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Weekly Current Affairs Compilations

A holistic magazine for UPSC Prelims, Mains and Interview Preparation

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9. OPTIONAL

- a. Geography
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- d. Political Science
- e. Sociology
- f. Philosophy

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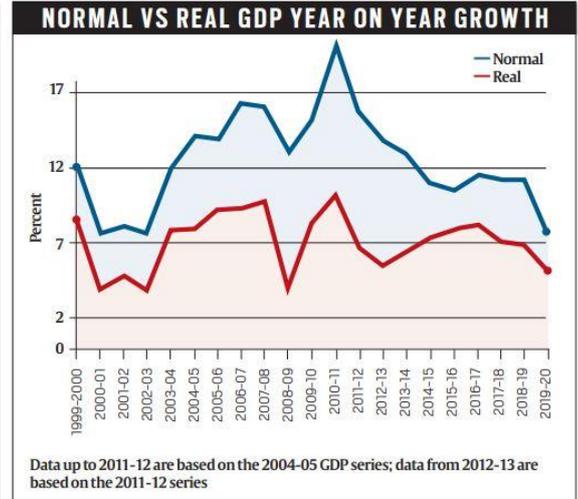
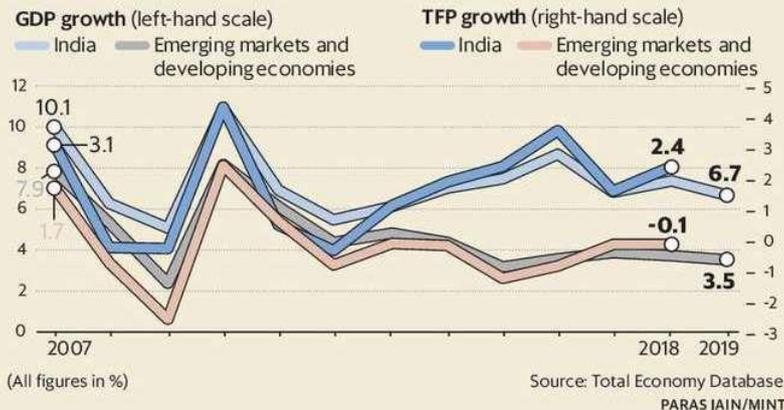
MODEL ANSWER

1. CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS

Topic 1 GDP GROWTH

Vital link

Most economies with 8% or higher GDP growth had TFP growth above 3%. India's TFP growth was 3.5% in 2016 when its GDP growth was 8.7%.



1. The slowdown has revived interest in India's growth rate as it aspires to become a \$5 trillion economy.
2. This would require growing at 8% in real terms, along with a 0.7% rise in total factor productivity (TFP).
3. ***GDP is the total market value of all goods and services produced in the economy during a particular year, inclusive of all taxes and subsidies on products.***
4. **What is nominal GDP and how is it different from real GDP?**
 - a. The market value taken at current prices is the **NOMINAL GDP**. Nominal GDP growth is a measure of the increase in incomes resulting from rise in both production and prices.
 - b. The value taken at constant prices (that is prices for all products taken at an unchanged base year) is the **REAL GDP**. Real GDP growth thus measures how much the production of goods and services in the economy has increased in actual physical terms during a year.
 - c. In simple terms, **real GDP is nominal GDP stripped of inflation.**
5. **But why should nominal growth matter at all? When we talk about "growth", isn't it a reference to how much real production is increasing?**
 - a. In the normal course, real growth is what one would ordinarily look at. But current fiscal year seems extraordinary because the gap between nominal and real GDP growth is just 2.6 %. This is marginally higher than the difference of 2.5 % in 2015-16.
 - b. In 2019-20, not only is real GDP growth expected to be the lowest in 11 years, but also the implied inflation (also called **GDP DEFLATOR**, or the increase in prices of all the goods and services produced in the economy) is just 2.6%. Simply put, producers have not gained from either higher output or higher prices.
 - c. Households and firms generally look at "**TOPLINE**" — how much their income has grown relative to previous year. When that growth falls to single digits in a country like India, which has been used to a minimum 5-6% GDP increase year after year and an equal rate for inflation, it is unusual. Low nominal GDP growth is associated more with developed western economies.
6. **What are the factors for economic growth?**
 - a. Economic growth is a function of **quantity of inputs** such as labour and capital employed for productive purposes, along with **factor productivity**.
 - i. It is intuitive that if more people are employed, more goods and services would be produced. Over time, due to a rise in population, labour employed increases and due to accumulation, capital also increases in an economy.
 - ii. A rise in productivity enables an economy to grow faster with the same set of labour and capital being employed.
 - b. ***It is important to recognize the factors responsible for growth to address current slowdown.***
7. **What is total factor productivity?**

a. **Total factor productivity (TFP) is derived as a ratio of total production and weighted average of inputs such as labour and capital.**

