs to be placed on reducing disparities in capability domains like education and differential endowments (tangible and intangible) that have the potential to sustain inequalities.

Conclusion

The rising levels of income and wealth need to be addresses by policy measures and reducing disparity in capacity domains.

6. How the new Warehousing Policy will transform India's logistics

In order to reduce transportation and logistic cost, the union government along with the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) is working on warehouse policy.

What are Warehouses?

- A warehouse is a building for storing goods.
- Warehouses are used by manufacturers, importers, exporters, wholesalers, transport businesses, customs, etc.
- They are usually large plain buildings in industrial parks on the outskirts of cities, towns, or villages.

Objectives of the New Warehousing Policy

- **Logistics boost:** The new policy is aimed at improving logistics throughout the country.
- **Supply chain management:** The modern warehouses will house cold-storage chains and will be able to store all kinds of cargo – wet and dry.
- **De-congesting cities:** These facilities are expected to come up outside city centres so that large trucks carrying the cargo do not need to enter the city to unload their goods.
- **Fuel efficiency:** This will also help boost bulk carrying capacity and save fuel.
- **Curbing air pollution:** The idea is to minimize pollution and traffic congestion in major cities.

Who will frame and implement the policy?

- **NHAI:** The policy will be framed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). It will also be the implementing agency.

How?

- **Through Land Banks:** There are land banks along the highways and expressways of the country with the NHAI.
- **PPP mode:** Tenders will be floated for such land parcels, inviting private players to develop warehousing zones in PPP mode on a revenue-sharing basis or for a fixed fee.

What will be the impact on logistic costs?

- **Logistics cost-saving:** Warehousing zones will help cut India's logistics cost, which is 14%-16% of gross domestic product (GDP), compared to 8%-10% of GDP in China and 12%-13% in the US.
- **Establishment of MMLPs:** The warehousing zones and multi-modal logistics parks (MMLPs) are being set up by the NHAI.
- **FMCG sector boost:** This will help Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) firms, steel and cement makers stock inventory near major hubs.

How will MMLPs aid warehousing policies?

- Integration of multi-modal transport includes the development of 35 MMLPs.
- The MMLPs are aimed at fostering inter-modal connectivity through dedicated railway lines and access from highways to provide connectivity to an airport or a seaport or an inland waterway terminal.
- The aim is to:
 1. Remove deficiencies related to logistics
 2. Draw the associated costs down, and
 3. Strategically integrate highway projects and other connectivity initiatives

Why such move?

Ans. E-commerce boom

- The e-commerce sector has been driving the demand for logistics and warehousing across global markets.
- It has emerged as the most prominent driver of Indian warehousing market volumes along with the third party logistics sector.
- This sector's share in transactions has grown from 18% in FY17 to 31% in FY21.
- The Indian market is on the verge of its next phase of growth with domestic groups such as Tatas and Reliance entering the business.
- Thus far, Amazon.com Inc. and Walmart Inc. have driven the market.

7. Seed Village Programme (Beej Gram Yojana)

The govt is implementing Seed Village Programme (Beej Gram Yojana) since 2014-15 to upgrade the quality of farmers' saved seeds.

What do you mean by Seed Village?

- It is a village, wherein a trained group of farmers are involved in the production of seeds of various crops and cater to their needs themselves.

Seed Village Programme

- This program aims at upgrading the quality of farm-saved seeds.
- Under this, financial assistance is available for up to one acre per farmer for distribution of foundation/certified seeds at:
 1. 50% of seed cost for cereal crops
 2. 60% for pulses, oilseeds, fodder, and green manure crops

Objectives of the program

- Increasing the seed production
- Increasing the seed replacement rate
- Organizing seed production in cluster (or) compact area replacing existing local varieties with new high yielding varieties
- Self-sufficiency and self-reliance of the village

Implementation

The present program of seed village scheme is having two phases:

- **Seed production of different crops:** The area which is suitable for raising a particular crop will be selected, and raised with a single variety of a kind.
- **Establishing seed processing unit:** If the seeds are not processed and handled properly, all the past efforts in production may be lost. Thus seed processing and packaging is a very important aspect of seed production.

Benefits offered

- Seed is available at the doorsteps of farms at an appropriate time.
- Seeds are available at affordable costs even lesser than the market price.
- It has increased the confidence among the farmers about the quality because of known sources of production.
- It facilitates the fast spread of new cultivars of different kinds.

8. Drones in Agriculture

Union Agriculture Minister released Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for use of Drone in Pesticide Application for Crop Protection and for spraying Soil and Crop Nutrients.

Key takeaways

- The SOP for drone regulation for pesticide application covers important aspects like statutory provisions, flying permissions, etc.
- The use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) commonly known as drones have great potential to revolutionise Indian agriculture and ensure the country's food security.
- The **National drone policy** has been notified and the Drone Rules 2021 have been made significantly easier for people and companies in the country to now own and operate drones.

