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## THE HINDU

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

#### 1. Poverty key factor in determining institutional delivery: study

Recently, research was released on utilization of institutional delivery in the country.

##### A. Findings of the Research: -

- In determining whether a mother will be able to have a safe delivery in a medical institution, poverty, education, and exposure to a community health worker are more essential than age at marriage.
- The study looks into socio-demographic characteristics as well as impediments to low institutional delivery coverage, which is a critical intervention in reducing maternal mortality from problems after childbirth.
- It focuses on Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, which are all low-performing states with high maternal death rates.

##### B. Access barriers:

- As far as barriers in accessing institutional deliveries were concerned, about 17% of women expressed distance or lack of transportation.
- 16% women cited costs, to be some of the challenges.
- Other reasons were facility closures (10%), poor service or trust issues (6%).

##### C. Recommendations: -

- Increase the number of public health facilities and enhance the accompanying quality of care are recommended as state-specific measures.
- It emphasizes that poor clinical training and qualified human resources have an impact on the quality of accessible maternity services, resulting in low institutional delivery coverage.

#### 2. How has India responded to SARS-CoV-2 variants?

This article examines India's response to Covid-19 and the set of challenges brought by the Omicron variant.

### What is the vaccine strategy?

- The necessity to inoculate India's frontline physicians and nurses, followed by the remainder of the adult population, prompted the rush for vaccinations.
- With Covishield, developed by the Serum Institute of India in Pune, Bharat Biotech received an "emergency use permission" from India's Drugs Controller General.
- Covishield was based on the Oxford University-developed ChAdOx1 vaccine, which has been authorized in the United Kingdom following phase-3 clinical trial findings.
- Phase 3 studies for Covaxin were still ongoing, and authorities authorised it based on data from phase 1 and phase 2 trials that indicated it was safe and generated an immunogenic response.

### What brought the second wave?

- The World Health Organization had highlighted three prominent variants of concern – the 'UK' variant, South Africa variant and the Brazil variant now known as the Alpha, Beta and Gamma variants.
- India acknowledged and classified a variant, B.1.617, that came to be known as 'Delta', after a new naming convention adopted by the WHO.
- The genome consortium body, INSACOG, later revealed that the variant had actually been first known in India.

### How did the second wave devastate India?

- The Delta infection was characterized by pronounced respiratory illness and a need for oxygen supplementation which meant that India's hospitals were overwhelmed.
- Oxygen tanks had to be imported and airlifted.

### What about the pace of vaccination?

- India chose to ship vaccinations to a few countries as part of the 'Vaccine Maitri' effort earlier this year, not anticipating that a destructive wave would result in a higher demand for vaccines.
- In addition, India had not secured vaccine supplies beyond Covishield and Covaxin, and the latter was ill-equipped to ramp up supply quickly.
- The Center first refused to extend immunizations to all adults, but as public outrage rose, it agreed and attempted to delegate procurement to states.
- While numerous countries provided free vaccinations to their populations, Covishield and Covaxin were among the most costly vaccines available in the retail market. Stocks were restricted at public hospitals, where they were offered for free.

- The immunization programme only became stable once the Center stepped in as a single buyer once more.

### **How is India facing up to Omicron?**

- Though findings from South Africa imply that Omicron is not as dangerous as Delta, the outbreak of illnesses, particularly among the vaccinated in Europe and the United States, has alarmed India.
- If the number of cases and hospitalizations rises, states will create containment zones and enforce mobility restrictions.
- Despite the fact that India has multiple indigenous producers in advanced phases of vaccine testing, Covaxin's experience implies that delivering at scale is a hurdle.

### **3. On the brink**

After the U.S. pulled back its troops from Afghanistan, which led to the return of the Taliban to power. While the Taliban now has the whole country under their control, the country is on the brink of a humanitarian disaster.

