



CHROME IAS

Giving Wings To Your Dreams !!!



EDITORIALS In - Depth

DECEMBER - 2020

**Covers important
Editorials for
CSE MAIN EXAMINATION**

CHROMEIAS ACADEMY

INDEX

EDITORIAL-IN-DEPTH MONTHLY COMPILATION DECEMBER - 2020

S. No.	Area	Topics	Page No.
1.	General Studies-II	Tibetans parliament-in-exile	2
2.	General Studies-II	The perils of deregulated imperfect Agri-markets	4
3.	General Studies-II	Behind China's wolf warrior diplomacy	7
4.	General Studies-II	Personal choices, the Constitution's endurance	9
5.	General Studies-II	The many layers to agricultural discontent	11
	General Studies-II	Inflation and the RBI's role in tackling it	13
7.	General Studies-II	Havana Syndrome	15
8.	General Studies-III	The dangers of misplaced optimism	17
9.	General Studies-II	Thousand days of nutrition, and a billion dreams	19
10.	General Studies-II	France's draft law and 'Islamism'	21
11.	General Studies-II	The antitrust suit against Facebook	22
12.	General Studies-II	Criticism of Maharashtra's proposed laws against sexual offences	24
13.	General Studies-II	Concerns over relocating of Rohingya refugees	26
14.	General Studies-II	S-400 deal with Russia and Relation with USA	28
15.	General Studies-II	Maharashtra House resolution on Arnab Goswami and its face-off with judiciary	30
16.	General Studies-II	Currency manipulation	33
17.	General Studies-II	Different voter's lists and a Common Electoral Roll	34
18.	General Studies-II	NFHS data and concern of the latest round findings	36
19.	General Studies-II	Teacher vacancies at IITs and reservation	38
20.	General Studies-II	Pathalgadi movement	40
21.	General Studies-III	The tightrope between production and industrial peace	42
22.	General Studies-II	The Tibet Policy and Support Act, passed by the USA	44
23.	General Studies-III	Zero coupon bonds	46
24.	General Studies-III	Major challenges to India's Neighbourhood First Policy in 2020	47
25.	General Studies-III	The tragedy of conservation	49
26.	General Studies-III	The protests over an eco-sensitive zone in Narmada district	51

TIBETANS PARLIAMENT-IN-EXILE

GENERAL STUDIES - II (INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD- RELATIONS)

Over 1.3 lakh Tibetans living in exile and settled across India and other parts of the globe shall be electing their next Parliament-in-Exile, called **Central Tibetan Administration, and its head** in May 2021.

- According to the **Green Book of the Tibetan government-in-exile**, over 1 lakh Tibetans are settled across India, while the remaining are settled in United States, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, France, Mexico, Mongolia, Germany, United Kingdom, Switzerland and various other countries.
- The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE) has its **headquarters in Dharamsala, in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh.**

Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE)

The **Speaker and a Deputy Speaker** head the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile.

The 16th TPiE had 45 members –

- 10 representatives from each of the **traditional provinces of Tibetan – U-Tsang, Dhotoe and Dhomey;**
- Two from each of the **four schools of Tibetan Buddhism** and the **pre-Buddhist Bon religion;**
- Two representing each of the **Tibetan Communities in North America and Europe;** and
- **One from Australasia and Asia** (excluding India, Nepal and Bhutan).

Till 2006, it used to be called as **Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPDs)** with the **chairman as its head and a vice-chairman.**

It was changed later to **Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile** headed by a **Speaker and Deputy Speaker.**

Tibetan Constitution

The Central Tibetan Administration exists and functions on the basis of the Constitution of the Tibetan government called the '**The Charter of the Tibetans in Exile**'.

- In 1991, The **Constitution Redrafting Committee** instituted by the Dalai Lama prepared the Charter for Tibetans in exile. The Dalai Lama approved it on June 28, 1991.
- **Till 2001**, the Dalai Lama used to suggest **three names for each post of Kalon (minister in the Cabinet)** and the Assembly selected one each.

CHROMEIAS ACADEMY

- **Kalon Tripa (the Central Tibetan Administration's head)** used to be elected from among the selected Kalons.

Changes in the Charter

In 2001, fundamental changes happened with the **amendment of the Charter that facilitated direct election of the Kalon Tripa** by the Tibetans in exile.

- The directly elected Kalon Tripa then nominated the Kalons with subsequent approval of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile.
- On March 14, 2011, the **Dalai Lama devolved his political leadership and the Charter was again amended.**
- The **political leadership was transferred to Kalon Tripa** who was called Sikyong or president of the Central Tibetan Administration.

The 2021 elections

The 2021 elections will be held to elect the president and 45 members of the TPiE.

- According to the **CTA's Election Commission**, nearly 80,000 Tibetans living outside Tibet have registered for voting so far, including roughly 56,000 living in India and 24,000 in other countries.
- One last round of registration is pending, and any Tibetan aged above 18 as per **one's identity document called Tibetan Green Book** is eligible to vote following registration.
- Only Tibetans living outside the subcontinent will elect their MPs based on their current geographic location.

Who all are in the fray for Sikyong's post?

Although the **Tibetan Election Commission will finally nominate two main candidates** in the first round of elections (January 3, 2021) who shall contest for the post of Sikyong in the second round (April 13).

There are **eight candidates who are among the front runners** from across the world.

The Kashag (Cabinet)

The Kashag (Cabinet) is **Central Tibetan Administration's highest executive office** and comprise **seven members**.

- It is **headed by the Sikyong (political leader)** who is directly elected by the exiled Tibetan population.
- Sikyong, subsequently **nominates his seven Kalons (ministers)** and seeks the parliament's approval.
- The Kashag's **term is for five years**.

Is TPiE officially recognised by any country?

Not exactly, **it is not recognised officially by any country, including India.**

- But, a number of countries including the United States of America and European nations deal directly with the Sikyong and other Tibetan leaders through various forums.
- The TPIE claims its democratically-elected character helps it manage Tibetan affairs and raise the Tibetan issue across the world.

The incumbent Sikyong, Lobsang Sangay, was among the guests who attended the oath-taking ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2014, probably a first.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 2nd DECEMBER- 2020

THE PERILS OF DEREGULATED IMPERFECT AGRI-MARKETS

GENERAL STUDIES - II (ISSUES RELATED TO AGRICULTURE)

The eruption of massive farmers' protests across India against the Farm Acts has shocked those in the seat of power in Delhi.

- **According to the government**, many private markets will be established, middlemen would disappear, farmers would be free to sell to any buyer and farmgate prices would rise.
- But the **protesting farmers do not accept these claims**. They believe that **farmgate prices would fall with the intensification of a corporate presence in agricultural markets**.
- They also believe that the government, ultimately, wants to phase out the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 (FPTC Act).

More mandis needed

An important assumption behind the FPTC Act is that mandis controlled by Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) are monopsonies in rural areas. **This assumption itself is specious.**

- First, official data show that even for paddy and wheat, respectively, **only 29% and 44% of the harvest is sold in a mandi**, while 49% and 36% is sold to either a local private trader or an input dealer.
- In other words, de facto, a **large proportion of Indian harvest is not directly sold in a mandi**.

Why the farmers sell their produce outside of Mandi?

Farmers are **forced to sell outside** the mandis for two reasons.

1. **The first** is that **there are not enough mandis**. In 1976, there were 4,145 large markets in India, with the average area served at 775 km².
 - The **National Commission on Agriculture (NCA)** had recommended that every Indian farmer should be able to reach a mandi in one hour by a cart. Thus, the **average area served by a mandi was to be reduced to 80 km²**.
 - For this, the number of mandis was to increase to at least 41,000. But **there were only 6,630 mandis in 2019 with an average area served of 463 km²**.
 - Using another set of criteria, a government committee in **2017 had recommended that India should have at least 10,130 mandis**. So, by all counts, India needs not less but more mandis.
2. **The second reason** is that most small and marginal farmers, given their small marketable surplus, do not find it economical **to bear the transport costs to take their harvests to mandis**.
 - Thus, **they end up selling their harvest to a village trader even if at a lower price**.
 - Even if private markets replace mandis, small and marginal farmers will continue to sell to traders in the village itself.
 - The situation will change **only if economies of scale rise substantially at the farm-level**.

The poor private investment in markets

The reason for poor private investment in markets is the **presence of high transaction costs in produce collection and aggregation**.

- When private players try to take over the role of mandis and the village trader, they incur considerable costs in opening collection centres and for salaries, grading, storage and transport.
- The more the number of small and marginal farmers are, the higher will these costs be.
- **Corporate retail chains face additional costs in urban sales and storage**, as well as the risk of perishability.
- This is why many retail chains **prefer purchasing bulk quantities of fruits and vegetables from mandis rather than directly from farmers**.

Transaction costs

Even if private markets emerge, the size of transaction costs are likely to offset any decline in mandi taxes. As a result, **there is no assurance that farmers would receive a higher price in private markets**.

- In fact, **if transaction costs exceed mandi taxes**, the costs would be transferred to the farmers as a lower price.
- This, then, would imply a stronger squeeze on the farmer than at present

Significance of Mandi taxes

Many commentaries treat taxes in mandis as wasteful. This assertion is not fully true.

1. First, much of the **mandi taxes are reinvested by APMCs to improve market infrastructure**. A fall in mandi taxes would reduce the surplus available with APMCs for such investment.
2. Second, in States such as Punjab, the **government charges a market committee fee and a rural development fee**.

The **Punjab Mandi Board uses these revenues** to construct rural roads, run medical and veterinary dispensaries, supply drinking water, improve sanitation, expand rural electrification and provide relief to farmers during calamities.

Such rural investments will also be adversely affected if mandis are weakened.

The fate of MSPs

Without doubt, **MSPs would continue to survive on paper** as the government will have to procure to maintain a minimum buffer stock.

However, **many policy signals point to a strategic design to weaken the MSPs**.

1. **First, input and labour costs are rising** sharply in agriculture. This necessitates a regular upward revision of MSPs to keep pace with costs of living.
2. **Second, the government has not yet agreed to fix MSPs at 50% above the C2 cost of production**. As a result, farmers continue to suffer a price loss of ₹200 to ₹500 per quintal in many crops.
3. **Third, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** has been recommending to the government that open-ended procurement of food grains should end. These policy stances have set alarm bells ringing among farmers.

In **Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh**, most crop sales are at the MSP through procurement centres including the mandis.

- If **mandis weaken and private markets with no commitment to MSPs expand**, they fear a gradual erosion of their entitlement to a remunerative price.
- If mandis weaken and private markets do not sufficiently replace them, they fear that the void would be filled by unscrupulous and unregulated traders.

Steps to be taken

Discussions between the government and the farmers can be structured using a broad framework based on two focus points.

First, **India needs an increase in the density of mandis**, expansion of investment in mandi infrastructure and a spread of the MSP system to more regions and crops.

- This should happen hand-in-hand with a universalisation of the Public Distribution System as an affordable source of food for the poor.

Second, we need not just more mandis, but also better mandis.

- APMCs need internal reform to ease the entry of new players, reduce trader collusion and link them up with national e-trading platforms.
- The introduction of unified national licences for traders and a single point levy of market fees are also steps in the right direction.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 3rd DECEMBER- 2020

BEHIND CHINA'S WOLF WARRIOR DIPLOMACY

GENERAL STUDIES - II (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

In the last few years, **'nationalism'** has returned as a governing theme of global politics and relations among major world actors.

- However, of late, a peculiarly abrasive brand of nationalism has come to be associated with China, and more importantly with the persona of Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- While **Beijing's recourse to nationalistic aggression as a foreign policy stratagem** has gained the **euphemism of 'wolf warrior diplomacy'** only recently, it has been a work-in-progress for much longer and involves a state-sponsored and systemic indoctrination campaign.
- Under Mr. Xi, this process has become even more intense and has acquired the dynamics of **'Chinese nationalism with Xi Jinping at [the] Core'**.

