

OFFICERS' Pulse

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Coverage.

The Hindu

PIB

Yojana

Rajya Sabha TV

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At a Glance & In Depth.

Polity and Social Issues

Economy

International Relations

Environment

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Culture



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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) Child pornography

Why in News?

- Consumption of child pornography after the lockdown in the country has gone up by 95% with online data monitoring websites showing an increase in demand for searches for child pornographic content.

News in Detail:

- The spike in consumption indicates “millions of paedophiles, child rapists and child pornography addicts have migrated online, making the Internet extremely unsafe for children”.
- Also, as children spend more time online during the lockdown, international agencies like Europol, the United Nations and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) have reported that paedophiles and child pornography addicts have increased activity to target children online to ‘groom’ them — befriending them on social media, building an emotional connection and luring them to perform sexual activities through photos and videos.

Way Forward:

- ICPF demands an urgent crackdown on child pornography through a pan-India tracker through the use of artificial intelligence which can monitor hosting, sharing, viewing, downloading of child sexual abuse material and provide the information to the government agencies.

- The ICPF was set up in January 2020 and aims to support NGOs with funding resources for curbing the exploitation of children.

- The Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) has several provisions to safeguard and protect children from sexual predators.

- Under **Section 15 of the POCSO Act**, a person who stores child porn for commercial purposes shall face imprisonment for up to 3 years or will have to pay a fine or face both the punishments.

2) Floor Test

What is a floor test?

- A floor test is primarily taken **to know whether the executive enjoys the confidence of the legislature**.
- It is a constitutional mechanism under which a Chief Minister appointed by the Governor can be asked to prove majority on the floor of the Legislative Assembly of the state.
- When a single party secures the majority of the seats in the house, the Governor appoints the leader of the party as the Chief Minister.
- In case the majority is questioned, the leader of the party which claims majority has to move a vote of confidence and prove majority among those present and voting.
- The Chief Minister has to resign if they fail to prove their majority in the house. This happens both in the parliament and the state legislative assemblies.
- In situations when there are differences within a coalition government, the Governor can ask the Chief Minister to prove majority in the house.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India has held that a **Governor can call for a floor test any time he/she objectively feels a government in power has lost the confidence** of the House and is on shaky ground.

News in Detail:

- The Supreme Court held that a Governor can call for a trust vote (confidence motion) if he/she has arrived at a prima

facie opinion, based on objective material, that the incumbent State government has lost its majority in the Assembly.

- A confidence motion, or a vote of confidence, or a trust vote, is sought by the government in power on the floor of the House.

- However, while directing a trust vote, the Governor should not favour a particular political party.
- Timing of a trust vote may tilt the balance towards the party possessing a majority at the time the trust vote is directed.
- Governor's power to call for a floor test is not restricted only before the inception of a State government immediately after elections, but continues throughout its term.
- The SC has clarified that the Governor's power of trust vote does not hamper any disqualification proceedings pending before the Speaker.
- A Governor need not wait for the Speaker's decision on the resignation of rebel Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) before calling for a trust vote.

3) National Food Security Act

Features of NFSA 2013

- The Government of India enacted National Food Security Act (NFSA) in July, 2013 which gives legal entitlement to 67% of the population (75% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas) to receive highly subsidized food grains.
- Under the Act, food grains is allocated @ 5 kg per person per month for priority households category and @ 35 kg per family per month for Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families at a highly subsidized prices of Rs. 1/-, Rs. 2/- and Rs. 3/- per kg for nutri-cereals, wheat and rice respectively. Coverage under the Act is based on the population figures of Census, 2011.
- The Act also has a special focus on the nutritional support to women and children. Besides meal to pregnant women and lactating mothers during pregnancy and six months after the child birth, such women will also be entitled to

receive maternity benefit of not less than Rs. 6,000.

- Children upto 14 years of age will be entitled to nutritious meals as per the prescribed nutritional standards.
- In case of non-supply of entitled foodgrains or meals, the beneficiaries will receive food security allowance.
- The Act also contains provisions for setting up grievance redressal mechanisms at the District and State levels. Separate provisions have also been made in the Act for ensuring transparency and accountability.

Why in News?

- Over 10 crore people have been excluded from the Public Distribution System because outdated 2011 census data is being used to calculate State-wise National Food Security Act coverage.

Out in the cold

An estimated 2.8 crore people may have been left out of the Public Distribution System in Uttar Pradesh, the most in any State. The table lists the five States which may have the highest under-coverage under PDS:

State	Coverage (2011 population)	Coverage (2020 population)	Estimated under coverage
Uttar Pradesh	15.21	18.06	2.80
Bihar	8.71	10.48	1.77
Madhya Pradesh	5.46	6.42	0.90
Rajasthan	4.47	5.25	0.79
Maharashtra	7	7.66	0.66
India	81.35	92.19	10.84

ALL FIGURES IN CRORE

News in Detail:

- India's population was about 121 crore in 2011 and so PDS covered approximately 80 crore people. However, applying the 67% ratio to a projected population of 137 crore for 2020, PDS coverage today should be around 92 crore.
- Even taking into account growing urbanisation, the shortfall would be around 10 crore people.
- With the 2021 census process being delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis, any proposed revision of PDS coverage using that data could now take several years.

ART & CULTURE

1) National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India

What is it?

- The National ICH List is an attempt to **recognize the diversity of Indian culture embedded in its intangible heritage**. It aims to raise awareness about the various intangible cultural heritage elements from different states of India. This initiative is also a part of the Vision 2024 of the Ministry of Culture. Following **UNESCO's 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage**, this list has been classified into five broad domains in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested:

- 1) Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- 2) Performing arts;
- 3) Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- 4) Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- 5) Traditional craftsmanship.

- The present items in the list have been collated from the projects sanctioned under the scheme for 'Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India' formulated by the Ministry of Culture in 2013.
- As of now the list has more than 100 elements, It also includes the 13 elements of India that have already been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The Intangible Cultural Heritages added into this list include:

- 1) Tradition of Vedic chanting.
- 2) Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana.
- 3) Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre.
- 4) Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas.
- 5) Mudi yettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala.
- 6) Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan.

- 7) Chhau dance.
- 8) Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir.
- 9) Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur.
- 10) Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab.
- 11) Yoga
- 12) Nawrouz, Novruz, Nowrouz, Nowrouz
- 13) Kumbh Mela.

Why in News?

- Union Minister for Culture launched the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India.

2) World Heritage Day

About :

- Every year, 18th April is celebrated Worldwide as World Heritage Day to create awareness about Heritage among communities. The theme of World Heritage Day 2020 is "Shared Culture", 'Shared heritage' and 'Shared responsibility'. It is decided by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) every year.

International Council on Monuments and Sites

- It is a global non-governmental organization associated with UNESCO.
- Its mission is to promote the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of monuments, building complexes and sites.
- It is an Advisory Body of the World Heritage Committee for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO.
- As such, it reviews the nominations of cultural world heritage and ensures the conservation status of properties.
- Its creation in 1965 is the logical outcome of initial conversations between architects, historians and international experts that began in the early twentieth century and that materialized in the adoption of the Venice Charter in 1964.

What is a World Heritage Site ?