#### **Background: -**

- According to the United Nations World Food Programme, the situation has the potential to become the world's greatest humanitarian disaster.
- According to UN estimates, around 23 million of Afghanistan's almost 40 million people are suffering from severe food shortages.
- Humanitarian aid has been supplied from other countries, notably the United States, European nations, and India, to help alleviate the situation.
- A resolution facilitating humanitarian relief to Afghanistan was unanimously endorsed by the United Nations Security Council.

### **How are the Taliban ruling?**

- The Haqqanis, who have deep links to al-Qaeda and the Pakistani intelligence services, control the Taliban rule.
- The hardliners appear to have the upper hand in decision-making, as seen by the appointment of a Pashtun-only Cabinet and actions such as keeping girls out of elementary school.
- Extrajudicial executions occurred despite the Taliban's announcement of a nationwide amnesty after seizing control.

### **What are the Concerns with the Humanitarian Crisis?**

- **No Aid:** - Almost 80% of the fallen Afghan Government's budget came from international development assistance. After the Taliban took over Kabul most of the donors suspended government aid.
- **Sanctions from US:** - The U.S. has also frozen nearly \$9.5 billion of Afghan central bank assets, and American financial institutions. The Taliban remain on the U.S. Treasury Department's sanctions list.
- **No road for Aid:** - As most commercial flights to Kabul are still suspended, aid is being sent by road to the landlocked country, mainly through Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia.

### **Does the Taliban regime have international recognition?**

- No country has publicly recognised the Taliban rule.
- Pakistan, China, Russia, and Central Asian republics, for example, have maintained their diplomatic posts in Kabul open.
- Qatar, which sponsored the Taliban-US discussions that resulted in the US pullout from Afghanistan, portrays itself as a link between the West and the Taliban.
- The UAE just opened an embassy in Kabul to reach out to the Taliban.
- The UAE told the Taliban that former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who has sought asylum in the UAE, would not be allowed to engage in political activities.
- All of this suggests that a bigger collection of countries is prepared to confront the Taliban this time.

### **Conclusion: -**

- The Taliban now dominate practically the whole nation, including the Panjshir Valley in the north, which had previously resisted both the Soviets and the Taliban.
- The Panjshir militants, on the other hand, were not beaten and fled to the mountains. The Taliban, on the other hand, are currently facing a security threat from the Islamic State-Khorasan, the IS's Afghan branch. Since the Taliban's takeover, the IS-K has carried out a number of bombs.

#### 4. Marriage age at 21: Lado Panchayat puts U.P. parties on notice

A “Lado Panchayat” of girls in Meerut decided that women would not vote for candidates in the coming Assembly election who are opposed to the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

##### What is ‘Lado Panchayat’?

- Sunil Jaglan created the country’s first Lado Panchayat, in which hundreds of girls and women took part.
- Participants came from Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, and Chandigarh, in addition to Haryana’s Mewat area.
- Hundreds of girls from various villages attended the ‘Lado Panchayat,’ which finished with debates and speeches in which the girls recounted their experiences.

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

#### 5. What are the head and tailwinds in the economy?

This article discusses the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the Economy of India.

##### Background: -

- The country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth had dipped to a mere 3% in the fourth quarter of 2019-2020.
- The pandemic-related lockdowns sent the stalling economy into free fall, causing output to shrink by 24.4% and 7.4% in the first two quarters of 2020-21, respectively.
- The resultant destruction meant that job and income losses coincided with the unfolding health crisis.

##### Indian Economy After Pandemic: -

1. An ambitious target was set for disinvestment from public sector enterprises backed by a new policy to retain a ‘bare minimum’ presence of state-owned firms even in strategic sectors.
2. The government explained that higher capital spending would trigger multiplier effects by nudging up demand in several sectors and spur job creation and consumption.

3. A K-shaped recovery is unfolding thanks to a divergence between those who needed to protect their lives and livelihoods.
4. While manufacturing and construction recovered, the economy's overall output remained far below even the low pre-pandemic levels.
5. The recovery remains uneven and fragmented with economists also unconvinced about its sustainability.
6. Demand and investments were yet to see a meaningful and durable pick-up and any improvements were expected to be limited.
7. Gradual domestic economy had been grappling with low demand and a subdued investment climate.