The base of 'wolf warrior diplomacy'

The Chinese Communist Party initially **embraced nationalism as a co-option strategy in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre.**

- Consequently, **nationalism was turned into a state dogma** to embed the Chinese Communist Party in the political sub-consciousness of the country, and secure the filial piety of its populace.
- While this process marked the Chinese Communist Party's transition from a revolutionary to a national party, **it forever transformed the Chinese nation-state into a Party-state.**
- It is this **'Party-state' brand of nationalism** that the international community is being confronted with.

Linked to a threat perception

CHROMEIAS ACADEMY

The **first concerted attempt** by the Chinese Communist Party to shape Chinese nationalism came with the **launch of the 'Patriotic Education Campaign' in the 1990s**.

- Consequently, **a narrative of 'Century of humiliation' was invented** and etched in public memory as a historical fact.
- **At the core of this campaign was** the grand design to project the Chinese Communist Party as the harbinger and **sole guarantor of the peace, prosperity and sovereignty** of the eternally 'victimised' Chinese nation.
- As such, the very legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party within Chinese politics is based upon an imaginary enemy or a threat perception.
- As **Mr. Xi tries to rewrite the rules of the Party**, and indeed the contours of the existing world order, he needs his own enemies.

Agenda of indoctrination

The Chinese Communist Party's **patriotic indoctrination efforts consist of dedicated programmes** for both the Party members, and the general public.

- The new **'Patriotic Education' guidelines were introduced in 2019**, along with the '2019-2023 National Work Program for the Education and Cultivation of Party Members'.
- Though **largely similar in content with their previous avatars**, they present a much hard-line version of Communist ideology and aim for a wider dissemination of ideological indoctrination throughout Chinese society.

Personality cult at its core

- The Chinese Communist Party's propaganda machinery also **designs customised programmes that target specific sections of society as per the Party's perceived challenges**.
- While such top-down measures might elicit non-compliance or criticism from a public increasingly exposed to western ideas, **the Party-state secures absolute acquiescence through the promotion of a personality cult around the core leadership**, whereby all his actions become a rallying call for the masses.
- Though Mr. Xi's personality cult has percolated into practically all aspects of Chinese society, academic establishments have emerged as its primary targets.

The plans ahead

The **Xi Jinping cult of personality** is set to gain further momentum after the recently concluded fifth plenum of the Party which approved a plan for China to become a global leader in technology by 2035.

With this 15-year plan, Mr. Xi has further declared his intentions to remain at the helm of China's affairs long after his due retirement date as General Secretary of the Party in 2022.

PERSONAL CHOICES, THE CONSTITUTION'S ENDURANCE

GENERAL STUDIES - II (GOVERNMENT POLICIES)

Recently, the Allahabad High Court declared **that religious conversions, even when made solely for the purposes of marriage, constituted a valid exercise of a person's liberties.**

- The High Court ruled that the **freedom to live with a person of one's choice is intrinsic to the fundamental right to life and personal liberty.**
- In holding thus, **the order recognised that our society rested on the foundations of individual dignity**, that a person's freedom is not conditional on the caste, creed or religion that her partner might claim to profess, and that every person had an equal dominion over their own senses of conscience.

However, **various State governments undertaking projects to outlaw what they describe pejoratively as "Love Jihad"**, this decision is an important reminder of the Constitution's goals and promises.

Right to privacy

The High Court's order makes it clear that it is neither the province of the state nor any other individual to interfere with a person's choice of partner or faith.

- By **invoking the Supreme Court's judgment in Puttaswamy**, the High Court held that an individual's ability to control vital aspects of her life inheres in her right to privacy.
- **This promise includes the preservation of decisional autonomy**, on matters, among other things, of "personal intimacies, the sanctity of family life, marriage, procreation, the home, and sexual orientation".

Petitioners vs. State

The petitioners, **Salamat Ansari and Priyanka Kharwar**, had approached the High Court seeking orders to quash a First Information Report (FIR) that was lodged against them.

- The petitioners claimed that they were both adults competent to contract a marriage, and had, **wedded in August 2019, as per Muslim rites and ceremonies, only after Ms. Kharwar had converted to Islam.**
- **The State resisted these claims.** It argued that **Mr. Ansari and Ms. Kharwar's partnership had no sanctity in the law**, because a conversion with a singular aim of getting married was illegitimate.
- In making this argument, **the government relied on the judgment in Noor Jahan v. State of U.P. (2014).**

- There, the High Court had held that a **conversion by an individual to Islam was valid only when it was predicated on a “change of heart” and on an “honest conviction” in the tenets of the newly adopted religion.**
- Additionally, the High Court had ruled that the **burden to prove the validity of a conversion was on the party professing the act.**

High Court's ruling in Salamat Ansari case

Therefore, in Salamat Ansari case, it was argued that it was for the woman to establish that her conversion was borne out of her conscience and out of a deep-seated belief in the teachings of her new religion.

- The Division Bench rejected this theory. It held that **the judgment in Noor Jahan was incorrectly delivered.**
- **Marriage, the High Court said, is a matter of choice,** and every adult woman has a fundamental right to choose her own partner.
- **Even if such a decision encourages other concomitant decisions,** including a choice of religion, the state can have little to do with it.
- According to the High Court, the **Constitution is violated every time matters of intimate and personal choice** are made vulnerable to the paternal whims of the state.

Freedom of conscience

Article 25 of the Constitution expressly protects the choices that individuals make.

- In addition to the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion, it guarantees to every person the **freedom of conscience.**
- **By its dictionary definition,** “conscience” refers to each person’s own sense of moral right and wrong. It is an emotion that cannot be judged from the outside.
- It is **certainly not something that the state can examine** as a function of its sovereign authority.

A tenuous peace

In response to the judgment, **the government of Uttar Pradesh has introduced an ordinance which makes not only religious conversions** that are forcefully obtained an offence but that also declares void any conversion found to be made solely for marriage.

- **In supporting the law,** the State will likely rely on a 1977 Supreme Court judgment in *Rev. Stainislaus v. State of Madhya Pradesh*.
- There, **the Court upheld, on grounds of public order,** two of the earliest anti-conversion statutes in India: the **Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantrya Adhiniyam, 1968,** and the **Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967.**

These laws required that a **District Magistrate be informed each time a conversion was made** and prohibited any conversion that was obtained through fraud or illegal inducement.

Respect people's choices

When we fail to acknowledge and respect the most intimate and personal choices that people make — choices of faith and belief, choices of partners — we undermine the most basic principles of dignity.

Our **Constitution's** endurance depends on our ability to respect these decisions, to grant to every person an equal freedom of conscience.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 5th DECEMBER- 2020

THE MANY LAYERS TO AGRICULTURAL DISCONTENT

GENERAL STUDIES - II (GOVERNMENT POLICIES)

At a kisan rally in Uttar Pradesh in 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of his **vision of doubling the income of India's farmers by 2022**. Subsequently, several central leaders and even official committees have reiterated this tall promise.

- Probably, **one of the measures that the Union government proposed to sub-serve this end was in the form of the three Farm Bills in September 2020** — by liberalising access to agricultural markets, removing existing barriers to storage of agricultural produce, and facilitating contract-farming.
- **These measures have been defended on the basis of slogans such as 'One Nation, One Market'.**
- But, they appear to be more directed **to scoring brownie points in the 'Ease of doing business' index**. Probably, more policy measures were in the offing to sub-serve this objective.

The response

Paradoxically, **organised farmers' bodies are not in sync with the reasoning of the government.**

- A wide spectrum of the political Opposition in Parliament offered strong resistance to these Bills;
- Some State governments even enacted their own Bills that were largely directed against the key provisions of the central farm Acts even though the constitutional status of these enactments is highly dubious.

The pivotal role of states

However, these issues and the relation across them vary remarkably across the different regions of India and in terms of the different produce.

- There can be a debate on **constitutional provisions with regard to the respective domains of the State and the Union with regard to agricultural marketing.**
- There is little doubt that **issues affecting the farming community have a far greater bearing on the States relative to the Centre.**
- Ideally, given its immediacy, **the States are the apt agencies to respond to a host of concerns faced by the farming community,** which includes agricultural marketing.
- The **three Acts that are the focus of the farmers' agitation,** and which farmers have demanded be repealed, bear differently on the different strata of the farming community and in different regions.

APMC as cushion

In the very high-stake and large-scale farming in Punjab and Haryana, for instance, **weakening the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) system** by subjecting it to competition — and its resultant bearing on Minimum Support Price (MSP), particularly on crops such as rice and wheat — is seen by the farmers as a **threat to an assured sale of their produce at a price.**

- This APMC system provides a cushion, wherein the farmer can anticipate the cost of opting for these crops and tap the necessary supports through channels he has been familiar with.
- While elsewhere in the country the **dependence on the APMC system is variegated,** there is widespread apprehension that the measures proposed by the Farm Acts in addition to the existing agrarian distress, are only going to make the lot of the farmer even more precarious.

Movements and an evolution

But the way the three Farming Acts were enacted, tends to crystallise a common sympathy across the farming community in India.

- Initially, **there were ordinances that were passed when there was little urgency for these measures.**
- After three months, when they were brought as Bills before the Houses, **there was hardly any consultation with farmers' organisations.**
- They were **rushed through the Houses of Parliament** by paying little heed to the issues they raised.
- Farmers in India, have now shown that the saying, 'they cannot govern themselves. They have to be governed' is way off the mark.

The farming strata

Clearly, **the rich farmers** — those with large holdings and produce for the market — are **spearheading the present stand-off against the Farm Bills,** as it affects them very deeply. But farming distress is shared in common by the different strata within the farming community, even though it has a **differential impact on them.**

- The rich invested their surplus in agri-business and clearly hold access to the wider economic and institutional domains.
- The lower strata of the farming community is invariably beholden to the rich farmer not merely for employment but also to access resources and services.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 7th DECEMBER- 2020

INFLATION AND THE RBI'S ROLE IN TACKLING IT

GENERAL STUDIES - III (INDIAN ECONOMY)

The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently, announced its decision to hold the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 4%.

- MPC has resolved to stick with its 'accommodative' policy stance in the next fiscal year to help support economic recovery amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The MPC opined that inflation was likely to remain elevated, **"barring transient relief in the winter months from prices of perishables"**.
- This, it stressed, "constrains monetary policy at the current juncture from using the space available to act in support of growth".

The projection on CPI inflation

The **rate-setting panel** noted that the recovery appeared to be "far from being broad-based" and was **dependent on sustained policy support**.

- The policy support is offered by the central bank **through a raft of measures to ensure that credit availability remains adequate**.
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation**, the RBI said, **would average 6.8% for Q3 and 5.8% in Q4** before easing to a 5.2% to 4.6% range in the first half of the next financial year, starting April 2021.

How does India measure retail inflation?

Inflation is the rate of change in the prices of a given set of items.

- India bases its retail inflation metrics **on the Consumer Price Index (CPI)**.
- The index **records changes in prices for a sample of family budget items** that are **representative of what consumers typically spend their household income on** — food, fuel, housing, clothing, health, education, amusement and even paan, tobacco and intoxicants.
- The **measure is based on a weighted average**.
- That is, **some items in the index may get greater weightage depending on their priority in a typical family's budget**.
- **The CPI-based retail inflation is measured monthly** and is published as a percentage value of change in the index from the corresponding year-earlier period.

- Data for a certain month are **released by the Ministry of Statistics** and Programme Implementation generally on the **twelfth day of the subsequent month**.

Why is faster inflation a concern for policymakers?

- Faster retail inflation is **indicative of prices of household items rising quickly**.
- While inflation affects everyone, it is often referred to as a **'tax on the poor'** as the low-income stratum of society bears the brunt.
- **Persistent high inflation** pushes several items out of reach for this category of consumers.

For example:

Onions and potatoes are generally a key staple in an average Indian family's diet. But, if the price of potatoes starts rising rapidly, a poor household is often forced to sharply reduce or forgo its consumption of this key source of essential nutrients, including carbohydrates.