- b. The measure gives us the growth in real output, which is in addition to the growth in inputs such as labour or capital employed for productive purposes.
- c. TFP gives us relationship between quantity of factors employed and output in an economy.
- d. A higher TFP implies higher growth with the same set of labour and capital employed.
- e. TFP as a concept was first discussed by Nikolaas Tinbergen (1942) and George Stigler (1947); Robert Solow (1957) developed the framework further.

8. **How has India's TFP growth evolved over the years?**

- a. As per the Total Economy Database (TED), India's adjusted GDP growth in 2005 was 9%, while TFP growth was 3.5%; in 2006, growth was 9.3% and TFP growth 3.3%; in 2007, the figures were 10.1% and 3.1%, respectively.
- b. Evidently, growth came with a substantial improvement in TFP.
- c. In 2016 India's TFP growth was 3.5%, in 2017 it was 1.6% and in 2018 it was 2.4%.

9. **What is the global trend on TFP growth?**

- a. Since 2008, TFP growth has been slower for most nations; for China it has been negative since 2012.
- b. TED and Federal Reserve Economic Data on TFP and GDP growth show most economies with 8% or higher growth had TFP growth above 3%.
- c. These countries also saw a substantial rise in private capital formation in that period.
- d. Recent evidence indicates TFP might impact GDP growth more than fixed capital.
- e. Better TFP does seem to have a positive impact on growth of an economy, whether emerging or developed.

10. **What are the factors affecting TFP?**

- a. India can improve its TFP by undertaking **bold market and structural reforms** that will unshackle its productive capacity, stuck in primary sector of economy.
- b. Such reforms can cause **reallocation of land and labour** from primary to other sectors of economy, thus enhancing productivity.
- c. Investments in physical infrastructure such as **highways, dedicated freight corridors, and human capital** will also increase TFP.

11. **Are there other implications as well, say for corporates and the government?**

- a. In the past, listed companies have seen their turnover double in five years or so, which comes with a nominal year-on-year growth of 14-15%. If the latter falls to 7-8%, the same doubling would take 9-10 years. This can have a psychological impact — although it could also be the case that the value of their inputs, including salaries paid to employees, would also be rising at a slower rate. Their net earnings or profits would not, therefore, be hurt to the same extent.
- b. As a result, even if the Centre's fiscal deficit is contained at the budgeted Rs 7,03,760 crore in absolute terms, the latter would now work out to 3.44% of GDP, as against the originally targeted 3.3%. This is over and above the slippages in the absolute fiscal deficit itself due to the Centre's revenues from taxes and other receipts, including disinvestment, turning out to be lower than the Budget projections.
- c. High nominal GDP growth also makes the government's debt seem more manageable. The debt stock (numerator) can keep going up so long as it does not exceed the nominal increase in GDP (denominator). That equation changes in a low nominal GDP growth scenario. For state governments too, low nominal GDP growth is a matter of concern because their budgets normally assume double-digit increases in revenues.
- d. The Centre's compensation formula to states from the Goods and Services Tax also promised to meet any annual revenue shortfall below 14%. That again, did not ever factor in the possibility of GDP growth (real plus inflation) falling to 7.5% levels.