### Sectors during Pandemic: -

- Agriculture is the only sector to record positive growth throughout the pandemic.
- Sectors like manufacturing, mining, electricity, recovered above pre-COVID levels by September.
- Employment-intensive sectors like construction, the contact-intensive trade and hotels industry, as well as financial services and real estate, continue to languish below their pre-pandemic levels.
- There are some other interesting aspects of this year's economic trajectory.
- Wholesale price inflation has also hit an all-time high in the current series of the index, making input costs the number one worry for businesses.

### Way Forward: -

- Global growth is expected to fall to 4.5 percent in 2022, down from 5.6 percent this year, according to the OECD, with India's growth forecasted to be 8.1 percent in 2022-23.
- Returning to normal consumption patterns should boost industrial capacity utilisation rates and pave the way for a broad-based investment rebound by the end of 2022.
- According to economists, the largest risk for the next year is greater inflation, as supply chain difficulties in essential components, unpredictable commodity and energy prices, and shipping interruptions are all expected to worsen at least in the first half of the year.

## 6. 'Biometric fraud' hits Tihar

Recently, a mismatch was detected in their biometric verification of The Tihar Prison Department.

### A. What is biometrics?

- The measuring and statistical analysis of people's unique physical and behavioral features is known as biometrics.
- The technology is mostly used for identification and access control, as well as identifying those who are being watched.

#### **B. How do biometrics work?**

- Biometric authentication is becoming more popular in corporate and public security systems, consumer gadgets, and point-of-sale applications.
- In addition to security, convenience has been a driving force for biometric verification, as there are no passwords to memorize or security tokens to carry.

#### **C. Biometric fraud in India: -**

- In India, Biometrics is primarily utilized for fraudulent purposes.
- Forgery, counterfeiting, and outright theft of Aadhaar card information are the most common cases.
- This may be done for a variety of purposes, including acquiring SIM cards, obtaining loans, transferring assets, and collecting government subsidies.
- The most serious privacy concern with biometrics is that physical characteristics, such as fingerprints and retinal blood vessel patterns, are often static and cannot be changed.

#### **D. Possible Reasons for Biometric fraud: -**

- A major number of these scams are the result of people's ignorance of their privacy and identification rights.
- Centralized government-controlled biometric and genetic data databases pose a significant societal concern.
- Any breach of such a database is virtually irrevocable for the rest of a person's life: no one can update their genetic data or fingerprints as a result of a leak.
- No government can claim that its flood prevention or public health system will never fail due to weather or disease. The purpose of policy is risk management, not risk aversion.
- In the case of Aadhaar, we have seen no adoption of industry-accepted standard security procedures to address exploits, flaws, or vulnerabilities.
- The database's misuse for governmental monitoring and targeted coercion is likewise unavoidable.

#### **E. Conclusion: -**



- Its multiplicity of security flaws has left billions of people's biometric data susceptible to external and internal exploitation.
- It has also given the government unjustified powers to spy on its citizens and deprive them fundamental liberties.
- The link and future contribution of biometrics to state-controlled machine learning systems would also weaken democratic values.

## 7. Study of distant magnetar reveals facets of the exotic star

An international group of researchers has succeeded in measuring for the first time the characteristics of a flare on a distant magnetar.

### A. What is magnetar?

- A magnetar is a rare compact type of neutron star teeming with energy and magnetism.
- Magnetars are relatively rare objects, with only about thirty having been spotted within the Milky Way so far.

### B. How do magnetars form?

- Massive stars, which have masses between 10 and 25 times that of the Sun, eventually collapse and shrink to produce neutron stars, which are very compact objects.
- Magnetars, a type of neutron star with a strong magnetic field, are a subgroup of these neutron stars.