- **Over time, if unchecked**, persistent high inflation erodes the value of money and hurts several other segments of the population, including the elderly living off a fixed pension.
- It hence **ends up undermining a society's consumptive capacity**, and thereby, economic growth itself.

What is the RBI's role in tackling inflation?

The RBI's explicit mandate is to conduct monetary policy.

According to RBI's website:

*"The **primary objective of monetary policy** is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth. Price stability is a necessary precondition to sustainable growth."*

- In 2016, the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, was **amended to provide a statutory basis** for the implementation of a flexible inflation-targeting framework.
- Thus **the Centre and the RBI would review and agree upon a specific inflation target every five years**.
- Under this, **4% was set as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation target for the period from August 5, 2016, to March 31, 2021**, with the upper tolerance limit of 6% and the lower tolerance limit of 2%.
- The RBI through its MPC constantly assess **current levels of inflation and prices of various goods and services in the economy**.
- RBI also take **into consideration inflation expectations both of consumers and financial markets** so as to use an array of monetary tools, including interest rates, to contain inflation within its target range.

What is core inflation and why is it important?

Core inflation helps measure inflation after excluding the effects of temporary volatility, especially from prices of items such as fuel and food.

For example, seasonal spikes in food prices may skew the inflation rate, but the effect is only transitory.

- The RBI's action on rates, however, affects the economy with a lag, by which time the spikes in the price of those food items may have reversed. Viewing inflation after stripping out such volatility helps give it a better picture of the underlying trend in prices.
- **In its recent statement, the MPC noted:** "Cost-push pressures continue to impinge on core inflation, which has remained sticky and could firm up as economic activity normalises and demand picks up."

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 8th DECEMBER- 2020

HAVANA SYNDROME

GENERAL STUDIES - II (ISSUES RELATING TO HEALTH)

In late 2016, **US diplomats and other employees stationed in Havana reported feeling ill after hearing strange sounds and experiencing odd physical sensations.**

Nearly four years after a **mysterious neurological illness, referred to as "Havana syndrome"**, started to afflict American diplomats and intelligence operatives in Cuba, China, and other countries.

The Study

- A report by the **National Academies of Sciences (NAS)** has found **"directed" microwave radiation to be its "plausible" cause.**
- The study, **commissioned by the US State Department**, however, does not mention that the **"directed, pulsed radiofrequency energy"** was delivered intentionally.
- It also stopped short of naming a source even though **it did note that "significant research" had been conducted on microwave weapons in Russia/USSR.** Moscow has denied any role in the **"attacks"**.

What are 'microwave weapons'?

"Microwave weapons" are supposed to be a type of direct energy weapons, which aim highly focused energy in the form of sonic, laser, or microwaves, at a target.

- People **exposed to high-intensity microwave pulses have reported a clicking or buzzing sound**, as if seeming to be coming from within your head.
- It can have both **acute and long-term effects** — without leaving signs of physical damage.

What is the 'Havana syndrome'?

In late 2016, US diplomats and other employees stationed in Havana reported feeling ill after hearing strange sounds and experiencing odd physical sensations in their hotel rooms or homes.

CHROMEIAS ACADEMY

- **The symptoms included** nausea, severe headaches, fatigue, dizziness, sleep problems, and hearing loss, **which have since come to be known as “Havana Syndrome”**.
- **Cuba had denied any knowledge of the illnesses** even though the US had accused it of carrying out “sonic attacks”, leading to an increase in tensions.
- In all, more than two dozen American diplomats in Cuba and **China and at least 14 Canadian citizens in Havana reportedly have experienced similar symptoms**.

NAS report on the ‘Havana syndrome’

The NAS report, **examined four possibilities to explain the symptoms** — infection, chemicals, psychological factors and microwave energy.

- **The report concluded that “directed pulsed RF energy appears to be the most plausible mechanism in explaining these cases among those that the committee considered”**.
- **By calling it “directed” and “pulsed” energy**, the report leaves no room for confusion that the victims’ exposure was targeted and not due to common sources of microwave energy, such as, a mobile phone.
- The report also mentions that the immediate symptoms that patients reported — including sensations of pain and buzzing sound — **apparently emanated from a particular direction, or occurred in a specific spot in a room**.

How has the US government reacted?

Even though the US State Department **praised the National Academies of Sciences** for undertaking the effort, it highlighted that “each possible cause remains speculative” and the investigation was still “ongoing”.

- It **also flagged the committee’s lack of access to some information** because of potential security concerns that “limit the scope of the report,” though “they do not lessen its value”.
- Interestingly, State Department, had referred to the episodes as “attacks” after they first appeared in 2017.
- Since then, the **administration has refrained from using the word**.

What have previous studies said?

So far, **NAS report provides** the clearest and detailed estimation of what may have transpired.

- Over the years, the FBI, CIA, US military, National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have investigated the incidents without coming out with anything conclusive.
- Some scientists even **peddled theories like “psychological illness” due to the stressful environment of foreign missions**.
- A 2019 US academic study found **“brain abnormalities”** in the diplomats who had fallen ill.
- Besides, a medical team that examined 21 of those affected in Cuba did not mention “microwave weapons” in a study.

THE DANGERS OF MISPLACED OPTIMISM

GENERAL STUDIES - III (INDIAN ECONOMY)

Preliminary evidence that India's economy contracted by 7.5% in the second quarter of financial year 2020-21 was, as news, both good and bad.

- **Good because** that figure is far lower than the 23.9% contraction registered in the first quarter of this financial year.
- **Bad because** a 7.5% second quarter contraction is high both in itself and when compared with most similarly placed countries.
- The figure signals that the substantial relaxation of lockdown restrictions during that quarter has not ensured automatic recovery.

Background

Lockdowns limit production and result in a rundown of inventories. They also adversely affect employment, income and demand.

- When **lockdowns are relaxed, therefore, production must rise**, not just to meet demands backed by the available purchasing power but also to restore inventories to normal levels across the distribution chain.
- Once the latter is done, however, **demand must return to and rise above pre-crisis levels for production to recover and grow.**

Shunning of fiscal conservatism

With the lockdown-induced adverse effects on demand of the loss of jobs and livelihoods, the increased indebtedness and the bankruptcies precipitated by the crisis bound to be felt well after restrictions are relaxed.

- **The tasks of providing safety nets, reviving employment and spurring demand** become crucial. Since the market cannot deliver on those fronts, state action facilitated by substantially enhanced expenditure is crucial.
- Since government revenues shrink during a recession, that expenditure has to be funded by borrowing.
- This is no time for **fiscal conservatism**, as governments across the world have come to accept.

What is the Fiscal conservatism?

Fiscal conservatism is the **economic philosophy of prudence in government spending and debt.**

- Fiscal conservatives **advocate the avoidance of deficit spending**, the reduction of overall government spending and national debt whilst ensuring balanced budgets.

- In other words, **fiscal conservatives are against the government expanding beyond its means through debt**, but they will usually choose debt over tax increases

GDP movements

Going by the available numbers, there are a number of features underlying aggregate performance that are suggestive of the dynamic of the post-COVID-19 economy.

While the decline in **private final consumption expenditure** at constant prices, **which accounts for 56% of GDP**, has come down from minus 27% in the first quarter.

- Though **there are signs of a short-run recovery in private consumption demand** with the lifting of lockdowns, **net incomes and consumer confidence are not at levels that can even restore last year's levels.**
- While **the decline in fixed capital formation has fallen** from a high minus 47% in the first quarter to minus 7% in the second, investment is still falling year-on-year.

These are all signs of an economy that is severely demand constrained, requiring a significant step up in government expenditure.

Impact on States

However, **the centre, has not just chosen to hold back on its own spending** but is adopting a stance that would squeeze expenditure at the State level as well.

- The **shortfall in spending was sharper in the case of capital expenditure**, with 48% of that budgeted being spent over April to October. The corresponding figure for 2019-20 was 60%.
- This **refers to the Centre's own expenditures.**
- Meanwhile, with Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues having fallen from their lower-than-expected levels during the COVID-19 months, the States have been cash-strapped.

A possible explanation

The rationale that underlies this **privileging of fiscal conservatism over growth** is nowhere explained. But there are signs of where it possibly comes from.

- This is a government that chose to push through regressive labour codes and Farm Bills in the midst of a pandemic.
- It is a government **which sees not an opportunity to tax when incomes and wealth of the super-rich explode during pandemic times**, but a cause to **celebrate India's ability to 'ease' the doing of business and generate its own billionaires.**

Conclusion

It is, in sum, **unabashedly neoliberal, possibly in the mistaken belief** that, COVID-19 notwithstanding, such 'reform' would deliver a 'robust' and 'resilient' economy.

That **possibly explains the optimism that a V-shaped recovery is imminent**, and that optimism, in turn, would justify the view that fiscal conservatism pays.

THOUSAND DAYS OF NUTRITION, AND A BILLION DREAMS

GENERAL STUDIES - II (ISSUES RELATING TO HEALTH)

How far India goes in realising its billion plus dreams over the next decade or two will be determined by how well it nourishes the physical well-being and mental potential of its people, particularly its children.

- The single greatest threat that blocks the promise of India at a foundational level is malnutrition.
- Malnourished children tend to fall short of their real potential — physically as well as mentally. That is because malnutrition leaves their bodies weaker and more susceptible to illnesses.
- In 2017, a staggering 68% of 1.04 million deaths of children under five years in India was attributable to malnutrition, reckoned a Lancet study in 2019.

Heavy burden

Children who survive malnutrition do not do as well as they could.

- Without necessary nutrients, their brains do not develop to the fullest. Malnutrition places a burden heavy enough for India, to make it a top national priority.
- According to the Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey- About half of all children under five years in the country were found to be stunted (too short) or wasted (too thin) for their height.

Government's effort

The country has been making progress on nutrition for the last two decades.

- An overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN) Abhiyaan, was launched in 2018.
- Under it, the government strengthened the delivery of essential nutrition interventions so that more children have the right start in life for optimum growth, health, development and a prosperous future.

As the flagship programme (POSHAN Abhiyaan) completes 1,000 days this week.

It is time to renew our commitment to nutrition for two reasons.

1. **First**, because it conveys the deeply symbolic value of the first 1,000 days from conception of a child till the child turns two years old, marking the most crucial period for nutrition interventions in a lifecycle, which once missed could result in irreversible damage to the child's physical and mental well-being.
2. **Second**, focus on nutrition is critical as COVID-19 threatens to derail the gains India has made in nutrition in more than one way.

Post-COVID challenges

1. **COVID-19 is pushing millions into poverty**, reducing incomes of many more and disproportionately affecting the economically disadvantaged, who are also most vulnerable to malnutrition and food insecurities.
2. Pandemic-prompted lockdowns disrupted essential services — such as supplementary feeding under anganwadi centres, mid-day meals, immunisation, and micro-nutrient supplementation which can exacerbate malnutrition.

It is in this challenging backdrop, **leaders from academia, civil society, development partners, and the private sector have come together** to seek and support the government in a six-pronged action.

POSHAN Abhiyaan

It was launched by the Prime Minister on the occasion of the ***International Women's Day on 8 March, 2018 from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan.***

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) is India's flagship programme, launched in March 2018.
- **It aims to improve nutritional status** of children up to 6 years, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- It seeks ***to achieve specific targets for reduction in low birth weight babies, stunting growth, under nutrition and prevalence of anemia over next three years.***
- **NITI Aayog** has been entrusted with the task of closely monitoring the POSHAN Abhiyaan and undertaking periodic evaluations.

The four point strategy/pillars of the mission are:

- Inter-sectoral convergence for better service delivery
- Use of technology (ICT) for real time growth monitoring and tracking of women and children
- Intensified health and nutrition services for the first 1000 days
- Jan Andolan

Implementation of POSHAN Abhiyaan

The implementing departments /agencies like women and child development department through anganwari workers, health and family welfare department through ASHA, ANM, primary health centres, community health centres, school education and literary department through schools, panchayati raj department through panchayat, and rural development through self-help groups will carry out the activities and spread the message during the month.

Success of POSHAN Abhiyaan

One reason POSHAN Abhiyaan succeeded in galvanising action so fast was because it was led by the central authorities directly.