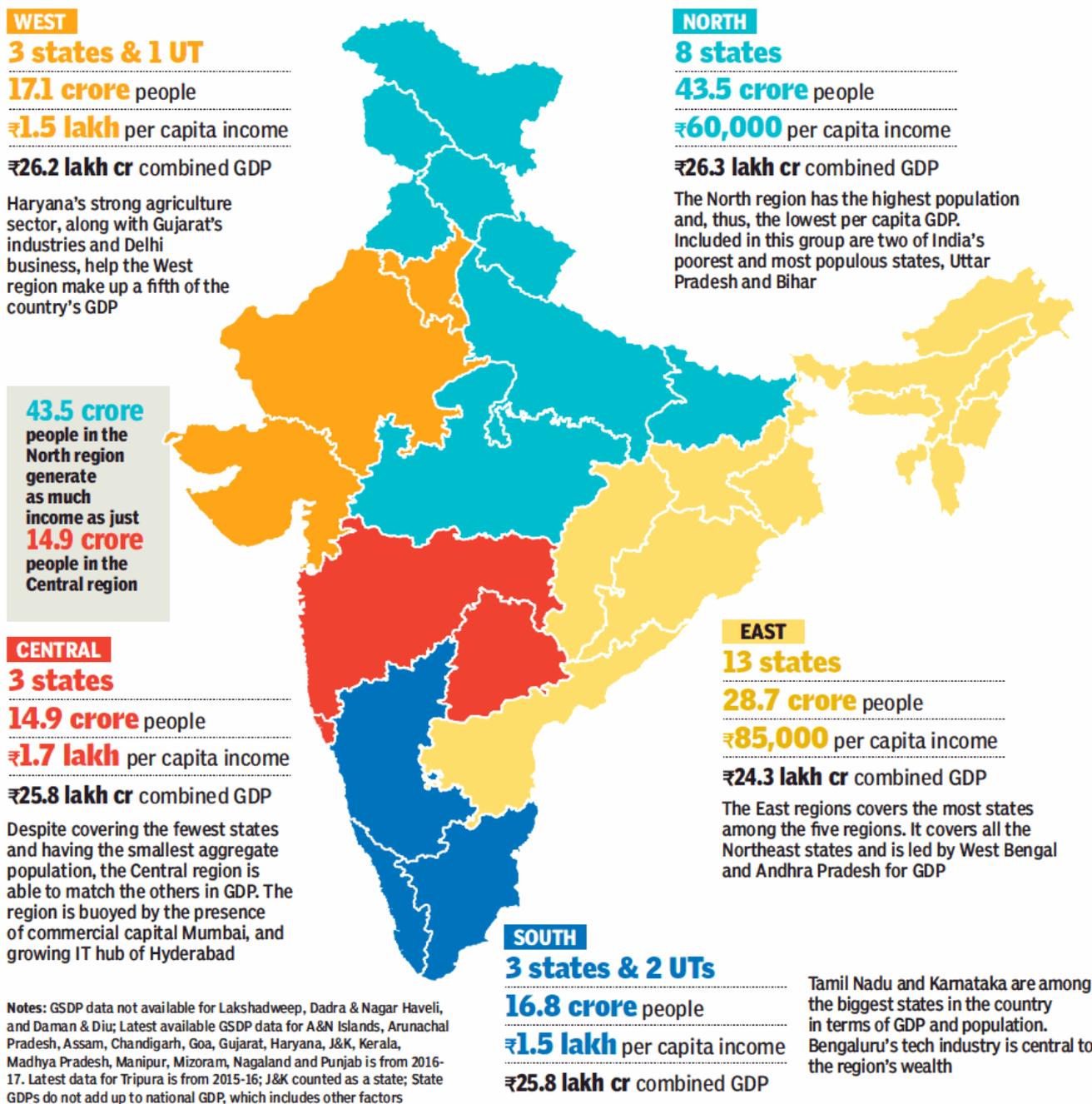
12. **Stress hits job sectors**

- a. sharp slide in growth recorded by two employment-intensive sectors, **construction and manufacturing**, is expected to trigger concern.
- b. Government expenditure has been only source of support, but shortfalls in revenue limits headroom even here.

13. So is low single-digit nominal GDP growth the new normal?

- a. The only time India had as many as three consecutive years of single-digit nominal GDP growth was from 2000-01 to 2002-03. The nominal growth in those three years were 7.62% (2000-01), 8.2% (2001-02) and 7.66% (2002-03). A repeat looks unlikely as of now, given rising food and fuel prices, especially in the last three months or so.
- b. Also, the current real GDP growth of 4.98% is higher than the 3.8%, 4.8% and 3.8% respectively of those three years.