### C. What are the Features of magnetar?

- Magnetars contain extremely strong magnetic fields, ranging from 10<sup>15</sup> gauss to 10<sup>15</sup> gauss.
- Furthermore, these magnetars produce powerful flares.
- Instabilities in a magnetar's magnetosphere, or "starquakes," are thought to cause eruptions in the crust, a stiff, elastic material roughly one kilometre deep.
- In the magnetosphere, this creates waves, and the interaction between these waves causes energy dissipation.
- When magnetars remain quiet, they are extremely difficult to notice.
- They can only be seen during a flare, and these flares are so short-lived that they pose a significant threat.

## 8. A telescope on million-mile voyage

The James Webb telescope has left Earth on its mission to show the first stars to light up the Universe.

### The James Webb Space Telescope

- The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is NASA's flagship infrared observatory.
- NASA's main infrared observatory is the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST).
- It's a NASA-built space telescope that also includes contributions from the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency.
- Webb is the successor of the Hubble telescope, named after one of the architects of the Apollo Moon landings.
- It will offer scientists the opportunity to observe galaxy evolution, the formation of stars and planets, exoplanetary systems, and our own solar system, in ways never before possible.

**THE INDIAN EXPRESS**

## GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

### 1. Life expectancy reduced in 2020

A report on the data of life expectancy in 2020 was recently published in a British Medical Journal.

#### Highlights of report

- Life expectancy in 2020 reduced **in 29 of the 37 countries surveyed.**
- Life expectancy remained unchanged for Denmark, Iceland and South Korea.
- New Zealand, Taiwan and Norway recorded increases in life expectancy.
- Russia recorded the largest drop in life expectancy.

## Life expectancy

- It is an indication of **how long on average people can expect to survive** if the age specific mortality rates of that year remain constant for the remainder of their life.

## Highlights about India

- As per Economic Survey 2020-21, **Life expectancy at birth** improved from 69.4 years in 2018 to 69.7 years in 2019.
- India's life expectancy is less than the world's average lifespan of 72.81 years.
- Life expectancy in India **dropped by two years** due to COVID-19. For men and women, now it is 67.5 years and 69.8 years respectively in 2020.

## 2. Young India's aspirations, worries

Lokniti-CSDS in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung released a report base on the survey titled '**Indian Youth: Aspirations and Vision for the Future**'.

## Highlights of report

### Occupation Status

- **In the last one and half decade**, occupation status has changed significantly and nearly 39% identify themselves as student.
- More young men (39%) compared to women (11%) were working.
- Close to **four in five youth from the youngest group** were studying and only 4% were earning.

### Employment

- **10 per cent decline** in preference for **government jobs as compared to 2016**, with **55 per cent** choosing government jobs over others.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) would **prefer to start their own business**.

### Marriage

- The proportion of married youth has **decreased by five percentage points** since 2016.
- Youth showed a **greater acceptance** for the idea of inter-caste marriage (61% supported) than for inter-religious marriage.
- **Inter-faith marriage is still not widely accepted**, with 45% of the youth favouring it and 42% opposing it.

## Mental health

- Family's **financial security worried** the youth the most, followed by **their own health**.
- About six in ten (56%) worried about their jobs, and more than half (54%) about their physical appearance.
- Those with **high exposure to social media were found to be more emotionally distressed** than those with low or no exposure.

### 3. World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Accreditation

Recently, the National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) has regained the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accreditation.

- **The WADA accreditation** was suspended in August 2019, based on non-compliances which were observed during on-site assessment of the Laboratory.

## What is Doping?

- The term “doping” refers to the **use of prohibited medications, drugs, or treatments** by athletes with the intention of improving athletic performance.

## Regulations:

- In 1967 the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** banned doping.
- In 1999, the IOC led the initiative to form the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)**.
- WADA assists in setting the standard for other agencies and sports.
- According to the **World Anti-Doping Code** a substance or treatment constitutes doping if it meets two of the three following criteria:
  - It enhances performance
  - It presents a risk to the athlete's health
  - It is contrary to the spirit of the sport

## National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL):

- NDTL is a premier analytical testing & research organization established under **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.