- That example must be sustained so that leadership of food and nutrition security rests with the Prime Minister at the national level, a Chief Minister at the State level, a district magistrate at the district and panchayat at the village level.
- This was already imperative for POSHAN Abhiyaan to succeed, but it has now become critical as COVID-19 compounds an already complex challenge.

India needs to ensure coverage of every single child and mother, along with 12 months of Poshan Maah (Nutrition Month), 52 weeks of breastfeeding weeks and 365 days of take-home ration.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 11th DECEMBER- 2020

FRANCE'S DRAFT LAW AND 'ISLAMISM'

GENERAL STUDIES - II (IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS)

Recently, the **French cabinet presented a draft law that targets “radical Islamism”** — although the word “Islamist” is not part of the text.

- The Bill is called a law **“to reinforce Republican principles”**.
- Prime Minister Jean Castex has said it is **“not a text against religion, nor against the Muslim religion”**, but against radical Islamism, whose objective, he said, is “to divide French people from one another.”
- The Bill comes in the wake of a series of terror attacks in recent years.

What does the proposed law aim to do?

It envisages a range of measures, such as:

- School education reforms to ensure Muslim children do not drop out,
- Stricter controls on mosques and preachers, and
- Rules against hate campaigns online.

Once the law comes into force, French mosques could see increased surveillance of their activities, such as financing.

- The government would be able to exercise supervision over the training of imams.
- It will have greater powers to shut down places of worship **receiving public subsidies if they go against “republican principles” such as gender equality.**

French secularism laws

Under French secularism laws, or **laïcité**, there is already a **ban on state employees displaying religious symbols that are “conspicuous”, such as the crucifix or hijab.**

- This **ban would now be extended** beyond government bodies to any sub-contracted public service.

CHROMEIAS ACADEMY

- There would also be a **clampdown on home-schooling for children over age three**, with parents from to be dissuaded from enrolling them in underground Islamic structures.
- Doctors who issue “**virginity certificates**” would be fined or jailed.
- Officials would be **banned from granting residency permits to polygamous applicants**.
- **Couples would be interviewed separately by city hall officials prior to their wedding** to find out if they have been forced into marriage.
- Stricter punishments would be introduced for **online hate speech**.

What has been the reaction?

The sharpest criticism of the Bill has come from abroad.

- **Turkish President Recep Erdogan**, has called the proposed law an “**open provocation**”.
- **The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Egypt’s top cleric**, has called Macron’s views “**racist**”.
- For his part, **Macron said recently**, “I will not allow anybody to claim that France, or its government, is fostering racism against Muslims.”

Why is it significant politically?

Macron faces re-election in 2022, and experts say he is appealing to France’s right-wing voters after facing a series of electoral losses this year.

- The President has **also been facing protests over a proposed “global security” legislation**.
- Macron, who describes his politics as “**neither right nor left**” — he was with the Socialist Party until 2009 — faces a challenge from right-wing politician Marine Le Pen, who has led the charge against him for not cracking down hard enough against Islamism.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 12th DECEMBER- 2020

THE ANTITRUST SUIT AGAINST FACEBOOK

GENERAL STUDIES - II (EFFECT OF POLICIES OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES)

Two lawsuits filed by the United States federal government and governments of 48 US states and territories have put under the scanner **the acquisition by Facebook of Instagram and WhatsApp – and therefore, the present structure of the giant social media company**.

Background

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC)’s in a lawsuit has accused Facebook of eliminating competition with the acquisitions — even though the FTC itself had approved the deals.

FTC’s Bureau of Competition said:

- Facebook’s actions to entrench and maintain its monopoly deny consumers the benefits of competition.
- Our aim is to roll back Facebook’s anti-competitive conduct and restore competition so that innovation and free competition can thrive.

What does the FTC's lawsuit say?

The FTC has alleged that Facebook **"is illegally maintaining its personal social networking monopoly through a years-long course of anticompetitive conduct"**.

The lawsuit followed a **"lengthy investigation"** by a **"coalition of attorneys general"** of 46 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam.

Key points in the Lawsuit

The case has been filed under **Section 2 of the Sherman Act**, which the FTC enforces through Section 5 of the FTC Act.

- Section 2 of the Sherman Act **prohibits companies from using anti-competitive means to acquire or maintain a monopoly.**
- **Facebook's 2012 acquisition of Instagram** for \$1 billion and the **2014 acquisition of WhatsApp** for \$19 billion are **being cited as attempts to illegally eliminate competition.**
- Facebook has been made accused of **imposing "anti-competitive conditions on software developers"**.
- Facebook is **restricting its "third-party software developers' access to valuable interconnections to its platform"** by exercising strict control over its application programming interfaces or APIs.

What does the FTC want?

The lawsuit seeks **"divestitures of assets, including Instagram and WhatsApp"**.

- If the FTC wins, **Facebook might be forced to sell Instagram and WhatsApp**, two products that are crucial to driving the company's growth.
- The FTC also wants to **"prohibit Facebook from imposing anti-competitive conditions on software developers"**.

The concerns about Facebook's acquisition of Instagram and WhatsApp

The FTC has noted that the acquisition of Instagram came at a time **when users were switching "from desktop computers to smartphones"** and **"increasingly embracing photo-sharing"**.

- According to the FTC, **"Facebook quickly recognized that Instagram was ... an existential threat to Facebook's monopoly power."**
- And **when Facebook was not able to compete with Instagram**, it **"ultimately chose to buy"** the app to eliminate the threat.
- **With WhatsApp**, Facebook did the same.

How has Facebook responded?

Facebook has called the lawsuits **"revisionist history."**

It is not true that it has no competition, and named **"Apple, Google, Twitter, Snap, Amazon, TikTok and Microsoft"**.

- The lawsuits ignore the fact that users can and do move often to competing apps.
- Facebook recalled that the **FTC had cleared the Instagram deal after an in-depth review.**
- The WhatsApp transaction **had been reviewed by the European Union as well.**

Facebook said “The evidence will show that Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp belong together, competing on the merits with great products.”

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 14th DECEMBER- 2020

CRITICISM OF MAHARASHTRA’S PROPOSED LAWS AGAINST SEXUAL OFFENCES

GENERAL STUDIES - II (GOVERNMENT POLICIES)

Criticism of Maharashtra’s proposed laws against sexual offences

Recently, two bills cleared by the Maharashtra Cabinet are expected to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly during the two-day Winter Session.

- The Bills — **the Maharashtra Shakti Bill, 2020**, and the **Special Court and Machinery for Implementation of Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law, 2020** — enhance punishment for violence against women and children, and include the death penalty for some offences.
- These bills have been criticised by prominent women’s rights advocates for being “draconian” and “anti-women”.

Highlights of the Draft Bill

- The draft Bill proposes **to make changes to the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.**
- The **changes are proposed in existing sections of rape, sexual harassment, acid attack and child sexual abuse.**
- The **Bill proposes death penalty in cases** of rape, gang rape, rape by persons in authority, aggravated sexual assault of minors and in cases of acid attack when grievous injury is caused.
- The **death penalty is proposed in cases which are heinous in nature** and where adequate conclusive evidence is available and circumstances warrant exemplary punishment.
- The draft Bill proposes an **additional law to deal with abuse of women on social media.**
- **Section 354E** is added to include intentional acts creating “a sense of danger, intimidation, and fear to a woman” apart from insulting her modesty by any act, deed or words including offensive communication will be an offence with a maximum punishment of two years and a Rs 1 lakh fine.
- The Bill also **makes provision for making a “false complaint” or provides false information** in respect of offence committed stating that anyone who does that “solely

with the intention to humiliate, extort or threaten or defame or harass” a person shall face imprisonment for a term up to one year or fine or both.

Who are the individuals and groups opposing the two Bills?

- These Bills are opposed by **women and child rights groups, lawyers, activists, academics and LGBTQ+ rights activists.**
- Members of organisations such as the Mumbai-based queer feminist LGBT collective LABIA, Akhil Bharatiya Janwadi Mahila Sangathana, women’s rights forum Awaaz-e-Niswan, and Forum Against Oppression of Women, are among the signatories.

What are their objections?

According to them, the two Bills — framed on the **lines of The Andhra Pradesh Disha Act, 2019** — should have been discussed with lawyers, activists, and academics working on women’s issues before they were passed by the state Cabinet.

- An **amendment has been proposed to Section 375 (rape) of the IPC**, to add an “explanation” that says that in cases where parties are adults and their conduct suggest there was “consent or implied consent”, a presumption of consent will be made.
- This, the activists say, **“feeds into the patriarchal construct of consent and conduct of women”**.
- **Consensual sexual intercourse** is very often used as defence by accused in cases of rape — and with such an explanation inserted into the law, proving rape will be impossible.
- Again, **Section 12 of The Special Courts and Machinery for the Implementation of Shakti Act, 2020**, will punish the filing of false complaints.
- This, according to the signatories, **“perpetuates the patriarchal notions of viewing women with suspicion, as unworthy of being believed”** — and will deter victims from reporting sexual offences.

The argument to oppose the hanging of perpetrators of sexual offences against women

The women’s rights activists say this will be counter-productive.

- In several offences of rape of adult women or under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, **the perpetrators of the crime are family members.**
- If the **offence is made punishable with death, many victims may not find support from their families**, which will result in the offence going unreported.
- In addition, **it would endanger the lives of victims as seen in some cases** in which the offenders have killed the rape victim if murder and rape both attract the same punishment.

Conclusion

The signatories have said, this sends a “wrong and lethal message” to rape survivors. “The message it sends is that after an incident like rape her life is as good as over; she is as good as dead,” they have written.

They have also stressed that women and child rights activists and scholars have repeatedly stated that the death penalty reduces both the reporting of sexual offences and of conviction rates.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 15th DECEMBER- 2020

CONCERNS OVER RELOCATING OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES

GENERAL STUDIES - II (INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD)

Recently, United Nations (UN) human rights investigator had **requested Bangladesh to allow a safety assessment of the remote islet of Bhashan Char**, where the government had shipped 1,600-odd Rohingya refugees.

- The UN said it was not involved in the transfer of the refugees there.
- According to the UN human rights investigator for Myanmar, **the assessment and verification process to ensure that the refugees were not forced to go were in the “best interest of all”**.
- Other human rights agencies have also criticised the move.

Bhashan Char

Bhashan Char is a char-land of around 13,000 acres, **formed by the accumulation of silt** where the river Meghna meets the Bay of Bengal carrying rich alluvial deposits.

Char-lands are a common feature in Meghna and Padma rivers and literally mean “shifting landmass”.

- As the name reveals, **the char was not part of the permanent land feature of Bangladesh**, but appeared recently.
- Bhashan Char is surrounded by a mangrove forest that has given it geographical stability.
- **Sensing a tourism opportunity**, the Bangladesh government had declared **Bhashan Char as a protected forest land in 2013**. It is a two-and-a-half-hours boat ride away from Cox’s Bazar in Chittagong.
- **The main argument for the char-land being unsafe** is that these lands are known to be unstable and flood-prone.
- **The other fear factor** includes the tropical cyclones that visit the area every year.

Who are Rohingyas?

The Rohingya people **are an ethnic group from Myanmar**, once called Burma. Most live in **Rakhine State on Myanmar’s western coast**.

- The ethnic minority is considered **“the most persecuted minority in the world”** by the United Nations.

- The **story of that persecution has its roots in Britain's colonization of Burma**, and modern-day Myanmar's refusal to recognize the existence of a people who have existed for thousands of years.
- They were not granted full citizenship by Myanmar. They were classified as "resident foreigners or associate citizens".
- Ethnically they are much closer to Indo-Aryan people of India and Bangladesh than to the Sino-Tibetans of the Country.

The Rohingyas crises

When Myanmar became a military state in 1962, the Rohingya became victims of state-sponsored persecution.