- World Heritage Sites are cultural and/or natural sites considered to be of 'Outstanding Universal Value', which have been inscribed on the World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee.
- These places or buildings are thought to:
- have special importance for everyone
- represent unique, or the most significant or best, examples of the world's cultural and/or natural heritage
- Outstanding Universal Value is considered to transcend national boundaries and to be of importance for future generations. World Heritage status is a high accolade that brings with it responsibilities and international scrutiny.

About UNESCO

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to protect and preserve such sites through the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. This international treaty was drawn up in 1972. Governments of countries that have ratified the Convention (States Parties) identify and nominate suitable sites to the World Heritage Committee for inscription on the list maintained by UNESCO.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Tourism celebrated the World Heritage Day 2020 through a webinar series. The Union Minister of

Tourism and Culture (I/C) addressed live through the webinar on Ancient Temple city of Mamallapuram which had participants from all over the world.

3) Meru Jatra festival

About:

- Meru Jatra marks the end of the 21-day-long festival of penance named 'Danda Nata'.
- Danda Nata or Danda Jatra is one of the most important traditional dance festivals organized in different parts of South Odisha and particularly in the Ganjam District, the heartland of ancient Kalinga Empire.
- The Danda Nata festival is being held in the month of Chaitra every year. Only male persons take part in this festival.
- The Participants of Danda are called Danduas (also known as Bhaktas) and they pray to Goddesses Kali and Shiva during this 13-, 18- or 21-day Danda period.

Why in News?

- Odisha's Ganjam district administration has banned the Meru Jatra festival and congregations related to it at temples on the occasion of Mahavishub Sankranti, which is also the start of the Odia New Year.

ECONOMY

1) Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana

About the scheme

- In March 2020, the Union government announced Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against Corona Virus.
- Following are the components of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: —
 - 1) **Insurance cover of Rs 50 Lakh** per health worker fighting COVID-19
 - 2) 80 crore poor people to get **5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses** for free every month for the next three months
 - 3) 20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders to get **Rs 500 per month** for next three months
 - 4) Increase in **MNREGA wage** to Rs 202 a day from Rs 182 to benefit 13.62 crore families
 - 5) An **ex-gratia of Rs 1,000** to 3 crore poor senior citizen, poor widows and poor disabled
 - 6) The first instalment of Rs 2,000 due in 2020-21 will be front-loaded and paid in April 2020 itself under the **PM KISAN Yojana**.
 - 7) Central Government has given orders to State Governments to use **Building and Construction Workers Welfare Fund** to provide relief to Construction Workers.

Why in News?

- More than 30 crore poor people have received financial assistance of Rs 28,256 crore through Direct Benefit Transfer under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana.

2) Wholesale Price Index

About WPI

- Wholesale Price Index measures and tracks the changes in the price of goods in the stages before the retail level. It provides estimates of inflation at the wholesale transaction level for the economy as a whole.
- It is released by the **Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.

- The base year is **2011-2012**.
- The index basket consists of commodities under 3 main categories in decreasing order of weightage: **Manufactured products, Primary Articles and Fuel and Power**.

Why in News?

- WPI eased to 1% in March from 2.26% in February on sharp fall in food prices in the country.
- Food inflation in March fell to 4.91% from 7.79% in the previous month.

3) Ease 90-day NPA deadline norm

What is NPA?

- A non performing asset (NPA) is a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment remained overdue for a period of **90 days**.
- Banks classify NPAs further into Substandard, Doubtful and Loss assets.
 - **Substandard assets:** Assets which have remained NPA for a period less than or equal to 12 months.
 - **Doubtful assets:** An asset would be classified as doubtful if it has remained in the substandard category for a period of 12 months.
 - **Loss assets:** Loss asset is considered uncollectible and of such little value that its continuance as a bankable asset is not warranted, although there may be some salvage or recovery value.

Why in News?

- HDFC Ltd. chairman Deepak Parekh has suggested that instead of 90 days, a loan should be classified as NPA if repayment is due for 180 days.

4) Measures to ease financial stress

What's in the news?

- The RBI has announced a slew of liquidity measures to ease financial stress and increase credit flows in the banking system to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

Measures announced

- It includes liquidity infusion of Rs. 1 lakh crore, of which Rs. 50,000 crore is exclusively for non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), via banks.

- The RBI will extend another Rs. 50,000 crore to refinancing agencies like Nabard, Sidbi and National Housing Bank.
- The central bank has also reduced the **reserve repo rate** by 25 bps to 3.5%. This was to discourage banks from parking their excess liquidity with RBI at the reverse repo rate.
- *(Reverse Repo rate is the rate at which RBI borrows money from commercial banks by lending securities)*

WMA limits

- RBI has also increased the ways and means advances (WMA) limits of States by 60%, over and above the level as on March 31, 2020.
- The move was aimed at providing greater comfort to the States for undertaking containment and mitigation efforts, and to

plan market borrowing programmes better.

About WMA

- The RBI gives temporary loans to the centre and state governments as a banker to the government. This facility is called Ways and Means Advances.
- Thus, WMA is a temporary liquidity arrangement that helps **meet mismatches in receipts and payments of the government.**
- Under this scheme, Centre and states can avail themselves of immediate cash from the RBI. But it has to return the amount within **90 days**. Interest is charged at the existing **repo rate**.
- The limits for WMA are decided by the government and RBI mutually and revised periodically.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) Special Drawing Rights

About Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)

- Special Drawing Rights is an international reserve asset, created by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- SDRs are allocated to IMF members based on their individual IMF quotas. The SDR serves as the unit of account for the IMF for internal accounting purposes.
- The value of the SDR is based on a basket of **five** currencies—the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling.
- SDR (also called "*paper gold*") is **neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF**. It is a potential claim of IMF members on freely usable currencies.
- SDRs can be traded for freely usable currencies between IMF members through voluntary trading agreements. These agreements are facilitated by the IMF and can be done to adjust reserves or meet balance of payments needs.

Why in News?

- Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said India could not support a proposal of the IMF for new SDR allocation, which would provide all its 189 members with new foreign exchange reserves with no conditions.
- The Minister also expressed concerns that such a major liquidity injection could produce potentially costly side-effects if countries used the funds for extraneous purposes.

Past allocation

- The IMF last approved a \$250-billion new allocation of SDRs in 2009, boosting liquidity for cash-strapped countries during the last financial crisis.
- Doing so again now could provide more flexibility to the 102 countries that have already sought IMF emergency loans and grants, and allow aid to flow to high-debt countries that can't qualify for new IMF loans, such as Argentina and Zimbabwe.

2) U.S. freezes WHO funding

About WHO

- The World Health Organization is a **specialized agency** of the United Nations (UN) established in 1948 to further international cooperation for improved public health conditions.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Working with 194 Member States (including India), its stated goal is to ensure "**the highest attainable level of health for all people**".

Where does WHO get its funding from?

- It is funded by a large number of countries, philanthropic organisations, United Nations organisations etc.
- **Voluntary donations** from member states contribute 35.41%, **assessed contributions** (dues countries pay in order to be a member of WHO) are 15.66%, **philanthropic organisations** account for 9.33%, **UN organisations** contribute about 8.1%; the rest comes from myriad sources.
- Countries decide how much they pay and may also choose not to.
- The US contributes almost 15% of the WHO's total funding and almost 31% of the member states' donations. India contributes 1% of member states' donations.