- **Aim:** To get permanently accredited by **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** and **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)** to do the testing for the banned drugs in human sports.
- It is one of the 32 WADA accredited laboratories in the world.

#### Objectives:

- To provide accurate & reliable testing services for **Dope testing of Human sports** to the satisfaction of clients
- To become an institution with high level of **research in drug** of abuse analysis in the country.
- To conduct **research in Bio-Chemistry**, Forensic science, Bio-technology, Chemistry & Pharmacology to innovate new methods for drugs of abuse analysis.
- To conduct research in drug of abuse and allied area under inter-disciplinary scheme to promote the interest of young talent.

#### World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA):

- WADA was established in 1999 as an **international independent agency**.
  - It is composed and funded by the sport movement and governments of the world.
- **Aim:** To lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport.
- Its key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities, and monitoring of the **World Anti-Doping Code**.
  - World Anti-Doping Code is the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries.

#### Objectives:

- To protect the **rights of all athletes** in relation to anti-doping, contributing to the integrity in sport.
- To maintain the highest **ethical standards** and avoid improper influences or conflicts of interests that would undermine independent and unbiased judgement.
- To develop policies, procedures and practices that reflect **justice, equity and integrity**.

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

#### 4. Kerala Silverline Rail Project

Protests are taking place across Kerala against Silverline railway project.

##### Silverline Project:

- It is a **semi high-speed rail corridor** that connects one end of Kerala to the other.
  - It will link Thiruvananthapuram in the south to Kasaragod in the north covering **11 districts in just 4 hours**.
- **Length-** 532-km
- **Deadline of project-** 2025
- **Project execution agency:** Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited (KRDCL) or K-Rail.
  - It is a joint venture between the **Kerala government** and the **Union Ministry of Railways**.
- The Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) has sanctioned **Rs 2,100 crore** for the project.

##### Need of the project:

- **Reason-** Most trains run at an average speed of 45 km/hr due to a lot of curves and bends on the existing stretch.
- The Silverline project can take a **significant load of traffic**.
- It can make **travel faster** for commuters.
- It will **reduce congestion** on roads and help reduce accidents.
- It will also **reduce greenhouse gas** emissions.
- It helps in expansion of **Roll on Roll Off service (Ro-Ro)** services.
  - It is a concept in which an open flat railway wagon carries road vehicles loaded with various commodities
- It will produce **employment opportunities**.
- It will help in **integrating airports and IT corridors**, and enable faster development of cities.

##### Controversy Around Project:

- The project is financially **unviable** and **would lead to displacement** of over 30,000 families.
- It would **cause great environmental harm** as its route cuts through precious wetlands, paddy fields and hills.

- The building of embankments will **block natural drainage** and **cause floods** during heavy rains.
- A petition signed by 17 Opposition MPs from the state and has urged the government to abandon the project and explore **sustainable solutions**.

## 5. Big drop in toy imports in last three years

Recently, Commerce and Industry Minister stated that the government is protecting the interest of the domestic toy industry by promoting Made-in-India toys.

- India's domestic toy market is valued at **Rs. 5750 Crores per annum**.
- Currently, the production and import of toys in India rising at the rate of 10-15% every single year.
- The toy industry in India is facing severe competition from Chinese toy imports.
  - **China is the largest exporter of toys in the world.**
- The global market for toys is estimated at **US\$ 80 billion**.
  - Indian toy market comprises less than **0.08 percent of this huge market**.

### Import of toys in India

- India's import of toys in the financial year 2018-2019 stood at \$1.4 billion.
- Almost 85% of the toys sold in India are imported, with China being the top source, followed by **Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Germany, Hong Kong, and the US**.