- **During "Operation King Dragon,"** Burmese military forces targeted the Rohingya people, and were accused of human rights abuses including rape, destruction of houses and villages, and mass arrests.
- Rohingya people began fleeing to nearby Bangladesh in huge numbers. Another targeted campaign,
- **"Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation,"** pushed another 200,000 people out of the country.
- As of August 2018, over 723,000 Rohingya refugees had fled to Bangladesh.
- Many settled in the **Kutupalong refugee settlement**, now the world's largest.

What is the arrangement for the Rohingya?

Over the past few years, Bangladesh **has constructed roads and brought modern telecommunication networks to Bhashan Char.**

- The Bangladesh government has earmarked around 1,350 acres for the Rohingya refugees, of which 432 acres is dedicated to their rehabilitation and the rest remains for future projects.
- The government has constructed a large number of housing units in the section designated for the Rohingya.
- The country sent 1,642 Rohingya refugees to the islet from their temporary camps in Kutupalong, near Cox's Bazar.
- They are being housed in **red-roofed residential units and most houses are built four feet above the ground** to help them withstand unexpected high tidal waves.

Why is Bangladesh moving the refugees?

Rohingya refugees of **Kutupalong have been living in a large refugee camp near the forested borders with Myanmar since 2017.**

- Ever since their arrival, the refugees, numbering 1.1 million, have been living in Kutupalong under bamboo and tarpaulin structures.
- The **camp is located on a hillock**, which was a sanctuary for elephants and other wild animals.

- Kutupalong has also been in the news for its rising crime rate. Bangladesh argues that the islet will provide a safer place.

Why are human rights agencies upset?

- Amnesty International said Bangladesh must “drop” its plans to shift Rohingya refugees to Bhashan Char as the char-land had not yet been declared safe for habitation by the United Nations.
- Amnesty International claimed that many Rohingya who were asked to relocate said they were coerced.

What happens next?

Diplomatic sources have confirmed that Dhaka does not plan to relocate the entire refugee settlement and only aims at reducing the congestion in Kutupalong.

The country’s long-term plan for Rohingya refugees is to seek their repatriation to the Rakhine province of Myanmar.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 16th DECEMBER- 2020

S-400 DEAL WITH RUSSIA AND RELATION WITH USA

GENERAL STUDIES - II (BILATERAL AGREEMENTS)

The United States has imposed sanctions on Turkey over Ankara’s acquisition of Russian S-400 air defence systems.

- Ankara acquired the Russian S-400 ground-to-air defenses in mid-2019 and says they pose no threat to NATO allies.
- Washington has long been threatening sanctions on Turkey and had removed the country from an F-35 jet program last year.

With India set to get the consignment of the S-400 air defence system early next year, New Delhi is watching Washington’s moves closely.

While it has got a waiver from the outgoing Trump administration, Delhi hopes that the incoming Biden administration would not work towards reversing the decision.

What is the S-400 air defence missile system?

The S-400 Triumf, (NATO calls it SA-21 Growler), is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.

- It is the **most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world**, considered much ahead of the **US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD)**.
- **The system can engage all types of aerial targets** including aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV and ballistic and cruise missiles within the range of 400km, at an altitude of up to 30km.
- The system **can track 100 airborne targets** and **engage six of them simultaneously**.
- It represents the **fourth generation of long-range Russian SAMs**, and the successor to the S-200 and S-300.
- The S-400's mission set and capabilities are roughly comparable to the famed US Patriot system.

Key features of S-400 Triumph

The S-400 Triumph air defence system integrates a multifunction radar, autonomous detection and targeting systems, anti-aircraft missile systems, launchers, and command and control centre.

- It is **capable of firing three types of missiles** to create a layered defence.
- The S-400 is **two-times more effective than previous Russian air defence systems** and can be deployed within five minutes.
- **It can also be integrated into the existing and future air defence units** of the Air Force, Army, and the Navy.

India's acquisition of S-400 Triumph

In October 2015, Defence Acquisition Council considered buying **12 units of S-400 for its defence needs**.

- But, on evaluation, **in December 2015, five units were found adequate**. The deal is worth about USD 5 billion.
- **The deal is near fruition, and negotiations are at an "advanced stage"**, and now it is expected to be signed before a summit meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin.
- India's acquisition **is crucial to counter attacks in a two-front war**, including even high-end F-35 US fighter aircraft.

What is CAATSA, and how did the S-400 deal fall foul of this Act?

Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) was passed unanimously by the US Congress and signed reluctantly by US President Donald Trump.

- Enacted on August 2, 2017, **its core objective is to counter Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures**.
- **Section 231 of the Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions** — enumerated in Section 235 of the Act — on persons engaged in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.

- CAATSA, if implemented in its stringent form, **would have affected India's defence procurement from Russia.**

Exemption for India

CAATSA impacts Indo-US ties and dents the image of the US as a reliable partner.

- At a time when the US is projecting India as a key partner in its Indo-Pacific strategy, with the US National Security Strategy 2017 explicitly supporting New Delhi's vital role in this regard.
- Recently, a **US Congressional committee has proposed waivers for India** from stringent sanctions under Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).
- This is directed against those doing business with Russia's defence industry.

Way forward

India hopes that Washington understands New Delhi's security imperatives, **especially with a hostile China along the border.**

This is more important since Indian and Chinese soldiers have been in a face-off situation for more than six months now, with no resolution in sight.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 17th DECEMBER- 2020

MAHARASHTRA HOUSE RESOLUTION ON ARNAB GOSWAMI AND ITS FACE-OFF WITH JUDICIARY

GENERAL STUDIES - II (SEPARATION OF POWERS)

Recently, both Houses of the Maharashtra State Legislature passed a proposal that is appeared to **questioning the boundaries of the judiciary's powers.**

The decision has added a new twist to the debate over the separation of powers between the judiciary and legislature.

The doctrine of separation of power

The doctrine of separation of power is a **part of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution, even though it is not specifically mentioned in its text.**

- It implies that the **three pillars of democracy, namely the executive, judiciary and legislature**, perform separate functions and act as separate entities.
- One of the features of the doctrine is that one **arm of the state should not interfere in the functioning of the other organs or exercise a function of another organ.**

The resolution passed by the Maharashtra Assembly

Both Houses of the Maharashtra State Legislature passed the proposals stating that **they will not take cognizance of or reply to any notice sent by the High Court or the Supreme Court in the Breach of Privilege motion against Republic TV editor and anchor Arnab Goswami.**

- Both the proposals stated that **replying to such notices could mean accepting that the judiciary can keep a check on the legislature** and would be **“inconsistent with the basic structure of the Constitution”**.
- The proposals were passed during the two-day Winter Session that ended Tuesday.

The Maharashtra Government’s Stand

- Maharashtra legislative Speaker Nana Patole said: ‘The Constitution has set clear cut boundaries for the three organs of the government – the judiciary, the legislature and the executive. Each organ should honour these boundaries. No one should encroach on each other’s territories.’
- The Chairman of upper house: **“...publicly, the legislature, secretariat, its secretaries and other officers responding to court notices and other correspondence means, in a way, accepting that the judiciary can keep a check on the legislature and it would be inconsistent with the Basic Structure of the Constitution.”**

Reasons for the Maharashtra Assembly to pass such a resolution

The genesis of the proposal:

- The privilege motion was filed by the **members of Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi Government against Republic TV editor and anchor Arnab Goswami.**
- **Two such separate privilege motions were filed** on September 8 in the Legislative Assembly against Goswami.
- Seeking admission of his motion, Goswami was accused of using **“derogatory language” and making baseless remarks against Chief Minister and NCP president.**
- He further said that **Goswami has been frequently insulting ministers, Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha members during TV debates.**
- **Another one was moved in the Legislative Council** on the same day.
- The proposal was forwarded by the Chairman of the Legislative Council on November 3 to the Privilege Committee for an inquiry.

Arnab Goswami’s counteraction

Goswami had moved the Supreme Court to challenge one of the privilege motions filed against him.

While the court granted relief to Goswami from arrest in the matter.

Supreme Court’s Action

The Supreme Court **took exception to a letter** dated October 13 sent to Goswami by Maharashtra Legislative Secretariat’s deputy secretary Vilas Athawale.

- The letter is alleged to have raised questions on how **Goswami submitted confidential proceedings in the Lower House regarding breach of the privilege motion against him to the Supreme Court without the Speaker's permission.**
- The **SC stated that the content of the letter was to "intimidate the petitioner"** and Supreme Court had issued a showcase notice to deputy secretary asking him to explain **why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against him for his letter to the journalist.**

The **proposal moved by the Maharashtra Assembly is an attempt to safeguard itself against** any such notice and ensure that its officials or the speaker are not asked to present itself against the court.

The legal provisions under the state assembly invoked while passing the proposal

The proposal cites two articles of the constitution as the basis of its argument.

They are articles 194 of the Constitution: it lays down the powers and privileges of the Houses of Legislatures.

1. **Article 194 states that** there shall be freedom of speech in the Legislature of every State and **no member of the Legislature of a State shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in the Legislature or any committee** thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of a House of such a Legislature of any report, paper, votes or proceedings.
2. **Article 212 states** that the validity of any proceedings in the Legislature of a State shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure and no officer or member of the Legislature of a State in whom powers are vested by or under this Constitution for regulating procedure or the conduct of business, or for maintaining order, in the Legislature shall be subject to the jurisdiction of any court in respect of the exercise by him of those powers.

The earlier precedents of similar proposal

In 2010, Congress MLA Yashomati Thakur had moved a privilege motion against Shrinivas Karve, head of the caste verification committee.

- The officer challenged the motion in court and the Bombay High Court had subsequently issued summons to the MLA and served notices to legislature officials.
- Subsequently in April 2011, **the state assembly passed a resolution** to deny the summons served to office bearers and members of the assembly by a court.
- While the MLA did not have to present herself before court, **Karve in 2013 was handed a one-day civil imprisonment punishment by the State Legislative Assembly** as part of the privilege proceedings.

CURRENCY MANIPULATION

GENERAL STUDIES - II (EFFECT OF POLICIES OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES)

The United States has once again included India in its monitoring list of countries with potentially “**questionable foreign exchange policies**” and “**currency manipulation**”.

This comes a year after India was removed from the watch-list in the US Treasury Department’s semi-annual foreign-exchange report to the US Congress.

Who are labelled as ‘currency manipulator’?

This is a label given by the US government to countries it feels are engaging in “**unfair currency practices**” by **deliberately devaluing their currency against the dollar**.

- The practice would mean that the country in question is artificially lowering the value of its currency to gain an unfair advantage over others.
- This is because the devaluation would reduce the cost of exports from that country and artificially show a reduction in trade deficits as a result.

What are the parameters used?

An economy **meeting two of the three criteria in the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act** of 2015 is placed on the Monitoring List.

This includes:

1. A “**significant**” **bilateral trade surplus with the US** — one that is at least \$20 billion over a 12-month period.
2. A **material current account surplus** equivalent to at least 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over a 12-month period.
3. “**Persistent**”, **one-sided intervention** — when net purchases of foreign currency totalling at least 2 percent of the country’s GDP over a 12 month period are conducted repeatedly, in at least six out of 12 months.

The countries in the latest monitoring list

The US Department of the Treasury in its latest report to the US Congress, has included **India, Taiwan and Thailand to its Monitoring List** of major trading partners that “merit close attention” to their currency practices and macroeconomic policies.

- Other countries in the latest list comprise **China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Italy, Singapore, Malaysia**.
- India was **last included in the currency watchlist in October 2018**, but **removed from the list** that came out in May 2019.

Why is India back in the Monitoring List again?

- According to the latest report, India, which has for several years maintained a “significant” bilateral goods trade surplus with the US, **crossed the \$20 billion mark**.
- Bilateral goods trade surplus totaled \$22 billion in the first four quarters through June 2020.

Implication

The designation of a country as a currency manipulator **does not immediately attract any penalties**, but **tends to dent the confidence about a country** in the global financial markets.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 19th DECEMBER- 2020

DIFFERENT VOTER'S LISTS AND A COMMON ELECTORAL ROLL

GENERAL STUDIES - II (SEPARATION OF POWERS BETWEEN VARIOUS ORGANS)

The common electoral roll is among the promises made by the BJP in its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections last year.