Why in News?

- U.S. President Donald Trump has ordered a freeze on funding for the WHO alleging mismanagement of the coronavirus crisis by the organization.

3) Extend Brexit transition, says IMF

Background

- Brexit ("British exit") refers to the United Kingdom's decision in a 2016 referendum to leave the European Union (EU), which is a group of 27 countries that operates as a cohesive economic and political block.
- The process of leaving the EU formally began in 2017, when the former British Prime Minister Theresa May triggered **Article 50** of the **Lisbon Treaty** (which gives any EU member state the right to

quit unilaterally, and outlines the procedure for doing so).

- In January 2020, the process completed and Britain exited the EU and an 11-month transition period has started which ends on **December 31, 2020**.

What changes during the period and what remains the same?

- **Out of EU politics**
- With Brexit Day, the United Kingdom leaves all of the European Union's political institutions. The UK had 73 Members of European Parliament, and they automatically lost their seats.
- **EU rules apply**
- During the transition period, the UK will continue to obey EU rules and make payments to the EU. If it is involved in a legal dispute with an EU member country, the European Court of Justice will continue to have the final say.
- **New trade equations**

- Out of the EU, Britain will have to build new trade relationships with countries outside the Union.

- **Freedom of movement**

- During the transition, UK nationals will continue to be able to live and work in European Union countries. EU nationals who want to live and work in the UK, too, can do so.

- **EU Budget**

- The UK will for now continue to contribute to the EU Budget. Existing schemes that are funded by EU grants will continue to be funded.

Why in News?

- International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva suggested that the UK should ask for an extension to its post-Brexit transition period to ease uncertainty at a time when the world economy is being hammered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1) Coronavirus: two vaccines enter human trials

Why in News?

- According to the “DRAFT landscape of COVID-19 candidate vaccines” released by the WHO, two vaccines are currently being tested on humans.

Non-replicating viral vector vaccine

- This includes a non-replicating viral vector vaccine developed by CanSino Biological Inc. along with the Beijing Institute of Biotechnology.
- A non-replicating vector vaccine can be developed either **using a virus that is killed or a part of the virus**.
- Since it is not a complete virus, it **cannot replicate** inside the host.
- But the antigens trigger our immune system to produce antibodies, which help fight the disease in case we contract it in the future.

RNA vaccine

- The second is a **messenger RNA vaccine** developed by Moderna and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.
- In RNA vaccines, the messenger RNA from the pathogen is used.
- The messenger RNA gets translated into antigenic protein recognised by our immune cells and antibodies are produced.
- But mRNA is a highly unstable molecule making it difficult to handle.
- So the mRNA is encapsulated in a small ball of fat or lipid nanoparticle (LNP).
- This LNP acts as a delivery vehicle that helps the mRNA cross the host cell membrane and once inside the mRNA is released.

Vaccines from India

- The WHO draft adds that 60 candidate vaccines are in preclinical trials.
- This list contains the DNA plasmid vaccine developed by Gujarat based Zydus Cadila and Live Attenuated Virus vaccine developed by the Serum Institute of India.

- **DNA vaccines** are made by taking **genes from the pathogen** and inserting it into the host's body with a vector.
- The host cells produce the protein of the viral gene and this is recognised as a foreign antigenic protein by the host's immune system.
- DNA vaccines are comparatively easy to make, transport, store and are cheaper.
- **Live attenuated virus vaccine** is created by reducing the virulence of a pathogen or weakening it, but still keeping it alive.

2) U.S. approves sale of missiles, torpedoes

Boeing P-8I

- Boeing's P-8s are designed for **long-range anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare** and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.
- The P-8s India version is called the P-8I, and helps the Indian Navy carry out important maritime operations.
- India currently has **eight** of these aircraft and is scheduled to receive four more by 2022.



Why on News?

- The U.S. State Department has approved **two potential missile deals** with India, for an estimated \$92 million and \$63 million.

Harpoon missiles

- The first deal is for ten **AGM-84L Harpoon Block II** air launched missiles and related equipment from **Boeing**.
- These missiles can be fitted onto Boeing's 8-PI (Poseidon Eight India) maritime

patrol aircraft and are intended to enhance India's capability in anti-surface warfare while defending its sea lanes.

Torpedoes

- The second deal, for \$63 million and principally contracted with **Raytheon Integrated Defense System**, is for 16 **MK 54 All Up Round Lightweight Torpedoes (LWT)**; three **MK 54 Exercise Torpedoes (MK 54 LWT)**; and related equipment.
- Also included are MK 54 spare parts; torpedo containers; two Recoverable Exercise Torpedoes (REXTORP) with containers and related equipment and support from the U.S. government and contractors.
- The torpedoes are expected to enhance India's anti-submarine warfare capability and can be used with the P-8I.

3) Rapid antibody testing

Why in News?

- On April 4, the ICMR announced the introduction of the rapid antibody testing for COVID-19.

About Rapid antibody testing

- It involves conducting **blood tests** on people displaying influenza-like illness symptoms in containment zones, large migration gatherings, or evacuee centres.
- A rapid antibody test is conducted to determine the **presence of antibodies IgM and IgG**, which can be detected from the seventh day of the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.
- This test can help understand an individual's capacity to fight the infection after the virus has invaded the body.
- A rapid test kit can produce results in **just 30 minutes**.
- The rapid antibody-based test will help detect the growth rate of cases, effectively aiding the country develop a better containment strategy.

Not for diagnosis

- WHO does not recommend the use of antibody-detecting rapid diagnostic tests

for patient care but encourages the continuation of work to establish their usefulness in disease surveillance and epidemiologic research.

- The rapid antibody tests **may not be as accurate as the RT-PCR** (*please refer to Pulse 41*).
- These tests are known to throw up more false negatives than false positives which is why the US Centre for Disease Control recommends a molecular test like RT-PCR if a rapid antibody test throws negative results.

4) Aarogya Setu app

Why in News?

- Aarogya Setu, a mobile app was developed by the ministry of electronics and IT to help citizens identify their risk of contracting Covid-19.

About the app

- Aarogya Setu is designed to keep an user informed in case s/he has crossed paths with someone who has tested positive.
- The tracking is done through a Bluetooth & location-generated social graph, which can show user's interaction with anyone who has tested positive.
- The user will be alerted if someone you came in close proximity with, unknowingly, tests positive.
- The app alerts are accompanied by instructions on how to self-isolate and what to do in case you develop symptoms.

Self-testing tool

- It has a tool for self-testing. The user is asked to answer a number of questions.
- In case some of the answers suggest Covid-19 symptoms, the information will be sent to a government server.
- The data will then help the government take timely steps and initiate the isolation procedure, if necessary.