### Steps taken by the Indian government to promote the toy industry

- The government has emphasized using tourism as a tool to promote India's culture, especially in regions that are renowned for handcrafted toys.
- Under the '**Vocal for Local**' slogan and '**Aatmanirbhar Bharat**' campaign, the government shall explore opportunities to tap the potential of the sector.
- A **national action plan** has been created by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), MSME, and other departments to promote the toy industry.
- **Toy Cluster Programme** was organized in 2020, to build toy clusters in dedicated SEZs and help them become customized, self-sustained ecosystems catering to export markets.
- **Toycathon-2021**, an online toy hackathon for innovative toys, is another initiative taken by six different ministries and departments of the government.
  - It aims to enhance toy manufacturing capabilities.

- The Indian Government had organized the **India Toy Fair 2021**, making India a global hub for the manufacturing and sourcing of toys.
- The Government has issued **Toys (Quality Control) Order, 2020**.
  - As per the Order, every toy shall conform to the requirements of relevant Indian Standard and bear the Standard Mark under a license from BIS as per scheme-I of BIS Regulations, 2018.

## 6. India's Solar Expansion Programme May Fall Short of Target: IEA

Recently, 'Renewables 2021' was recently launched by International Energy Agency.

### PM-KUSUM:

- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan** was cleared by the Union Cabinet in February 2019.
- **Aim:** To provide water and energy security to farmers and enhance their income.
- Under the scheme, **30.8 GW solar power capacity** is targeted by 2022 with Central assistance of ₹34,035 crore.
- As on November 30, 2021, the total of 4,909 megawatts (MW) of solar power was sanctioned and 20 MW has been installed.
- Upside potential in the programme also exists if financing and implementation challenges are resolved.

### Highlights of the Report:

- The **KUSUM programme** supporting solar photovoltaic (PV) deployment in rural areas has a target of commissioning about 31GW of photovoltaic (PV) capacity until 2024.
- Due to **financing and implementation challenges**, it will reduce about 10 GW over 2021-2026.

### Renewable Electricity Growth:

- India is expected to add **121 GW of renewable capacity over 2021-2026**, an 86% increase on existing capacity.
  - This will make India the **third-largest growth market** globally after China and the United States.
- **China and the European Union** are set to overshoot their current targets, setting the stage for a more ambitious growth trajectory.
- Relative to existing capacity, **renewable power** is growing faster in India than any other key market in the world.



### Demand for Biofuels:

- Asia is set to overtake Europe as **India and Indonesia** lead renewed growth in global demand for biofuels.

It accounts for 30% of new production overtaking European biofuel production by 2026.

- This is due to strong domestic policies, growing liquid fuel demand and export-driven production.
- Recent **Indian ethanol policies** and blending targets for biodiesel in Indonesia and Malaysia are responsible for most of the growth in Asia.
- India is set to become the **third largest market** for ethanol demand worldwide by 2026.

### Suggestions:

Governments need to address four main barriers to **accelerate renewables deployment**.

- **For wind and solar PV projects** in advanced economies, various challenges to permitting and grid integration have led to lower-than-planned capacity.
- **In emerging and developing economies**, stop-and-go policies, lack of grid availability and risks concerning off-takers' financial health are hurting investor confidence, resulting in elevated financing rates.
- **Lack of remuneration** and targeted policy support for flexibility are an issue in all countries.
- Challenges concerning **social acceptance of wind and hydropower projects** caused an increasing number of countries to delay or cancel planned projects.

### Renewables need to Grow Faster

- **Renewable energy capacity** needs to grow faster to close the gap with a pathway to net zero by 2050.
  - For solar PV and wind, average annual additions would need to be almost double over the next five years.
- To align with the **Net Zero Emissions** by 2050, countries would need to implement existing and planned policies before 2026.
  - These Policies must incentivise greenhouse gas reductions, not just biofuel demand.
- Governments must strengthen their policy focus on **dispatchable renewable electricity** and renewable energy use in buildings, industry and transport.