Use of drones in Agriculture

- **Multi-features:** Drones are well-equipped with many features like multi-spectral and photo cameras.
- **Monitor:** It can be used in many areas of the agriculture sector such as monitoring crop stress, plant growth, predicting yields, and delivering props.
- **Assessment:** Drones can be used for assessing the health of any vegetation or crop, field areas inflicted by weeds.
- **Optimisation:** Based on this assessment, the exact amounts of chemicals needed to fight these infestations
- **Planting systems:** Drone planting systems have also been developed which allow drones to shoot pods. This technology increases consistency and efficiency of crop management.
- **Mitigating attacks:** The drones were also used for the first time in warding off the locust attacks in various states.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to the Beas river, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It originates near the Rohtang Pass.
2. It meets the Satluj river at Harike in Punjab.
3. It lies entirely within Indian territory.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer : D

Explanation

About Beas River:

- **It originates near the Rohtang Pass**, at a height of 4,062 m above sea level, on the southern end of the Pir Panjal Range, close to the source of the Ravi. It is a tributary of the Indus river. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **It meets the Satluj river at Harike in Punjab.** It is a comparatively small river which is only 460 km long **but lies entirely within the Indian territory.** **Hence, statement 2 and statement 3 are correct.**
 - It forms a gorge at Kati and Largi in the Dhauladhar range.
- The major tributaries of the Beas River are Bain, Banganga, Luni and Uhal, along with Banner, Chakki, Gaj, Harla, Mamuni, Parvati, Patlikuhlal, Sainj, Suketi and Tirthan.

2. Consider the following statements:

1. In tropical regions, Zika virus disease is transmitted by the same mosquito that transmits dengue.
2. Sexual transmission of Zika virus disease is possible.

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

- Zika virus disease is spread in tropical places by the same mosquito (Aedes species mosquito) that transmits dengue. Chikungunya viruses are also disseminated by mosquitos of the Aedes species. **Hence Statement 1 is Correct.**
- Zika is spread by bites, but it may also be caught through sexual infection. **Hence Statement 2 is Correct.**
- Even if the infected individual is asymptomatic at the time, sexual transmission of Zika virus illness is feasible.
- In 1947, it was discovered in the Zika Forest of Uganda. There is presently no particular therapy or vaccination available to treat Zika.
- **Hence Option C is Correct.**

3. With reference to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), consider the following statements:

1. It was established in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War in 1991.
2. Its headquarters is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
3. India is not a member of OIC.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : C

Explanation

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It is the **second-largest intergovernmental organisation** after the **United Nations** with a membership of 57 states.
- It was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in **Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco** on the 25th of September 1969. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- **Headquarters:** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- India is not a member of the OIC. However, India was invited as a guest of honour at the **46th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers** in 2019. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

4. PANEX-21 is being held among the member countries of which of the following organisations?

- a. Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)
- b. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
- c. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (ASEAN)
- d. BRICS nations

Answer: a

Explanation

- PANEX-21 is a multi-agency exercise of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries.
- It is an exercise in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.
- Subject area experts and delegates from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand will attend the exercise.
- **Hence Option A is Correct.**

5. The 'Katchatheevu Island', often seen in the news, is located in?

- A Gulf of Khambhat
- B Arabian Sea
- C Bay of Bengal
- D Palk Strait

Answer : D

Explanation

- **Katchatheevu Island** is an uninhabited off-shore island in the **Palk Strait** originally owned by a king of Ramnad (present-day Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu).
- The island is used by fishermen to dry their nets.
- During British rule, it was administered jointly by India and Sri Lanka.
- In the early 20th century, Sri Lanka claimed territorial ownership over the islet, so in 1974 India ceded the island to Sri Lanka, through a joint agreement.
- Two years later through another accord, India further gave up its fishing rights in the region.
- **Hence, option D is correct.**

6. The Aral Sea is situated between which of these 2 countries?

- a. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan
- b. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan
- c. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan
- d. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan

Answer: b

Explanation

- The Aral Sea separates **Kazakhstan from Uzbekistan** to the north and Uzbekistan from Kazakhstan to the south.
- It was previously Central Asia's largest saltwater lake and the world's fourth-largest body of inland water.

- Hence Option B is Correct.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Increase of probity in governance does not always result in a decrease in corruption. Do you agree? Substantiate your argument with examples. (150 Words)

Approach:

- Explain the concept of probity.
- Then with the help of examples, discuss that though probity helps in curbing the menace of corruption it does not always result in the decrease of corruption.
- Conclude suitably.

2Q. Make in India, which was envisaged to boost manufacturing in India, has failed to meet its objective. Critically examine. (150 words)

Approach:

- Briefly mention the aims and objectives of 'Make in India' campaign.
- Give a comparative analysis of its objectives and respective outcomes achieved.
- Mention the issues faced by Indian manufacturing sector.
- Conclude by mentioning a few steps taken by government and suggestions to improve the situation.