PIB ANALYSIS

1) YUKTI

About YUKTI (Young India Combating COVID with Knowledge, Technology and Innovation):

- It's a unique portal and dashboard to monitor the initiatives of the HRD Ministry – in academics, research and social initiatives – taken in the wake of COVID-19.
- This portal will help in critical issues related to student promotion policies, placements related challenges and physical and mental well-being of students in these challenging times.
- The portal will also allow various institutions to share their strategies for various challenges because of coronavirus.
- It will also establish a two-way communication channel between the Ministry of HRD and the institutions so that the Ministry can provide the necessary support system to the institutions.

Why in News?

- The Union HRD Minister has launched a web-portal YUKTI.

2) Minor Forest Produce

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Home Affairs(MHA)has allowed collection, harvesting and processing of Minor Forest Produce(MFP), other non-timber forests produced by Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers in forest areas during the Covid-19 lockdown.

About Minor Forest Produce (MFP):

- Minor forest produce includes non-timber items such as bamboo and other grasses, edible or useful roots, seeds, fruits, flowers and plants.
- A number of people from Scheduled Tribes and other forest-dwelling communities depend on the collection and sale of such items for their livelihood.

News in Detail:

- This move comes as a relief to crores of Tribals dependent on gathering of forest produce.

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is also considering the proposal of the Price Committee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) for MFP.
- It is recommended that the MSP for the existing 50 MFPs must be increased in the range of 16% to 30%.
- It is also sought to add 25 new items to the list of MFPs.
- Reports from some forest areas show that Police personnel have been preventing forest dwellers from leaving their homes to collect minor forest produce due to the restrictions.
- These exemptions are timely required as the peak of harvesting season has set-in in many regions
- The Government of India has initiated a number of steps to develop socio economic conditions of tribal population in the country and one of those initiatives is the formation of Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) in 1987.

What is Minimum Support Price (MSP)?

- MSP is the minimum price set by the Government at which farmers can expect to sell their produce for the season. When market prices fall below the announced MSPs, procurement agencies step in to procure the crop and 'support' the prices.
- The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs announces MSP for various crops at the beginning of each sowing season based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- The CACP takes into account demand and supply, the cost of production and price trends in the market among other things when fixing MSPs.

3) CollabCAD

Why in News?

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog and National Informatics Centre (NIC) jointly launched CollabCAD.

News in Detail:

- CollabCAD is a collaborative network, computer enabled software system, providing a total engineering solution

from 2D drafting & detailing to 3D product design.

- The aim of this initiative is to provide a great platform to students of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) across the country to create and modify 3D Computer Aided Designs with free flow of creativity and imagination.

About Atal Innovation Mission

- The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is a flagship initiative set up by the NITI Aayog to promote innovation and entrepreneurship across the length and breadth of the country.
- AIM's objectives are to create and promote an ecosystem of innovation and

entrepreneurship across the country at school, university, research institutions, and MSME and industry levels.

Functions

- The Atal Innovation Mission has following two core functions:
- Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs.
- Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.

News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) All India Agri Transport Call Centre

News in Detail:

- The 24x7 service All India Agri Transport Call Centre is an initiative of the **Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW)**, Government of India for coordination between States for inter-state movement of perishables - Vegetables & Fruits, Agri Inputs like seeds, pesticides and fertilizer etc.
- Truck drivers and helpers, traders, retailers, transporters farmers, manufacturers or any other stakeholder who is facing problems in inter-state movement of agricultural, horticultural or any other perishable commodities besides seeds and fertilizers may seek help by calling at the Call Centre.
- Call Center Executives will forward the vehicle & consignment details along with the help needed, to State Government officials for resolution of issues.
- It is operated by the IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited (IKSL) from their offices in Faridabad, Haryana.

Why in News?

- Agriculture Minister launched the All India Agri Transport Call Centre at Krishi Bhavan in New Delhi. This will facilitate inter-state movement of perishables in the current situation of lockdown due to the COVID-19 threat.

2) Fit India Active Day Programme

Why in News?

- Fit India and CBSE has organised first-ever live fitness sessions for school students in the second phase of lockdown.

About Fit India Movement:

- The Fit India Movement is a movement to take the nation on a path of fitness and wellness. It provides a unique and exciting opportunity to work towards a healthier India. It aims at behavioural changes – from sedentary lifestyle to physically active way of day-to-day living. As part of the movement, individuals and organisations can undertake various efforts for their own health and well-being as well as for the health and well-being of fellow Indians.

News in Detail:

- Fit India and CBSE have taken this unique initiative to ensure fitness of all school children.
- The live sessions will cover all aspects of children's fitness from daily workouts to yoga, nutrition to emotional well-being.
- Students accessed these live sessions on Facebook and Instagram handles of Fit India Movement and CBSE.
- All the sessions will also be available on YouTube so that students can access it at their convenience as well.

3) National Directives for COVID-19 management

Why in News?

- The Union Government has issued a list of National Directives for COVID-19 management prohibiting spitting and making face covers compulsory.

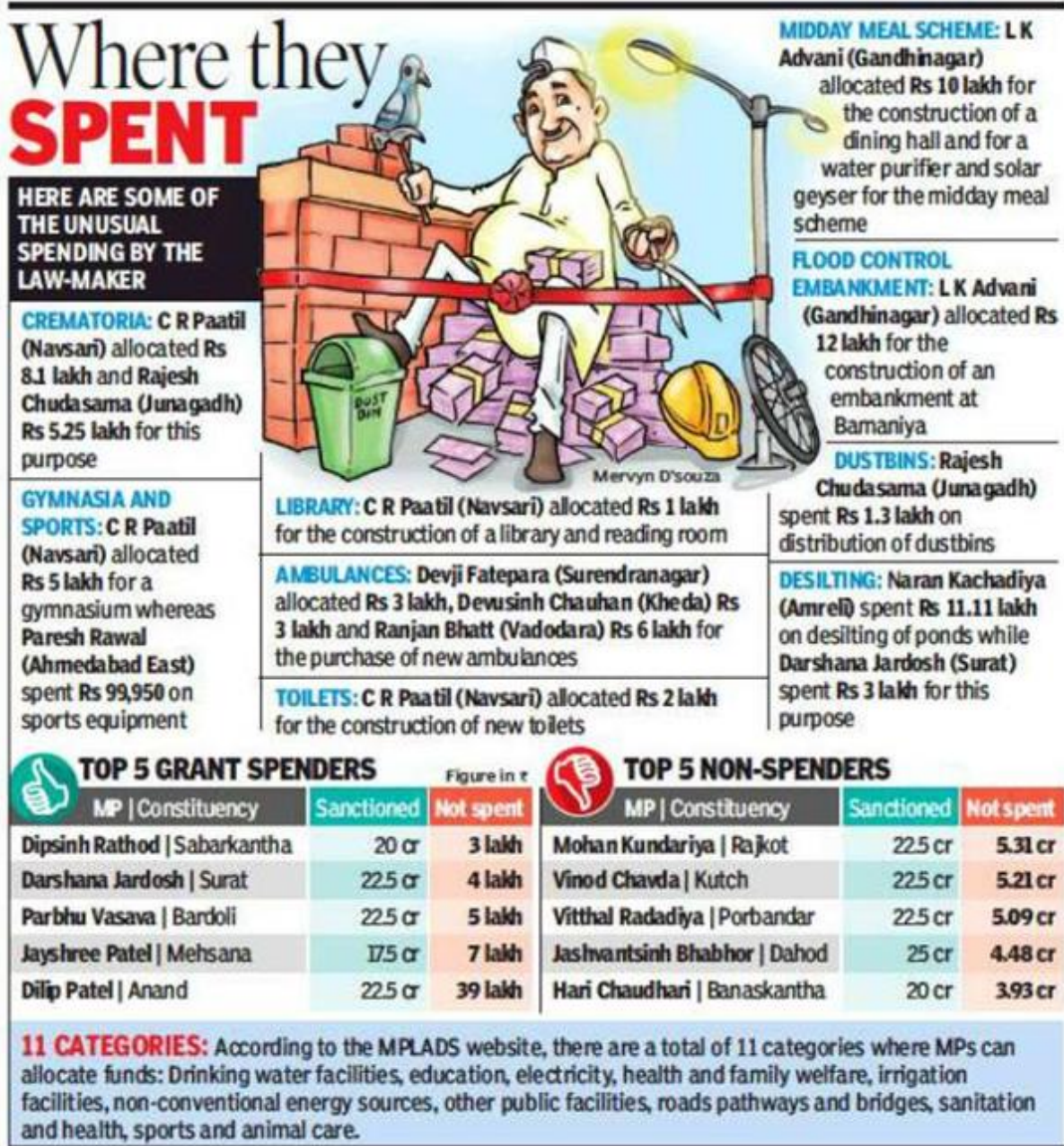
News in Detail:

- Home Ministry, in its directives, have made wearing of face cover in workplaces and public places compulsory.
- No organization and manager of public spaces shall allow gathering of five or more persons. Gatherings such as marriages and funerals shall remain regulated by the District Magistrate.

- Spitting in public places will be punishable with a fine and there will be a strict ban on sale of items such as liquor, gutka and tobacco.
 - Government has directed all work places to have adequate arrangements for temperature screening and provide sanitizers at convenient places.
 - Workplaces should have a gap of one hour between shifts and should stagger the lunch breaks of staff to ensure social distancing.
- Government has also asked workplaces to encourage use of Arogya Setu for all employees, both private and public.
 - All organizations shall sanitize their work places between shifts and large meetings are to be prohibited.
 - For manufacturing establishments, frequent cleaning of common surfaces and hand washing are mandatory. There should be no overlap of shifts.

THE HINDU EDITORIALS

1) For better use: On MPLADS funds



Why in News?

- The Government is seeking to garner around Rs 7,900 crores by suspending the MPLADS for two years (2020 and 2021) in the event of struggle against Covid-19 and directed these funds to be transferred to the Consolidated Fund of India.

- The political opposition has criticized this move as in their opinion the decision may undermine the decentralized manner of funding local area development but the government is of view that the transfer of these sums to the Consolidated Fund of India would help judicious deployment of funds.

What is the background?

- This political tussle and decision has revived the debate regarding the relevance of MPLAD Scheme.

What is MPLAD Scheme?

- The scheme was formulated in 1993.
- The objective is to enable Members of Parliament (MPs) to recommend development works in their constituencies with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets based on the locally felt need.
- The aim is to build durable assets of national priorities and community need viz. drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation and roads, etc
- The scheme was initially under the control of the Ministry of Rural Development and Planning.
- But the scheme was transferred to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in October 1994.
- Every MP is entitled to spend Rs 5 crore annually under this scheme.
- Several states have enacted schemes called Member of Legislative Assembly Local Area Development Scheme (MLALADS) where funds are given to MLAs which is similar to MPLADS.

What are the issues related to the scheme?

- Part IX and IX-A of the Constitution is violated as MPLADS encroaches upon the domain of local self governing institutions.
- The scheme conflicts with the doctrine of separation of powers as MPs are getting involved in executive functions.
- The CAG has flagged instances of financial mismanagement and artificial inflation of amounts spent.
- The scheme is alleged to be marred by the nexus of MP and private firms.
- The scheme is subject to the whims and fancies of the government of the day as it is not governed by any statutory law.

What is the way forward?

- Immediate discontinuation of the MPLAD scheme on the ground that it was inconsistent with the spirit of federalism and distribution of powers between the centre and the state as recommended by the National Commission to Review the working of the Constitution in 2002 and the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission's Report 2007.

- The funds spent and sanctioned works needs to be monitored properly for better transparency.
- It can be made more inclusive by including citizens for which project to be executed from MPLAD funds.
- The funds now are non lapsable but should be made lapsable to put pressure on MPs for optimum utilisation and prevent build up of unutilised funds.

Conclusion

- The scheme can work as an indispensable tool of development at the grassroots with adequate monitoring and sufficient political will given the decentralized nature of the MPLAD scheme.

2) Ambedkar and the Poona Pact



Why in News?

- The Poona pact was negotiated between B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi on the background of the announcement of the Communal Award in August 1932 which provided a separate electorate for depressed classes.

What is the background?

- The British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, announced the Communal Award which provided for separate electorates for the 'Depressed classes' the Muslims, the Europeans, the Sikhs, the Anglo-Indians and the Indian-based Christians on August 16, 1932.
- This award was built on with the already put in place notion of separate electorates through the Morley Minto Reforms (1909) and the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms (1919).

- Each community was allocated a number of seats in the legislatures and only members from these communities would be eligible to vote to elect a representative of the same community to legislative assemblies under the separate electorates system.

What is the significance of the pact?

- Ambedkar agreed for depressed class candidates to be elected by a joint electorate in a settlement negotiated with Mahatma Gandhi.
- Under the Communal Award nearly twice as many seats (147) were reserved for the depressed classes in the legislature.
- A fair representation of the depressed classes in the public services was assured through Poona Pact while earmarking a portion of the educational grant for their uplift.
- The depressed classes constituted the most discriminated sections of Indian society and the Poona pact was an emphatic acceptance by upper-class Hindus.
- The pact conceded that the depressed classes should be given some concrete political voice.
- The country was formally made responsible for uplifting the depressed classes through this pact.
- The Poona Pact were the precursors to the world's largest affirmative programme launched later in independent India.
- The pact for the first time in Indian History made the depressed classes a formidable political force.

What are the differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar's approach?

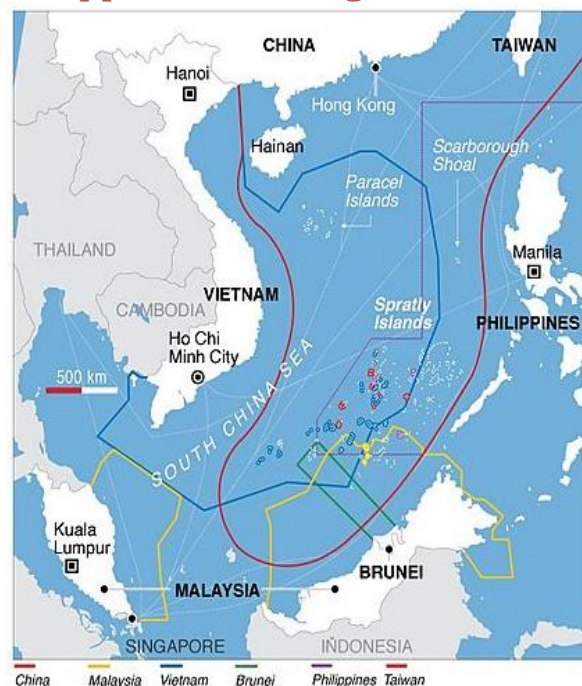
- Ambedkar was in favour of annihilation of the caste system which was beyond reforms.
- Abolition of the caste system or Varnashrama order was not supported by Gandhi.
- Gandhi favoured bringing in behavioural change in the society regarding ills of the caste system.
- But Ambedkar wanted a political solution for the upliftment of the depressed classes as according to him caste question is a political issue.