## 7. Securities Appellate Tribunal imposed a penalty on SEBI

Recently, Securities Appellate Tribunal(SAT) imposed a penalty on the Securities and Exchange Board of India(SEBI) for abuse of the court process.

### Securities Appellate Tribunal(SAT)

- It is a statutory tribunal **established** under the **SEBI Act, 1992**.
- It has the **only bench** which sits **in Mumbai**.
- It hears and disposes of appeals against:
  - Orders passed by the SEBI or by an adjudicating officer under **the SEBI Act**.
  - Orders passed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) under the **PFRDA Act, 2013**.
  - Orders passed by the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI) under the Insurance Act, 1938, the General Insurance Business (Nationalization) Act, 1972 and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999, and the Rules and Regulations framed thereunder.

### SAT Composition:

- It has a presiding officer and 2 other members.
  - All members and presiding officers will be **appointed by the Union Government** in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- Like other tribunals,
  - SAT is **not bounded** by the procedures of the **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**.
  - **Appeal** against SAT's decision lies **in High Court**.

### Key fact:

A tribunal is a specialized adjudicating body. Provision about tribunals was added to the constitution by **42nd Amendment Act, 1976**. It added:

- Article 323-A: Administrative Tribunals.
- Article 323-B: Tribunals for other matters.

## 8. Scientists trace first clue to understand transient high energy pulses from magnetars

### Magnetars:

- Magnetars are a type of **isolated neutron stars** that possess the most **intense magnetic fields**.
  - A neutron star is the **collapsed core of a massive supergiant star**, which had a total mass of between **10 and 25 solar masses**.
- They experience **violent eruptions** or intense bursts in the form of **transient X-ray pulses** which are several orders **higher than** that of the **Sun**.

#### Cause of Bursts:

- Like earthquakes on Earth, **magnetars have starquakes**.
- These are produced on their crust **due to high instability** prevailing in their **magnetospheres**.
- The **instability triggers Alfven waves** that are also common in the Sun.
- The **interactions between multiple Alfven waves** ultimately **release massive energies**, appearing as giant flares **lasting for a few milliseconds**.

#### Alfven Waves:

- An Alfvén wave in a plasma is a **low-frequency travelling oscillation of the ions and the magnetic field**.
- The wave **propagates in the direction** of the **magnetic field**.

#### Atmosphere-Space Interactions Monitor (ASIM):

- It is a project led by the **European Space Agency**.
- It placed **cameras and X-ray/γ-ray detectors** on the **International Space Station**.
- **Objective:** To observe the **upper atmosphere** in order to study **sprites, jets and elves and terrestrial gamma-ray flashes** in connection with **thunderstorms**.

**Prelims Practice Questions**

**1. The 'Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle' report is released by which of the following?**

- A NITI Aayog
- B Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
- C Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
- D Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)

Answer : A

Explanation

- Recently, **NITI Aayog** has released a comprehensive **report titled Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle**.
  - The report brings out the gaps in the health insurance coverage across the Indian population and offers solutions to address the situation.
- According to the report, **at least 30% of the population**, or 40 crore individuals (referred as the missing middle in this report) **are devoid of any financial protection for health**.
  - The Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and various State Government extension schemes, provide comprehensive hospitalization cover to the bottom 50% of the population.
  - Around the top 20% of the population - 25 crore individuals - are covered through social health insurance, and private voluntary health insurance.
- **Hence, option A is correct.**

**2. Who amongst the following decides on the election schedule for the state assembly elections?**

- a. Election Commission of India
- b. State Election Commission
- c. Governor in consultation with State Election Commission
- d. President of India

**Answer: a**

## Explanation

- The Election Commission of India is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
- The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
- **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**

### 3. Consider the following statements:

1. The World Bank was created in 1944, as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).
2. The World Development Report is released by the World Bank.