Recently, The Prime Minister's Office held a meeting with representatives of the Election Commission and the Law Ministry to discuss the possibility of having a common electoral roll for elections to the panchayat, municipality, state assembly and the Lok Sabha.

How many types of electoral rolls in our country?

In many states, the **voters' list for the panchayat and municipality elections is different** from the one used for Parliament and Assembly elections.

Why the distinction?

- The distinction stems from the fact that the **supervision and conduct of elections in our country are entrusted with two constitutional authorities** — the Election Commission (EC) of India and the State Election Commissions (SECs).
- **Set up in 1950, the Election Commission of India (ECI) is charged with the responsibility of conducting polls** to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India, and to Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils.
- **The State Election Commissions (SECs)**, on the other hand, supervise municipal and panchayat elections.
- They are free to prepare their own electoral rolls for local body elections, and this exercise does not have to be coordinated with the EC.

Separate voters list in States for their local body elections?

- Each SEC is **governed by a separate state Act**.
- Some state laws allow the **SEC to borrow and use the EC's voter's rolls for the local body elections**.
- In others, the state commission uses the **EC's voters list as the basis for the preparation and revision of rolls for municipality and panchayat elections**.
- **Currently, all states, except** Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, **adopt EC's rolls for local body polls**.

Union government's plan for a common electoral roll for all elections

- The common electoral roll is among the promises made by the BJP in its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections last year.
- It ties in with the party's commitment to hold elections simultaneously to the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies.
- The incumbent government has pitched a common electoral roll and simultaneous elections as a way **to save an enormous amount of effort and expenditure**.
- It has argued that **the preparation of a separate voters list causes duplication of essentially the same task between two different agencies, thereby duplicating the effort and the expenditure**.

How does the government intend to implement it?

- First, a **constitutional amendment to Articles 243K and 243ZA** that give the power of superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of local body elections to the **State Election Commissions (SECs)**.
- The **amendment would make it mandatory to have a single electoral roll** for all elections in the country.
- **Second, to persuade the state governments to tweak their respective laws** and adopt the Election Commission's (EC) voters list for municipal and panchayat polls.

Election Commission

- The Election Commission is a **permanent and an independent body** established by the Constitution of India directly to ensure free and fair elections in the country.
- **Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the power of** superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission.
- Thus, **the Election Commission is an all-India body in the sense that it is common to both the Central government and the state governments**.
- It must be noted here that the election commission is not concerned with the elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states.
- For this, the **Constitution of India provides for a separate State Election Commission**.

State Election Commission

- The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections to the panchayats shall be vested in the state election commission.
- It consists of a state election commissioner to be appointed by the governor. His conditions of service and tenure of office shall also be determined by the governor.
- He shall not be removed from the office except in the manner and on the grounds prescribed for the removal of a judge of the state high court.
- His conditions of service shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.
- The state legislature may make provision with respect to all matters relating to elections to the panchayats.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 21st DECEMBER- 2020

NFHS DATA AND CONCERN OF THE LATEST ROUND FINDINGS

GENERAL STUDIES - II (ISSUES RELATING TO HEALTH)

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) recently released the results from the first phase of the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)**.

This is **the fifth such survey and the first phase** — for which data was collected in the second half of 2019 — covered 17 states and five Union Territories.

What is NFHS?

National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a **large-scale nationwide survey of representative households**. The data is collected over multiple rounds.

- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** has designated **International Institute for Population Sciences** in Mumbai as the nodal agency.
- **The survey is a collaborative effort of IIPS; ORC Macro, Maryland (US); and the East-West Center, Hawaii (US).**
- The survey is **funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** with supplementary support from UNICEF.
- This is the **fifth NFHS** and refers to the 2019-20 period.
- **The first four referred** to 1992-93, 1998-99, 2005-06 and 2015-16, respectively.

What data does it collect?

The initial factsheet for **NFHS-5** provides **state-wise data on 131 parameters**.

These parameters include questions such as how many households get drinking water, electricity and improved sanitation; what is sex ratio at birth, what are infant and child

mortality metrics, what is the status of maternal and child health, how many have high blood sugar or high blood pressure etc.

In the fifth iteration, there are new questions on preschool education, disability, access to a toilet facility, death registration, bathing practices during menstruation, and methods and reasons for abortion are added.

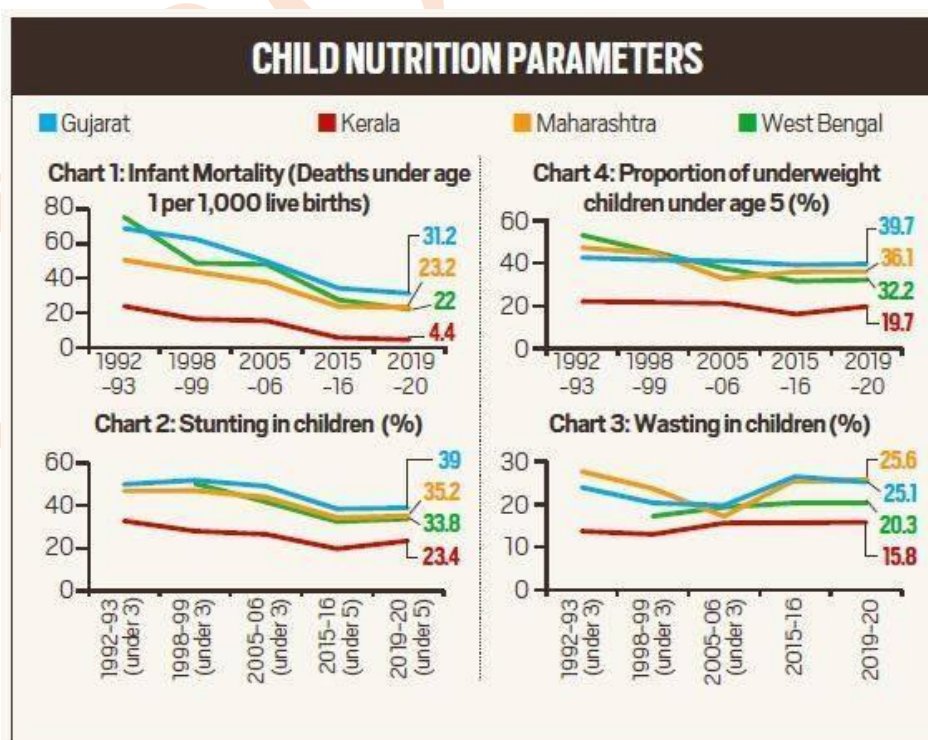
Why are NFHS results important?

The NFHS database is possibly the most important one **because it not only feeds into the research needs and informs advocacy but also is central to both central and state-level policymaking.**

What has NFHS-5 found?

Researchers and experts on health and welfare metrics have described the latest **results as “shocking”, “alarming” and “very troublesome”.**

- On several parameters, **the number of states worsening over the last round** — NFHS-4 (2015-16) — is not only high but often more than the number of states improving.
- The most troubling is that on child malnutrition parameters **several states have either been stagnant or worsened.**
- In other words, children born between 2014 and 2019 (that is, 0 to 5 years of age) are more malnourished than the previous generation.
- **Another cause of concern** is the fact that the first phase data is pre-pandemic and it is quite likely that the second phase — which will also incorporate Covid’s impact — may throw up ever poorer results.



Concerns

- **Worsening child malnutrition**, as well as **rising levels of anaemia in women** (especially pregnant ones), points to Indian children born in the past 5 years likely suffering from both cognitive and physical deficiencies.
- In January 2012, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had said that high child malnutrition level in India was “**a national shame**”.
- The latest results show that health-wise, **India has taken a turn for the worse since 2015 despite improvements in water availability and sanitation methods.**

Significance of these results

Health outcomes such as **child malnutrition data are the result of a complex set of reasons** — ranging from the state of a family’s income generation to environmental factors to government interventions.

Experts say that only **when the full set of raw unit-level data is available can a proper analysis of why India suffered such reversals over the past five years be done.**

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 22nd DECEMBER- 2020

TEACHER VACANCIES AT IITS AND RESERVATION

GENERAL STUDIES - II (ISSUES RELATING TO EDUCATION)

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have a **large number of faculty vacancies**, as the **student intake capacity was raised by over 50% during 2008-10** after reservation for **Other Backward Classes** students was introduced.

Currently, **there are 23 IITs**, and **reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)** has been added.

Need of new faculties

- Since the ratio of students to teachers has come under strain, and the high bar for entry of teachers, starting with a doctoral degree, **has shrunk the pool of eligible aspirants from reserved categories.**
- The Education Ministry **formed a committee to look at implementing the reservation system** effectively.

Who is responsible for recruitment?

- Student admissions and teachers’ appointments are covered by the **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006**, and the **CEI (Reservation in Teachers’ Cadre) Act, 2019.**

- Beneficiaries belong to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and EWS.

Committee's Proposal

The Ministry **Committee headed by the Director of IIT Delhi, V. Ramgopal Rao**, met twice in the current year, and came up with two options.

1. According to the first, **the government could in effect sidestep the faculty reservation question by including IITs in the schedule to the 2019 law**, providing them exemption as in the case of some national institutions of importance.
2. The second option provides for **de-reservation of positions if no suitable candidates are found in the year of recruitment**.

The recommendations have **evoked a strong reaction, as they are seen as negating the objective of affirmative action** through reservation.

Why is it difficult to find candidates in reserved categories?

The Committee said in its report that the IITs, set up as **institutions of national importance** under a special law to contribute to national and even global development, had to pursue high quality teaching and research.

- **Aspirants must therefore possess a PhD degree**, as well as a superior academic record and "high research accomplishments" for teaching.
- **The IITs also come within the ambit of a special dispensation** backed by the Human Resource Development Ministry (now the Education Ministry) in 2009, which enables a flexible cadre structure.

Student to Faculty ratio

- **About a decade ago**, the student to faculty ratio was estimated at **about 6:1**, which facilitated closer monitoring and pursuit of projects that make IIT courses unique.
- **This faculty ratio later fell to 12:1**, and appears to be under further strain.
- The Education Ministry's Committee has pointed out that the **optimal is a ratio of 10:1**, on the basis of which faculty numbers have been set.

What remedy is the Committee offering?

Towards speedy resolution of the faculty issue, **it came up with two options:**

- To include the IITs in the schedule to the 2019 law on teachers' recruitment, which would exempt these institutes from reservation.
- **As a second option**, the panel suggested that faculty at the **level of Assistant Professor Grade I and II be given reservation, including for EWS**, and the vacancies considered for the institution as a whole, and not for each department.
- Where **suitable candidates from the reserved category are unavailable, the posts should be de-reserved in the next year**, with approval from the Board of Governors.
- Also, **Associate Professor and Professor posts should be exempted from reservation**.

What is the government's position?

- The report of the Committee, is “under examination” by the government, according to the Ministry of Education.
- Although **it aims at addressing a critical gap**, the recommendation to do away with reservation is at odds with the stated position of the Central government.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 23rd DECEMBER- 2020

PATHALGADI MOVEMENT

GENERAL STUDIES - II (ISSUES RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT)

Soon after taking charge, the Hemant Soren-led government in **Jharkhand** had decided to drop “all cases” related to the Pathalgadi movement of 2017-2018.

Almost a year later, **the Soren government is still to send a requisition to the court to withdraw the cases**, many of which involved charges of sedition, filed by the BJP government led by Raghubar Das.

What is Pathalgadi?

The word pathalgadi is drawn from a **tribal custom of erecting stone plaques on the tomb of tribal people in Jharkhand**, which has **32 tribal communities**.

It is also done in honour of their ancestors, to announce important decisions regarding their families and villages or to simply mark the boundary of their villages.



Background of Pathalgadi movement

When the Provisions of the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA)** came into force, former IAS officer BD Sharma, started the practice of erecting stone plaques in villages with provisions of the Act inscribed on it.