- If the depressed classes did not get equal opportunities to participate in political democracy it would seem meaningless according to Ambedkar.
- But caste issues are social one and not to be given political colours according to Gandhi.
- Faith and spirituality was Gandhi's approach while Ambedkar preferred rights based approach.
- Ambedkar referred depressed classes as Dalits in order to give them a political identity.
- Gandhi called them Harijans to sensitize the upper castes for the plight of depressed classes by invoking spirituality.

Conclusion

- Though Poona Pact changed the Indian Political history especially for the depressed classes the social stigma attached to caste system still is denting Indian society for which both Gandhian and Ambedkar's ideas are needed to achieve egalitarian society.

3) South China Sea: Vietnam approaches UN against China



Why in News?

- As the nations of Asia evolve into major trading and resource-consuming powers with economic growth dependent on seaborne trade in the recent years, Maritime Asia has evolved as a new geopolitical frame of reference which is

now concerned with China aggressively expanding its maritime influence seen through its activities in the South China Sea (SCS).

What is the background?

- In the recent act of aggression in the region near the Paracel Islands the Chinese ship sank a Vietnamese fishing boat in the Exclusive Economic Zone.
- The ruling on SCS given by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 was refused by China unilaterally.

What is the significance of the South China Sea?

- SCS is strategically important as it is in a geographical location which links Indian Ocean to the Pacific and is a critical shipping channel.
- One-third of the global shipping carrying trillions of trade passes through it according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- Huge oil and gas reserves is believed to be in the SCS seabed and the South China Sea holds proven oil reserves of at least seven billion barrels and an estimated 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas as per the World Bank.
- The strait of Malacca which connects Indian Ocean to the South China Sea is a choke point and is always in interest of great powers to control which could potentially affect commercial transit.
- It is estimated that up to 10% of the world's ocean-caught fish come from the South China Sea.

What is the South China sea dispute?

- Japan in World War II had occupied some islets in the South China sea which was taken control by China in 1947.
- The map created with a 9-dash line claiming almost the entire South China Sea has been claimed by China since 1953.
- Seeking to strike down China's expansive territorial claims in the South China Sea the Philippines had filed an arbitration case in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016.
- The tribunal issued a decision finding that there is no legal basis to claim "historic rights" to islands in the South China Sea and the 9-dash line is inconsistent with

Convention on the Law of the Sea which China refused to abide by.

- Further, since 2010, China has been converting uninhabited islets into artificial islets to bring it under UNCLOS (examples would include Haven Reef, Johnson South Reef and Fiery Cross Reef).
- The US is very critical of this building of artificial islands and terms these actions of China as building a 'great wall of sand'.

Conclusion

- As a key element of the Act East Policy, India has started internationalizing disputes in the Indo-Pacific region to psychological pressure on irritants and is aggressively using the soft tool of Buddhist legacy to reclaim the unique historical leverage to make a strong bond with the Southeast Asian region.
- With extensive interconnections and to win trust of neighbours and world community China should abide by the rule based international order and peaceful coexistence.

4) Hungry for More



Why in News?

- In order to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide governments have imposed social distancing and lockdown which has highlighted the importance of processed food, especially in the urban areas.

What is the background?

- The food industry has always provided vital linkages and synergies among all sectors irrespective of the current crisis.
- All the sectors of the economy i.e, the Primary, Secondary and tertiary are benefitted.

What is the status of the Food Processing Industry in India?

- Food processing Industry provides an opportunity to utilize excess production efficiently as in India farmers suffer losses frequently.
- The industry also helps in increasing shelf life of agricultural products and enhances its quality.
- India has seen a good growth in this industry in the last few years and is now an integral part of the food supply chain.
- It is recognised as the 'Sunrise Industry' in India.

What are the challenges faced by the Industry?

- There have been supply and demand side bottlenecks due to small fragmented landholdings, low farm productivity, low mechanization, high seasonality, perishability and lack of supply chain mechanism.
- There are Infrastructure bottlenecks as more than 30% of the farm produce is lost due to inadequate cold chain infrastructure.
- Unorganised segments constitute almost 75% of the food processing industry across all product categories.
- There are deficiencies in the regulatory environment as there are numerous laws which fall under the jurisdiction of different ministries and departments.
- Lack of formal economy and mounting finances.
- Lack of skilled and trained manpower.
- Inadequate quality control and packaging units.

- High taxation and duties.

What is the way forward?

- Government should adopt a hand-holding approach by establishing risk sharing mechanisms, fiscal incentives and partnership models for creation of infrastructure for logistics, storage and processing.
- There is a need to foster development of backward linkages crucial for securing scale and economic viability by evolving conducive regulatory framework for contract and corporate farming and encouraging commodity clusters and intensive livestock rearing.
- All the laws should be brought under a single window to avoid multiple approvals.
- Village level procurement centres for perishables such as fruits, vegetables and dairy should be established as suggested by NITI Aayog, in the Strategy for New India @75 document.

Conclusion

- Food processing industry will not only serve the nutritional needs of New India but it will also act as an important link in doubling the farmer's income and the need today is to treat food processing as part of the overall food sector and provide all the facilities, exemptions, and concessions available to agriculture and related activities.

RSTV BIG-PICTURE

1) COVID-19 Crisis : Role of World Health Organisation

WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COVID-19?

- Proportion of severe cases increases with age
- Like SARS and MERS, 2019-nCoV came from bats
- Fatality rate is **2% to 3%**
- Coronavirus can be transmitted from persons who have travel history but asymptomatic
- WHO has recommended 14 days as incubation period
- TS officials have decided to observe suspected cases for **28 days**
- It could be possible that people infected with **2019-nCoV** could be infectious before displaying any symptoms

81%
of known infections are classified as mild

WHO RECOMMENDATIONS
These measures do not help in preventing COVID-19
Taking Vitamin C, smoking, drinking traditional herbal teas, wearing multiple masks to maximise protection and taking self-medication like antibiotics

ARE THERE SPECIFIC MEDICINES FOR COVID-19?
No specific medicine available but symptomatic treatment for fever, cough etc should be taken

IT APPEARS AS IF IT IS A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE A CLUSTER OR A GROUP OF PATIENTS TEST POSITIVE IN INDIA
— TS HEALTH OFFICIAL

Why in News?

- The President of the United States threatened to stop funding the World Health Organisation accusing it of being “very China-centric” after which the WHO Director General has hit back asking the President not to politicise this virus.

What is the background?