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

### World Bank

- **About:**
  - It was created in 1944, as the **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)** along with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. The IBRD later became the World Bank. **Hence statement 1 is correct.**
  - The **World Bank Group is a unique global partnership of five institutions** working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.
- **Members:**
  - It has 189 member countries.
  - India is also a member country.
- **Major reports:**
  - **Ease of Doing Business (Stopped publishing recently).**
  - **Human Capital Index.**

- World Development Report.
- Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- Its Five development institutions:
  - International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)
  - International Development Association (IDA)
  - International Finance Corporation (IFC).
  - Multilateral Guarantee Agency (MIGA)
  - International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)
    - India is not a member of this.

**4. The World Press Freedom Index is released by which of the following?**

- a. Walk Free foundation
- b. Reporters without Borders
- c. Cornell University & INSEAD
- d. International Federation of Journalists

Answer : b

**World Press Freedom Index**

- The World Press Freedom Index is published by Reporters Without Borders, a non-government-organization.
- 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.
- A smaller score on the report corresponds to greater freedom of the press as reported by the organization.
- India ranked at 142 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index.
- Reporters Without Borders 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.
- Violence against journalists, netizens, and media assistants, including abuses attributable to the state, armed militias, clandestine organizations or pressure groups, are monitored by RSF staff during the year and are also part of the final score.

5. The UV Index is designed by which of the following organization?

- a. International Renewable Energy Agency
- b. World Health Organization
- c. Sustainable Energy for All
- d. United Nations Security Council

Answer : b

### UV Index

- The UV index tells how much ultraviolet radiation is around at ground level on a given day, and its potential to harm the human skin.
- UV radiation is a component of sunlight that can cause tanning and sunburn in the short term.
- In the longer term, too much exposure to UV can cause cataracts and skin cancer.
- In 2002, the World Health Organization devised the UV index in an effort to make people around the world more aware of the risks.
- The index boils down several factors into a single number that gives you an idea of how careful you need to be in the sun.
- A score of 1 or 2 is low, 3 to 5 is moderate, 6 or 7 is high, 8 to 10 is very high, and 11 and above is extreme.

### UV Radiation

- The Sun showers Earth with light at a huge spectrum of different wavelengths, and each wavelength can have a slightly different effect on human skin.
- An important part of the spectrum is ultraviolet or UV radiation: light with wavelengths too short for our eyes to see, from around 400 nanometres to 10 nanometres.
- There are two important kinds of UV radiation: UV-A, with wavelengths from 400 to 315 nanometres, and UV-B with wavelengths from 315 to 280 nanometres.
- UV-A and UV-B both contribute to skin damage, ageing and skin cancer. But UV-B is the more dangerous: it is the major cause of sunburn, cataracts and skin cancer.

**6. Consider the following statements:**

1. India is not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions.
2. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution encompasses the right of refugees from refoulement.

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**

- Recently, the High Court of Manipur has ordered safe passage to seven Myanmar nationals, stranded at a border town in Manipur, to travel to the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** in New Delhi.
  - Although India has no clear refugee protection policy or framework, it does grant asylum to a large number of refugees from the neighbouring country.
  - India usually respects UNHCR's recognition of the status of such asylum seekers, mainly from Afghanistan and Myanmar.
- India is **not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions** but it is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Article 21 of the Constitution encompasses the right of non-refoulement.**
  - Non-refoulement is the principle under international law which states that a person fleeing persecution from his own country should not be forced to return to his own country. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**



## **MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

**1Q. What is meant by 'Peri-Urban Agriculture'? How can it help in adapting to the challenges posed by climate change? (250 words)**

### **Approach**

- Describe 'Peri-Urban Agriculture'.
- Elaborate on its benefits in dealing with climate change.
- Give conclusion.

**2Q. Discuss how the Shraman tradition marked the beginning of new religious and social movements in ancient India? (150 words)**

### **Approach**

- In the introduction briefly explain Shramanas and explain how they were different from existing brahmanical order.
- In the body, discuss in detail about the new social and religious movement brought about by the Shramanas traditions.
- In conclusion, mention the long term impacts of Shramanic traditions.