This was done **to empower people belonging to the 5th Schedule area on their legal and constitutional safeguards.**

The pathals also quoted several orders of High Courts and Supreme Court which says;

- **to preserve the tribal autonomy, their culture and economic empowerment, to ensure social, economic and political justice, and preservation of peace and good governance;** and
- **'special legislations cannot be held to be unconstitutional** on the ground of violation of other fundamental rights, such as **Article 14 and 19(1)(g)' and others.**

These provisions and orders to reiterate

- **supremacy of powers of traditional Gram Sabha and traditional Adivasi governance systems;**
- **rights of Adivasis over land;**
- **the restricted rights of non-advasis and outsiders in the scheduled areas to settle down and work and;**
- **that Adivasis are the original inhabitants and owners of India.**

How the Pathalgadi movement begin?

The earlier BJP government had attempted **to tweak Chhotanagpur Land Tenancy Act, 1908 and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act, 1949.**

- Under these acts a tribal can buy or sell their land only to another tribal.
- The Raghubar das government **passed an ordinance amending Land Acquisition Act (Jharkhand Amendment) in 2017** and awaited Governor's approval.
- **This led to violence in the state capital and protests were held in various parts of the state.**

The powers to safeguard and protect the interest of tribal population

Tribals form more than **1/4th of Jharkhand's population** and most part of the **state are part of the 5th Schedule.**

- **It vests the Governor of a state with special powers** to safeguard and protect the interests of the tribal population.
- **It includes examining the laws enacted** by the parliament or legislature and accordingly restrain or allow it keeping the interests of the tribals in tune with customary law, social and religious practices among others.

The demands of the Pathalgadis

Pathalgadis **started asking for self-rule** and said that the **government should enter their area with Gram Sabha permission.**

- Quoting **Article 19 (5) of the Indian Constitution**, they said outsiders are not allowed to live and work in adivasi villages without permission.
- The **administration's pamphlet calls this unconstitutional and violative of fundamental rights.**
- A fact finding body report, said, "...While most of the interpretations of Constitutional clauses written on the pathals may be wrong or far-fetched, **they are based on the valid issues and demands of the people and the basic idea about the supremacy of Gram Sabha is not wrong.**"

The JMM-led government's promise on Pathalgadi

Withdrawal of 'all cases' related to the Pathalgadi movement was the first cabinet decision of the Hemant Soren-led JMM government in Jharkhand.

- A committee was formed and in 30 FIRs, among the 19 cases in which sedition charge was invoked, the committee has recommended withdrawal of IPC section 124A (sedition) from 17 cases.
- Most of the cases were registered in the year 2018 and a few in 2017.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 24th DECEMBER- 2020

THE TIGHTROPE BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND INDUSTRIAL PEACE

GENERAL STUDIES - III (INVESTMENT MODELS)

Apple has decided **to place its Taiwanese supplier, Wistron Corp., on probation** by not giving new orders is a step forward in corporate accountability and ethical business operations.

This decision was taken after **an audit of the serious lapses in labour practices that led to violence in its facility in Narasapura in Karnataka.**

Realities of manufacturing

That it **took violence for the workers to be 'seen' and 'heard', and for corrections to be undertaken points to the realities of high-tech manufacturing outsourced through supply chains** in the global south.

- In fact, many of the suppliers subcontracting in the high-end electronics sector including those for Apple, **have been involved in wilful violations of labour standards and practices.**

- Until recently, the **default response of the brands has been evasion of responsibility** by either shifting the onus to the subcontracting firms or keeping things in silent mode.
- **The prevailing norms of work arrangements** practised by the suppliers themselves downstream, was through hired labour from multiple subcontractors/third party work supply firms.
- This process **creates ambiguity in identifying the primary employer** and thereby, seriously constrains the workers from getting effective redress of their grievances.

The China experience

The **labour contention and the resultant violence** at the Wistron facility can be comprehended better by taking into cognisance the operations of Taiwanese suppliers/subcontractors over the years in China.

Offshore assembly facilities was created by

- Riding on the global transformation of industrial production and increased outsourcing by corporate giants in the United States, Europe and East Asia.
- as part of the strategies of maintaining lean workforces,
- the unlimited supply of rural migrant labour at low wage levels, and
- the Chinese economic reforms

Further, the huge potential of the Chinese consumer market along with increased investment by the Chinese diaspora also played a role in facilitating the decision.

Much trauma for workers

As Apple and other brands churn out 'smart' devices at increased speeds, and with tight timelines 24x7, **the burden falls literally on the shoulders of the workers** employed in the supplier factories.

- Forcing them **to work under harsh conditions, doing overtime, long tiring shifts without much breaks, and under constant disciplinary monitoring** by supervisors.
- The **regimented work practices** on the assembly line are matched by **low pay and little or no social security**, leading to strain and traumatic experiences, both physical and mental.

Safeguards vs. investments

That many of these **exploitative labour practices and violations of safeguards** could be **carried over when these facilities move into the Indian terrain** is illustrated by the occurrence in the Wistron facility.

- In fact, **when they combine with the precarities already embedded in India's manufacturing sector**, the consequences are debilitating for labour.
- This becomes all the more pertinent, in the backdrop of increasing **keenness of governments in India to attract Taiwanese investments**.

- The **passing of the new labour codes** further **erodes existing modicum of labour protection**.
- The fear of '**flight of capital**', coupled with weak state capacity in supervision make state administrations reluctant to step in unless things escalate.

Prognosis ahead

Increasingly, following pressure from the consumers' side and also being highly conscious of its brand image, Apple has provided a '**Code of Conduct**' to all its suppliers.

- It is seeking to monitor and audit compliance of labour standards and safeguards.
- **In the absence of avenues for workers to channelise their grievances** — representative associations and unions — frequent labour unrest including to the extent of violent confrontations, could very well be a daily reality in these high-end manufacturing facilities.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 26th DECEMBER- 2020

THE TIBET POLICY AND SUPPORT ACT, PASSED BY THE USA

GENERAL STUDIES - II (EFFECT OF POLICIES OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES)

The **Tibet Policy and Support Act (TPSA)**, passed by the US Senate earlier this week, bookends a turbulent year in US-China relations.

The **House of Representatives had passed the legislation in January**. It will become law after the US President signs off on it.

The earlier version TPSA

The TSPA is an amended version of the Tibet Policy Act of 2002, which came into existence during the Bush Administration.

But, President George W Bush distanced himself from this Congressional action;

- He also said his approval to the Act did not constitute his adoption of the various statements of policy in the Act.
- As US foreign policy, and said these would be taken as "advisory" statements only, "giving them the due weight that comity between the legislative and executive branches should require, to the extent consistent with US foreign policy".

Key features of the new TPSA:

The **Tibet Policy and Support Act (TPSA)**, reaffirms the rights of the Tibetan Buddhists to choose the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama without any interference of China.

CHROMEIAS ACADEMY

- The **legislation will empower the US Government to impose sanctions on the Chinese Government officials**, who might try to interfere in the process of selecting the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama, just as they had done in case of Panchen Lama.
- It also **acknowledged the legitimacy of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile** elected by the exiled community as well as the **Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)**.
- It seeks to **introduce key provisions aimed at protecting the environment and water resources** on the Tibetan Plateau.

US and China, current relationship

US-China relations have become much more difficult over the last two decades, particularly worsening in the Trump Administration.

- **In 2020 over matters ranging from the pandemic to trade tariffs**, and its cross-world coalition-building **against Chinese superpower ambitions**.
- Earlier this month, the **Holding Foreign Companies Accounting Act**, targeting Chinese investments in the US, was signed into law.
- Earlier in the year, **President Donald Trump signed into law the Hong Kong Autonomy Act**.

President Trump is not expected to take a Bush-like view on the TSPA, which introduces stronger provisions on Tibet, plus teeth in the form of a threat of sanctions, including travel bans on Chinese officials.

The Dalai Lama

Among the most significant amendments is that the TSPA makes it US policy **to oppose attempts by Beijing to install its own Dalai Lama** 'in a manner inconsistent with Tibetan Buddhism'.

- The legislation makes reference to the **Chinese government's 'Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas' in 2007**, and a March 2019 statement.
- Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that the **"reincarnation of living Buddhas including the Dalai Lama must comply with Chinese laws and regulations and follow religious rituals and historical conventions"**.
- **China has also installed of a 6-year-old boy in 1995 as the 11th Panchen Lama**.
- The present Dalai Lama has explained the **traditions to be followed in the selection of a Dalai Lama**, and that the authority to recognise the reincarnation of a Dalai Lama lies with him and his officials.

China' response

China had earlier said the TPSA **"severely breached international law and basic norms governing international relations**.

- **TPSA interfered in China's internal affairs**, and sent a wrong message to 'Tibet independence' forces".

- After the passage of the Bill through the Senate, **China said it “resolutely opposes” the adoption of Bills containing such ill contents on China.**
- Issues related to Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong... are **China’s internal affairs** that allow no foreign interference.

India’s Response

If India is pleased at this latest US barb to China, it has not said so openly.

- **India has mostly refrained from playing the Tibet card against China**, and like the US, has a one China policy.
- It was only this year, **in the ongoing Ladakh standoff**, that it used Special Forces made up almost entirely of Tibetan exiles to occupy strategic heights in Pangong Tso’s south bank.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 28th DECEMBER- 2020

ZERO COUPON BONDS

GENERAL STUDIES - III (INDIAN ECONOMY)

The government has used **financial innovation to recapitalise Punjab & Sind Bank** by issuing the lender Rs 5,500-crore worth of **non-interest bearing bonds valued at par**.

- The **funds raised through issuance of these instruments**, which are a variation of the recapitalisation bonds issued earlier to public sector banks, are being deployed to capitalise the state-run bank.
- Though **these will earn no interest for the subscriber**, market participants term it both a ‘financial illusion’ and ‘great innovation’ by the government where **it is using Rs 100 to create an impact of Rs 200 in the economy**.

What kind of bonds are these?

These **recapitalisation bonds** are special types of bonds issued by the Central government specifically to a particular institution.

- **Only those banks, whosoever is specified, can invest in them**, nobody else.
- **It is not tradable, it is not transferable.**
- It is **limited only to a specific bank**, and it is for a specified period ... it is held at the held-to-maturity (HTM) category of the bank as per the RBI guidelines.
- Since it is held to maturity, **it is accounted at the face value** (and) no mark-to-market will be there.
- So these are special kind of bonds **issued by the government after proper** (due diligence).

Differ from Zero-Coupon Bonds

Though zero coupon, **these bonds are different from traditional zero coupon bonds** on one account — as they are being issued at par, there is no interest; in previous cases, since they were issued at discount, they technically were interest bearing.

What is a Zero-Coupon Bond?

A zero-coupon bond is a **debt security that does not pay interest but instead trades at a deep discount**, rendering a profit at maturity, when the bond is redeemed for its full face value.

- A zero-coupon bond is also known as an **accrual bond**.
- The difference between the purchase price of a zero-coupon bond and the par value, indicates the investor's return.

Difference between a Zero-Coupon Bond and a Regular Bond

- A **regular bond pays interest to bondholders**, while a **zero-coupon bond does not issue** such interest payments.
- A **zero-coupon bond will usually have higher returns than a regular bond** with the same maturity because of the shape of the yield curve.
- **Zero-coupon bonds are more volatile** than coupon bonds, so speculators can use them to profit more from anticipated short-term price movements.
- Zero-coupon bonds can **help investors to avoid gift taxes**, but they also create phantom income tax issues.

Sum-up

While this is a **financial illusion**, finally the government has realised that it is better to do what Western countries are doing rather than what their academicians are recommending.

The **financial illusion only buys time to put the house in order**. It doesn't solve the problem permanently but gives you more time to solve it.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 29th DECEMBER- 2020

MAJOR CHALLENGES TO INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST POLICY IN 2020

GENERAL STUDIES - II (INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD- RELATIONS)

This year, India faced a **trifecta of challenges in its neighborhood from China**:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic,
2. The growing competition for influence in South Asia, and
3. Aggressive actions at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA).