- With the pandemic engulfing the world every nation respects the WHO’s authority.
- Nations follow its advice, letting it coordinate the flow of information, resources and medical equipment across

national boundaries to areas of greatest need.

What are the reasons behind WHO’s critical failure?

- WHO has little power for all the responsibilities vested in it.
- WHO is a specialized body of the UN but it has no ability to bind or sanction its members unlike other international bodies like WTO.
- The annual operating budget of WHO was just about \$2bn in 2019 which is smaller than that of many university hospitals.
- The WHO “has been drained of power and resources”.

What is the story of WHO?

- The WHO was born during the moment of hopeful internationalism that followed the chaos of the Second World War.
- The idea of global collaboration in fighting disease was not new – in the 19th century, at periodic International Sanitary Conferences, countries had standardized quarantine procedures for cholera and yellow fever – but the WHO constitution, adopted in 1948, envisioned a far grander global mission, nothing less than “the attainment by all people of the highest possible levels of health”.

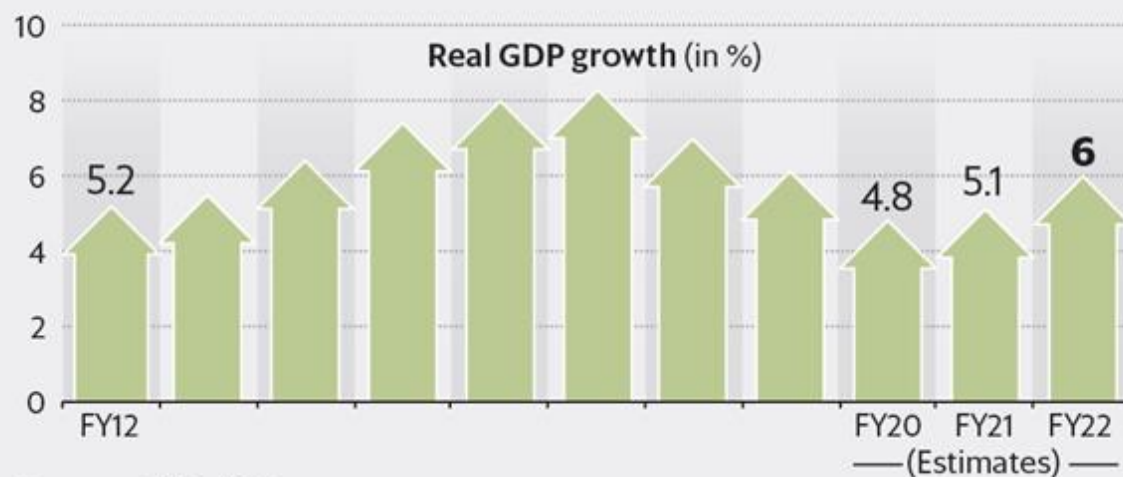
Conclusion

- The WHO is battling against a breakdown in international cooperation that is far beyond its capacity to control.
- The WHO hasn’t driven globalisation in the same way as the WTO or IMF, but in a way it has administered it – quietly promising to take on the outbreaks that arise in an industrialised and interconnected world, and relying on the often unspoken norms of international collaboration that underlie it.

2) Oil Price War and Implications

Tapering expectations

UBS has lowered India's real GDP growth forecast by 50 basis points to 5.1% year-on-year in FY21 after considering Covid-19 impact and low oil price benefits.



Source: CEIC, UBS

Why in News?

- OPEC and its allies led by Russia agreed to cut their oil output 10m barrels per day, or 10% of global supplies.
- They expected the United States and other producers to join in their effort to prop up prices hammered in the coronavirus crisis.
- Reductions of 5m bpd are expected to come from other nations to help navigate the deepest oil crisis in decades.

What are the reasons behind oil prices crashing?

- Russia declined to cut its oil supply with an intention to compete with the US shale industry, and, consequently, a price war has started as Saudi Arabia plans a big increase in its oil supply.
- Saudi Arabia, which is the world's largest oil exporter, has started offering unprecedented discounts in Europe, the Far East and the US to increase its supplies at the cost of other oil producers.
- Immediate fallout of the Russia-OPEC meeting was a 9% fall in oil prices recently.

What are the impacts on India?

- The impact of Covid-19 is being felt on the global demand for oil, too, as a dramatic increase in Covid-19 cases has put further

downward pressure on demand for commodities, including oil.

- Thus, both supply and demand shocks have coalesced to roil the crude oil market.
- Since the start of the year, oil prices have fallen by about a third.
- Prices may drop further under the weight of the twin assault of higher supply and lower demand.
- It is, therefore, not a stretch to expect oil prices over the coming financial year to be lower than they were in the previous two.
- This has positive implications for India's economy and policymaking, as it comes at a time when it has embarked on an uncertain and hesitant recovery.

What are the opportunities for India?

- As oil prices slide below levels in the previous two years and also below the price of India's oil basket of \$65 per barrel reportedly assumed for 2020-21, there's an opportunity to pass on about half the benefit of lower global prices to consumers while the other half can be used to shore up revenue by levying higher excise duty.
- The Union government did something similar between 2014 and 2016.

- It can use the low oil prices to improve its fiscal health and lessen the budget deficit.
- The additional tax revenue thus generated through higher excise duty
- Putting cash back in the hands of households and small businesses will go a long way in maintaining the growth of domestic demand, besides improving the credibility of the Union government as a trustworthy counter-party.
- The potential excise duty windfall from oil prices could come in handy for the government to provide relief to beleaguered telecom companies.
- The government will have fiscal leeway to allow a staggered and a longer schedule for the payments they have to make, arising out of the Supreme Court ruling on adjusted gross revenues.
- The telecom growth story is an important component of the broader India story, and the sector needs an urgent breather to ensure we are adequately prepared for a 5G roll-out, whenever it happens.
- A slowdown in economic activity, which is inevitable with restrictions placed on mobility and human interaction, will have adverse fiscal implications.
- Tax collections will decline.
- So will remittances from Indian workers in the Gulf, if that region is buffeted by oil and virus shocks.
- Hence, the quantum of the windfall from lower oil prices will need to be constantly re-assessed and fiscal strategies recalibrated.
- Even as it should nimbly take advantage of the lower prices now, the government should seriously consider hedging against possible higher oil prices in the medium to long term through appropriate instruments available in financial markets.
- This idea should be extended to hedging against a fall in the rupee relative to the US dollar too.

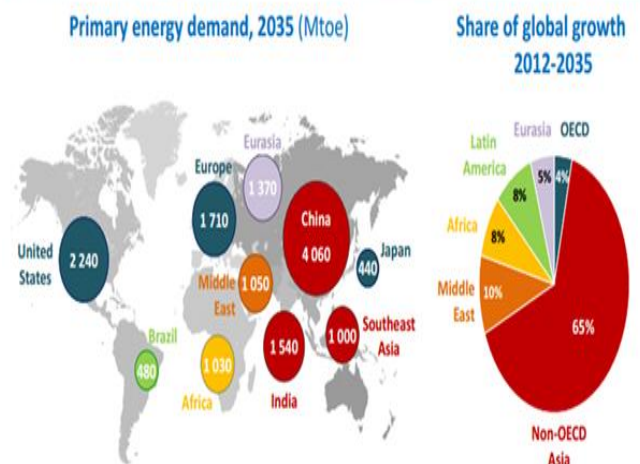
Conclusion

- Irrespective of the recent price trends, the Centre should persist with measures to reduce the country's oil dependency over the long run. It should strive to increase use of renewables, and catalyse a shift to electric vehicles.

should be used to clear all dues of the centre whether to private companies, state governments, or others awaiting tax refunds.