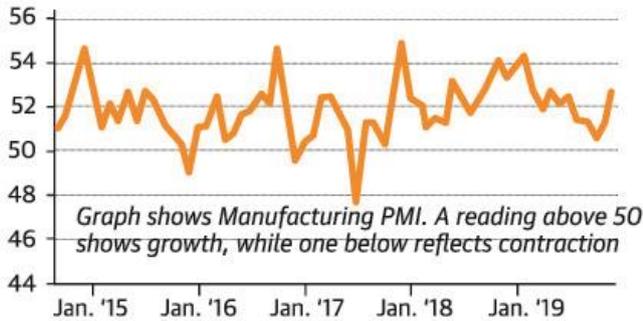
Uneven development among the various states is one of the realities of India's economy. A map of the country divided into five regions of equal GDP, based on data from 2017-18, presents another way of looking at the lag in growth



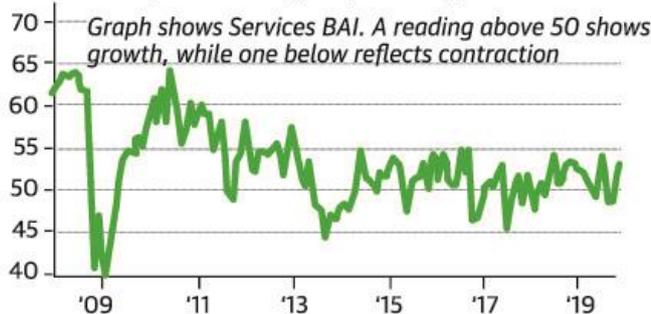
Recovery on the cards?

According to the first advanced estimates of Real GDP growth released on Tuesday, the economy is set to grow at the slowest pace since FY09, when the global financial crisis played out. However, certain indicators from November and December 2019 show that the economy may improve in the second half of FY20. The growth rate in the final months of last year, though still slow-paced, hints at a possible revival

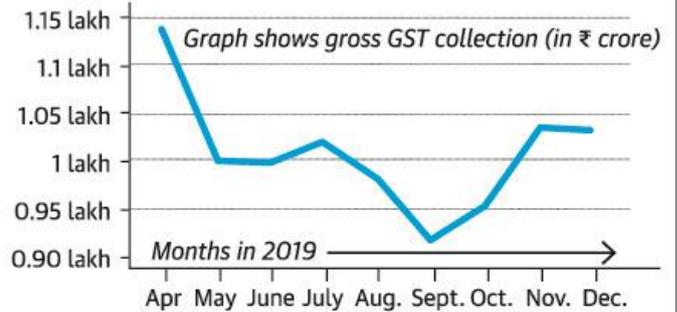
Manufacturing sector | In Dec. '19, the Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)*, which measures a combination of new orders, output and employment of 400 manufacturers, rose to 52.7, the highest in 10 months



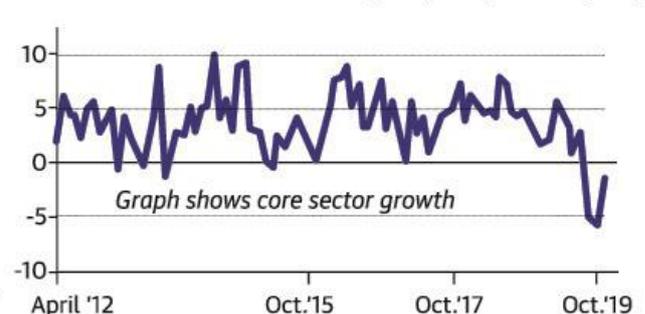
Services sector | In Dec, '19, the Services Business Activity Index (BAI)*, which measures changes in the volume of business activity of 400 service sector companies, rose to 53.3 from 52.7 in November, the second-highest rate of increase in output in over a year (after July)



Steady tax collections | GST collections, which had dipped to this financial year's lowest in September 2019, recovered in the following months. December is the second straight month that GST collections crossed the ₹1 lakh crore mark



Core sector | As for the core sector growth figures, the output of the eight core sector industries contracted by 1.5% in November. This was the fourth continuous month of decline, but it was still an improvement from the contractions recorded in October (5.8%) & September (5.1%)



Compiled by **Vignesh Radhakrishnan** | Source: Office of the Economic Adviser, *compiled by IHS Markit

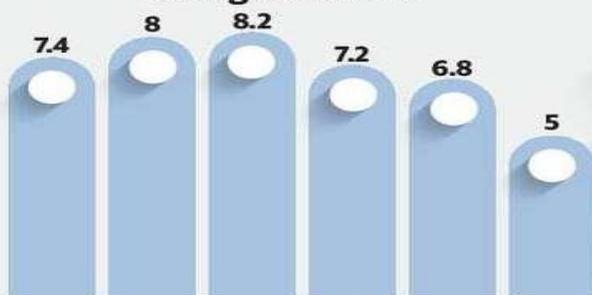
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SARVESH KUMAR SHARMA/MINT