How has India helped tackle the regional COVID-19 challenge?

The COVID-19 pandemic **that originated in China** has led to one of the biggest health challenges, causing heavy economic damage in South Asia.

- **India ranks second after the United States in terms of number of cases**, and the worst-hit economy among G20 nations.
- But **India is also one of the best poised nations to aid recovery efforts in the region**, given its status as one of the world's leading producers of pharmaceutical drugs and vaccines.
- In March, Prime Minister in a **special virtual summit of eight SAARC nations** proposed a COVID-19 package, for **which India provided about half of the \$20 million funding for relief**.
- India's **military ran a series of missions to SAARC countries and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** with supplies of food and medicines.
- **India's 'Vande Bharat' mission** flew home nationals from neighbouring countries, along with lakhs of Indians who had been stranded during the lockdown.

Did the military standoff impact regional ties?

China doubled down on territorial claims and its transgressions along its borders with South Asia: from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, PLA soldiers amassed along various sectors of the LAC, leading to violent clashes.

- The deaths of 20 Indian soldiers at the Galwan valley was the first such casualty in 45 years.
- China also laid **claim to Bhutan's Sakteng natural reserves** and pushed along the boundary lines with Nepal, all of which changed India's strategic calculations along its Himalayan frontiers.
- **That India and Nepal saw their worst tensions in decades** over the construction of a road to Lipulekh.
- It led **Nepal amending its constitution and map to claim Indian territory**, added to the already fraught situation.
- Meanwhile, a **new defence pact this year between China and Pakistan** vis-à-vis a sharp rise in ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan to the highest levels since 2003.
- It has made it clear that India must factor in among its military challenges at the LAC the possibility of a two-front war.

How has India dealt with a three-pronged challenge?

The government's response to the challenges has been **to assert its Neighbourhood First and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) strategies** as foreign policy priorities.

- Apart from the COVID-19 relief and neighbourhood visits, **Indian top officials have been in frequent touch with their counterparts in the region**.
- Mr. Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held a virtual summit on December 17.
- India has also **upped its game on infrastructure delivery**, particularly for regional connectivity in the past year.
- It includes completing **railway lines to Bangladesh and Nepal, riverine projects, ferry service to the Maldives, identifying other services to Sri Lanka and IOR islands**, while also considering debt waiver requests from its neighbours.

Indo-Pacific policy

Unlike in the past, India has also become **more flexible about the entry of other powers to help counter China's influence in the region.**

- It recently welcomed the U.S.'s new military dialogue with the Maldives.
- America's **Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) projects in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh** are also finding more space.
- As part of its Indo-Pacific policy, New Delhi is also encouraging its **Quad partners** — the U.S., Japan and Australia — to collaborate on security and infrastructure initiatives in the neighbourhood.

Conclusion

It is also significant that despite considerable security challenges from China, **India has not sought to elicit support from its neighbours**, which might have put them in a difficult position. Thus, the Modi government has made it clear that despite the provocations, **it intends to resolve the nearly ten-month-long military standoff diplomatically and bilaterally.**

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 30th DECEMBER- 2020

THE TRAGEDY OF CONSERVATION

GENERAL STUDIES - III (CONSERVATION)

39 areas covering national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserved forests **in the Western Ghats were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO** in the year 2012.

These sites are crucial for their biodiversity value. **Ten of them are in Karnataka.**

Background

Since the time the **Ministry of Environment and Forests began identifying the potential heritage sites**, there has been unrest among the indigenous people.

- When the exercise began, **they feared for their existence in lands that they had inhabited for decades.**
- The **restrictions on movement** following the declaration of these territories as ecologically sensitive areas aggrieved them further.

Against the backdrop of the enactment of the **Forest Rights Act of 2006** in India and the **Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in 2007 by the United Nations**, the people residing in the Western Ghats did not anticipate that they would have to deal with the uncertainty about their future following the announcement of the World Heritage Site.

Inhabitant of the Western Ghats

The indigenous people of the Western Ghats, including the **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups**, constitute **44.2% of the tribal population of 6.95% of Karnataka**.

- The **Western Ghats are also home to** a sizeable population of communities like Gowlis, Kunbis, Halakki Vakkala, Kare Vakkala, Kunbi, and Kulvadi Marathi.
- In the **context of the Forest Rights Act, they are treated as** 'other traditional forest dwellers' since they have been living there for at least three generations prior to December 13, 2005 and depend on the forest or forest land for their livelihood needs.
- They **eke out their living by collecting** 'minor forest produce' such as cinnamon and kokum from the forest.

A dismal record

Karnataka has a **dismal record in implementing the Forest Rights Act** compared to other States.

- According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the State had recognised only 5.7% of the total claims made.
- Notably, 70% of the claims were disposed off.
- There appeared to be clear **inconsistency in the government's approach in settling the claims** made by the tribals versus the claims made by other traditional forest dwellers.

The inconsistency reflected in their argument:

- According to them, **tribal applications constituted 17.5% of the claims** and nearly all of them were settled, while other claims were rejected as they were not backed by valid evidence.
- This means that claims made by **other traditional forest dwellers were treated as inconsequential**.

The wrong approach

The **Forest Rights Act is not about the indiscriminate distribution of forest land** to anyone applying for it.

- As per the law, only those lands are recognised where people prove their occupation not later than December 13, 2005.
- Moreover, the **combined stretch of land claimed by them is comparatively smaller by any account than what has been taken away for building dams, mining, laying railway lines and roads, power plants, etc.**
- The government records also reveal that **43 lakh hectares of forestland were encroached both legally and illegally until 1980** when the Forest Conservation Act came into force.
- Sadly, there is no significant conservation even after this landmark law.

Indigenous people are integral to conservation

Invariably, an approach adopted **to isolate the indigenous people from their natural habitats to protect biodiversity** is the root cause of conflict between them and conservationists.

- The latter think that resources have to be controlled and managed. However, this theory is fast proving unproductive.
- The **Global Environment Outlook Report 5** mentions that there is decreased biodiversity across the globe even as 'protected areas' have been expanding.
- **People living in nature's surroundings are integral to conservation** as they relate with it in a more integrated and spiritual way.

The way forward

Declaration of the Western Ghats as a World Heritage Site is as important in preserving the rich biodiversity of the region as the recognition of the rights of the people who depend on the forests.

- Preserving biodiversity requires the legal empowerment of the people living in those areas. The Forest Rights Act is an ideal instrument to push forward the objective.
- To realise it on the ground, the **government must make an effort to build trust between its agencies in the area and the people who depend on these forests** by treating them as equal citizens like everyone else in the country.

EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH – 31st DECEMBER- 2020

THE PROTESTS OVER AN ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE IN NARMADA DISTRICT

GENERAL STUDIES - III (CONSERVATION)

Tribal communities have been protesting since the beginning of November, **when the district administration served the first notice to execute the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) order.**

Tribals, especially from the Tadvi and Vasava communities, have been on the edge ever since Kevadia village in Nandod taluka of Narmada district, **was developed into a tourism circuit around the Statue of Unity.**

Why are tribal communities protesting against the notification?

1. As per the provisions of the notification, **land falling in the eco-sensitive zone cannot be transferred for non-agricultural use for commercial, industrial or residential purposes.**
2. A process has been initiated **to include the state government as the co-owner of the land in the 121 villages.**
3. The notification, combined with the Statue of Unity Tourism Authority (SoUTA), by the Gujarat government to govern Kevadia, which now has **increased administrative needs owing to the booming tourism, has left tribals in a state of mistrust and fear.**

The **tribal communities** feel the simultaneous implementation of the two government decisions could dilute the “**power**” **vested with villagers under the Panchayat (Extension of Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996**, implemented in areas notified under Schedule V of the Constitution.

Why are political leaders joining the protests?

The governments are unwilling **to implement the Schedule V and PESA in its entirety**.

- Tribals are indigenous and cannot be shifted and shunted out of their homes the way they have been so far.
- The governments, **in the name of development, have been grabbing lands of tribals and selling them off to multimillionaires.**
- The fight is against **this planned elimination of the tribal identity.**
- PESA empowers the tribes, but that power has not been handed over to the gram sabhas.

What is PESA?

The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 or PESA is a law enacted by the Government of India **for ensuring self-governance through traditional Gram Sabhas** for people living in the **Scheduled Areas of India**.

- **Gujarat notified the State PESA Rules in January 2017**, applicable in 4,503 gram sabhas under 2,584 village panchayats in 50 tribal talukas in eight districts of the state.
- The PESA Act is rooted in the cultural and traditional practices of the tribal community and vests ultimate power to the gram sabha to make administrative decisions.

What is SoUTA?

The government passed the **Statue of Unity Area Development and Tourism Governance Authority or the SoU Tourism Authority (SoUTA)** Bill last year.

- The SoUTA has **powers ranging from acquiring land for any development project to taking punitive action against those violating/encroaching it.**
- **The authority will define the limits** of the tourism development area and will be **empowered to acquire immovable property** under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.
- It will largely work as a local body that will prepare and execute a development plan or a town planning scheme.

The Gujarat government's position

The **Gujarat government has decided to go ahead with its plan to formalise the creation of the new authority for the SoU**, which has been aggressively marketed as a tourism destination.

On December 23, the state government announced details of SoUTA.

- **The first circle** will include administrators for the Statue of Unity, Shreshth Bharat Bhavan, Gora bridge navigation channel, Jetty service and overall maintenance of the complex.
- **The second circle** will include the administrators for all other projects around SoU.
- Each of the two circles will have 112 employees including two supervisory engineers, an executive engineer (civil) and executive engineer (electrical).

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

KEY FEATURES

- ✓ MODEL CONTENT FOR EVERY PAPER
- ✓ INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSIONS
- ✓ TARGET SCORE 550+ MARKS IN GS + ESSAY
- ✓ FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE FOR THE TESTS
- ✓ FREE ACCESS TO EDITORIALS IN-DEPTH
- ✓ TOPIC WISE COVERAGE OF MAINS SYLLABUS

**TRUST IS BUILT
WITH CONSISTENCY**



GS MAINS TEST SERIES 2021

INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSIONS

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF **MRIDUL PUROHIT**



LIMITED BATCHES
27th Dec.



MODULES
12 Test, 16 Test
(INCLUDES 4 ESSAY TESTS)



MODES
ONLINE
& OFFLINE

WE HAVE GIVEN RANKS 7, 37, 59, 75, 99, 133, 169, 189, 193, 197, & MANY MORE, CONSECUTIVELY IN 2017, 2018 & 2019

☎ 999-035-6664 📞 784-004-8445



ETHICS - ONLINE BATCH BY **MRIDUL SIR**

Starts in January - Registration open

Live Classes Via Zoom | Seats - 100

Some Key Highlights of this Program

1. Broad Understanding of Ethics with inter - Topic Connectivity.
2. Lectures covers important literature on Ethics.
3. Relevant Government Reports covered -ARC etc.
4. Special Attention to - ANSWER WRITING
5. Leading by Unique Examples - which help students to get more marks.

☎ 999-035-6664 📞 784-004-8445



CHROME IAS

Giving Wings To Your Dreams !!!

IAS 2019 - FINAL SELECTIONS



RAVI JAIN
RANK 9



VISHAL TEJRAO
RANK 91



NAKUL RAJENDRA
RANK 489



AKSHAY DINKAR
RANK 704



SHRENIK LODHA
RANK 221



AMIT KUMAR
RANK 295



MRIDUL SINGH
RANK 401



ANANYA KIRTI
RANK 736



B RAHUL
RANK 272



VIKRAM SINGH
RANK 354



PRAVEEN PUSHKAR
RANK 454



SHUBHAM ASHOK
RANK 749

Our Programs:

**Mentorship
Programme**

**GS Mains
Test Series - 2020**

**GS Mains
Test Series - 2021**

**Ethics
Course**

53/5, First Floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi - 110060

Mob.: 99903 56664 | 97737 32309 ✉ student@chromeias.com 🌐 www.chromeias.com