- More effort should be put in to ramp up the stagnating domestic oil output. The country's strategic oil reserves should be increased by making use of attractive buying opportunities in global markets.

3) India: Global Energy Demand Centre



China is the main driver of increasing energy demand in the current decade, but India takes over in the 2020s as the principal source of growth

(from the IEA's World Energy Outlook 2013)

Why in News?

- Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan called for a win-win formula that would safeguard interests of global energy suppliers and consumers during the G-20 oil ministers' virtual conference.
- During his intervention at the video conference hosted by Saudi Arabia, the rotating head of the G-20, Pradhan reassured the grouping that India will continue to remain a global energy demand centre.

What were the key focuses and objectives?

- The main focus of the G20 Energy Ministers was on the ways and means to ensure stable energy markets, which have

been affected due to decrease in demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- They were also focussed on the ongoing surplus production-related matters.
- The meeting was held to foster global dialogue and cooperation to ensure stable energy markets and enable a stronger global economy.

What is India's statement at G20?

- Union Energy Minister Dharmendra Pradhan reiterated PM Narendra Modi's call to G20 to take a human-centric approach to overcome the current hardships, especially for the most vulnerable population.
- The Minister highlighted the decision of PM Modi to provide free LPG cylinders to over 80.3 million poor families under the Ujjwala scheme as a part of the 23 billion dollars relief package.
- The Minister emphasized that India is, was and will continue to be the global energy demand centre.
- He also highlighted the Indian government's efforts to fill its Strategic Petroleum Reserves.
- On the ongoing energy market fluctuations, the Minister said that India has always called for a stable oil market that is not only reasonable for the producers but also affordable for consumers.
- He further appreciated the collective efforts of the OPEC countries to balance the supply-side factors that are imperative for long-term sustainability.
- The Minister has, however, urged that oil prices should be kept at affordable levels to allow for a consumption-led demand recovery.

What are the highlights?

- The G20 Extraordinary Energy Ministers' meeting will be adopting a Joint Statement, which proposes to set up a task force to advise all the G20 Energy Ministers on the next steps and agreed to remain engaged in the coming days in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.
- The G20 ground had called for the extraordinary energy ministers' meeting to discuss OPEC-led plans for the global crude oil production cut accord.

- This is the first time that the G20 group specifically convened to address energy issues.
- Saudi Arabia, which is OPEC's largest oil producer, holds the G20's rotating presidency for this year.

Conclusion

- The meeting comes amid major fall in global oil demand as more than a quarter of countries across the world have imposed complete lockdowns, grounded aircraft, taken vehicles off roads and shut down factories to combat novel coronavirus outbreak.

4) Road ahead for Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Why in News?

- The cascading effect of the global coronavirus pandemic is crippling the tourism and hospitality industry at an "astonishing pace".
- Media reports suggest Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTA) in India have come down by about 67 per cent annually in the January-March quarter, while for domestic tourists, the figure is lower by nearly 40 per cent.
- The travel and tourism sector alone accounted for 9.2 per cent of India's GDP in 2018, and generated 26.7 million jobs in that year.

What is the background?

- The closing down of the iconic Taj Mahal last month is an evocative symbol of how India's travel and tourism landscape has changed due to COVID-19.
- The country's travel and tourism sector, more dependent than others on the free and confident movement of people, is staring at millions of disappearing jobs and a grey future.
- As a result of lockdowns, with no travel possible, the tourism industry is being "badly hit", a government press release said on April 10, 2020.

What does the report suggest?

- Reports and experts suggest possible job loss across tourism and allied industries due to standstill caused by the COVID-19 outbreak across the world.
- The Indian tourism and hospitality industry is staring at a potential job loss

of around 38 million, which is 70% of the total workforce due to COVID-19.

- Nine million jobs--six times the population of Goa--in the travel and tourism sector are at risk in India, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), a global forum to raise awareness about the industry.

- If this trend continues as the COVID-19 crisis progresses, it will be a setback for national employment.
- The sector accounts for 12.75% of employment, 5.56% of its direct and 7.19% indirect.
- Over 87 million people were employed in the tourism industry in 2018-19, according to the ministry of tourism's annual report for 2019-20.

JOBS IN TIMES OF CORONA

HOSPITALITY, TOURISM
Industry Size
Hotels – ₹37,000-39,000 cr
Tourism – ₹18 lakh cr
Total Employees: **40 million**

CORONA IMPACT

- 1] Tourism body expects **1.2 million** direct job losses
- 2] Ancillary industries like logistics will also take a severe hit
- 3] Hotelivate estimates revenue loss at \$1.3-1.55 billion (₹9,600-11,400 cr) in short term, **27-32% drop** over last year
- 4] 15-25% casual/contract employees to suffer first blow
- 5] Indians make up 10% of global cruise liner staff; most may lose jobs

RESTAURANTS
Industry Size: ₹4.2 lakh crore
Total Employees: **7.3 million**

CORONA IMPACT

- 1] **15-20%** job losses likely (as of now)
- 2] Impact could be bigger

RETAIL
Industry Size: ₹59 lakh crore
Total Employees: **46 million**

CORONA IMPACT

- 1] Severe setback if crisis persists for three months
- 2] **11 million** (25%) jobs may be lost

What is the foreseen recovery?

- While every industry faces uncertainty over its future course with the unabated global advance of COVID-19, which has so far caused outbreaks in 185 countries, for this one the fears are more visceral.
- As those in the industry point out, information technology,

banking/financial services and pharmaceuticals have no doubt felt the sting of the virus, but they are not as dependent on the physical mobility of people, and their comfort with the idea of travel, both of which have been casualties of the current crisis.

- Medium and small enterprises dominating the tourism and hospitality sector are likely to be severely impacted by the pandemic, at least till the month of June.
- July to September has always been lean for tourism in India except for a few select pockets.
- The rate of revival after the month of October cannot be predicted right now as the full impact of the crisis is still unknown.
- Internationally, the situation is bleak too, with several countries having restricted movement within and across cities and borders, and travellers themselves putting travel plans on hold, for both financial reasons and health anxieties.

What is the way forward?

- Experts have emphasised on the need and potential to tap domestic tourism and the impact that social media has in capturing the imagination of potential travellers as the way forward to come out of the situation.
- China is a very big inbound market and that market is going to be damaged.
- It is a very big opportunity for India to try and tap the business when it revives unlike the manufacturing sector that let it go.

Conclusion

- We have to go back to the strength of the domestic market to fuel its own consumption and if we get that engine going, then we will be far less touched in the negative way.
- Over the next few weeks, if cases in India do not spiral--the way it has impacted Western Europe or America--then there is an opportunity in the domestic market and we need to capitalise it.

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