GROSS DOMESTIC PROBLEM

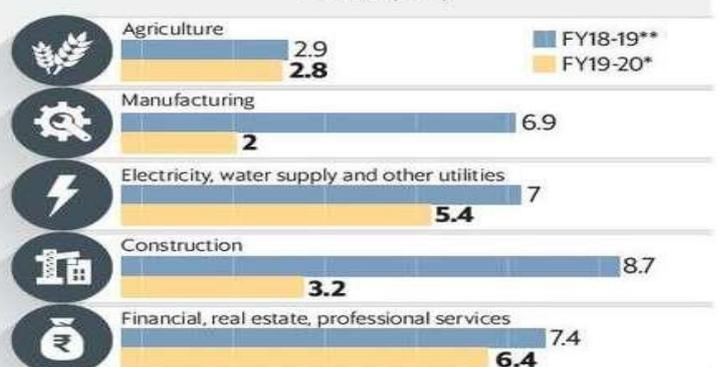
Economic growth is projected to slow to 5% in the current fiscal from 6.8% in the previous year, with manufacturing witnessing a paltry 2% expansion compared with 6.9% growth last year.

GDP growth (in %)



*advance estimate **provisional estimates
Source: Statistics ministry

GVA (in %)



THE estimate raises hopes that the second half of the financial year may turn out to be better than the first.

ECONOMISTS say any cut in public spending may put the modest improvement in economic growth at risk.

THE upcoming Union budget is widely expected to announce more measures to counter the slowdown.

Topic 2 BIG ACHIEVEMENTS OF 21st CENTURY

Protests, religion-based violence, and trade wars. Ostensibly, this may seem like a turbulent time for the world. But a long-term view of data offers a more optimistic perspective. Compared to previous century, humanity has already made significant progress on several fronts in the 21st century. To celebrate the beginning of the 20th year of the 21st century, we highlight 10 such major achievements so far.

1. Democracies outrank autocracies

- a. In 1900, a handful of countries were governed, as what can be defined as modern democracies. And, though this figure steadily increased, for the whole of the 20th century, more countries were ruled by autocratic regimes than democratic ones. This changed in the 21st century with democracies emerging in far-flung corners of the world and, eventually, outnumbering autocracies, according to data from the Varieties of Democracy Project, a research group at the University of Gothenburg tracking global electoral systems. (Chart 1)

2. Less war, more peace

- a. More than autocracies, the 20th century was defined by two tragic World Wars. Despite occasional wars, the 21st century, fortunately, has yet to witness conflict on the scale of the two great wars. Perhaps due to the **changing nature of warfare** or the world simply becoming more peaceful, there have been fewer battle-related deaths in the 21st century. (Chart 2)

3. Urban boom

- a. For almost all of history, most humans led a largely rural existence. Work and life was concentrated on farms and villages. With industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries, this slowly changed as more people shifted to cities. In the 21st century, this urbanization has continued unabated. According to population projections from the United Nations, nearly 60% of the world's population will be urban residents by 2020. In India, only 35% are expected to live in cities in 2020. (Chart 3)

4. Greater globalization

- a. 2019 was a bad year for global trade. But even after a slump, the world remains relatively open—especially compared to previous century. Starting the 1990s and continuing in the 2000s, global trade expanded rapidly, driven by both China's and India's greater participation in world economy. But as **trade wars escalate and borders tighten**, some forms of globalization may be threatened in the coming years. (Chart 4)

5. Healthier children

- a. One of the worst tragedies of the 20th century was that many children lost their lives before their first birthday. According to one estimate, in 1950, 16% of all infants died before reaching the age of one; by 2017, this proportion had fallen to 2.9%. This improvement has been driven by **falling poverty, as well as greater vaccination coverage**. Across the world, more children are now getting immunized against fatal diseases, which allow them to live healthier, longer lives. Growing anti-vaccination movement in some parts of the world could pose a threat to this achievement. (Chart 5)

6. More school-attendance

- a. Children are not just healthier, but also more likely to be educated. In 2000, 191 countries promised to deliver universal primary education for their children as part of UN's Millennium Development Goals. Over last 19 years, there has been significant progress on one aspect of this challenge: getting children into schools. Enrolment rates globally have increased. **In 2017, less than 10% of world's primary school-age children were out of school**, according to World Bank data. (Chart 6)

7. Progressive views on homosexuality

- a. In 2018, in a historic ruling, Indian Supreme Court decriminalized homosexual activity. The judgement was part of a larger, global trend of greater acceptance towards homosexuality. For most of the 20th century, in most countries, homosexuality was socially unacceptable. But now, **150 countries have legalized homosexuality and 45 countries have legalized homosexual marriages**, according to data compiled by Equaldex, a knowledge platform for homosexual rights. (Chart 7)

8. Rise of the internet

a. Much of the technology that underpins the internet was developed in the 20th century. Yet, it was only in the 21st century that the internet became the phenomenon that defines our times. In 2000, according to World Bank data, just 7% of the world and 0.5% of Indians had access to the internet. Since then, both figures have grown exponentially. (Chart 8)

9. Social media explosion

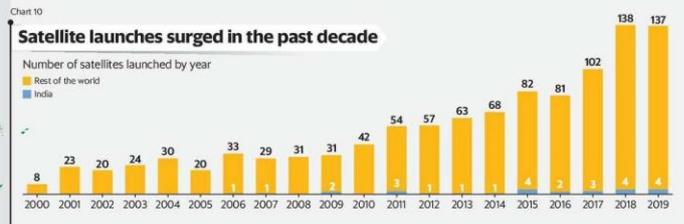
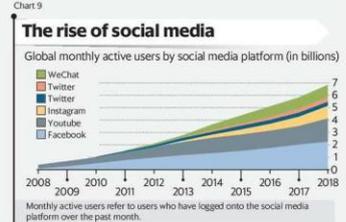
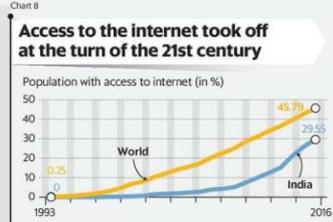
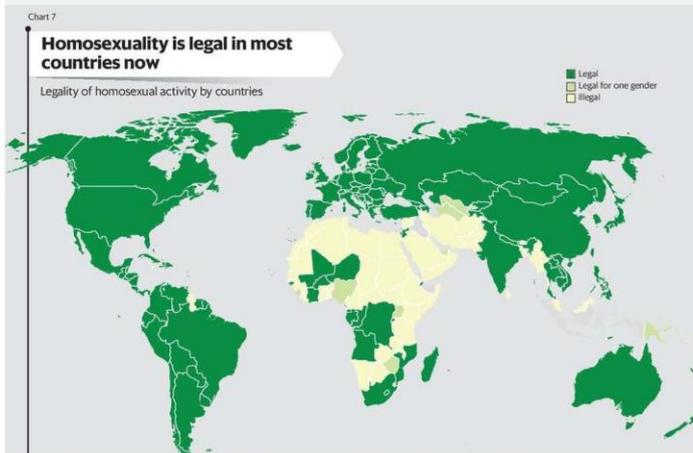
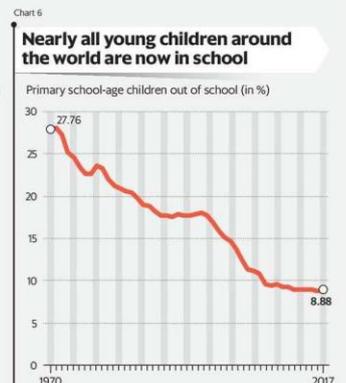
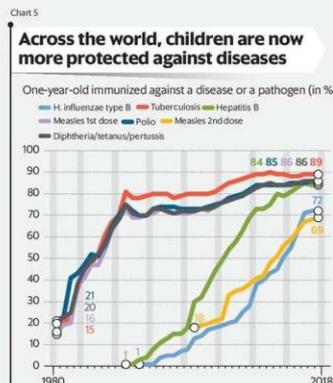
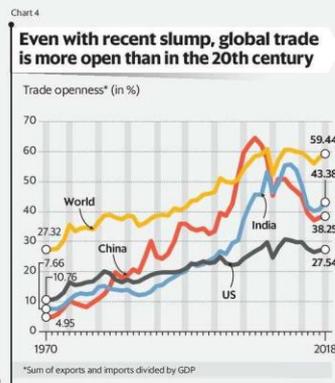
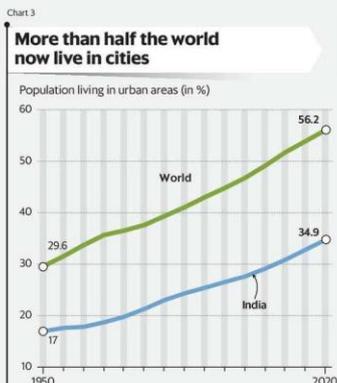
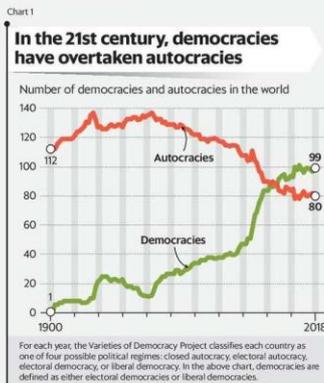
a. Social media has transformed how humans communicate, gain knowledge and spend their time. In **2018, there were more than two billion regular Facebook users across the world.** Social media may have transformed our lives, but its ubiquity is now raising other issues of **privacy, growing polarization and psychological pressures.** (Chart 9)

10. Spread of satellites

a. The 20th century breakthrough in space travel was meant to herald a new era of further, more frequent space travel. This may have yet to materialize, but there have been major developments in another area: satellites. There are now more than 4,000 satellites orbiting Earth. (Chart 10)

b. Each satellite serves a different purpose, but almost all have been launched in the last 20 years. And, where once almost all space activity was led by the US and Russia, others have now joined the space party. India, for instance, has launched 27 satellites since 2006.

MINT GRAPHITI



Violent Crimes are Down

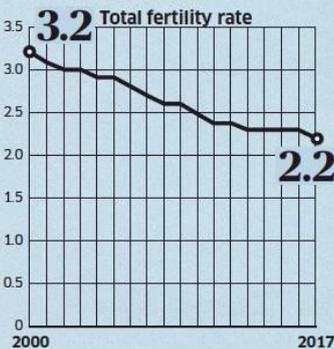
Incidents of violent crimes have been falling for some years across India, according to data as of 2017. The murder rate is lower than it has been in over 50 years. Though the number of reported rapes rose after the 2012 Delhi gangrape incident, that increase in reporting too has now levelled off



Source: National Crime Records Bureau

Making Families Smaller

Alongside more children surviving their infancy, women are restricting family sizes at a far faster rate than was earlier expected. Fertility among Muslims is falling at a faster rate than other religious communities in the country



Source: Sample Registration System, 2017

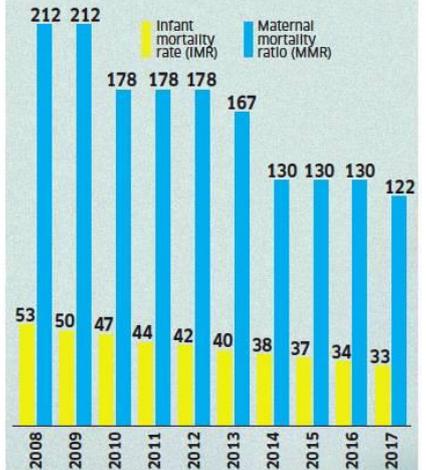
Total fertility rate (TFR) is the number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime



Source: International Institute for Population Sciences & Census 2011

Surviving Infancy & Childbirth

On many key health indicators like infant and maternal mortality rates, India continues to make steady progress even though there is an urgent need to end malnutrition among children and watch out for lifestyle diseases



MMR = Proportion of maternal deaths per 1 lakh live births

IMR = Infant deaths per 1,000 live births

Notes: For some periods, MMR was calculated for every three years

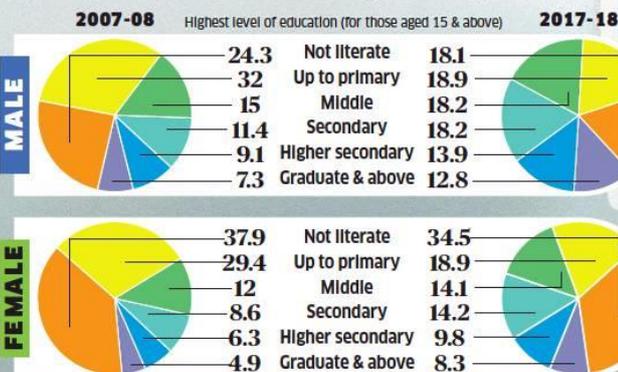
Lifestyle diseases include atherosclerosis, stroke, obesity and diabetes

Source: Sample Registration System



More Children Getting Educated

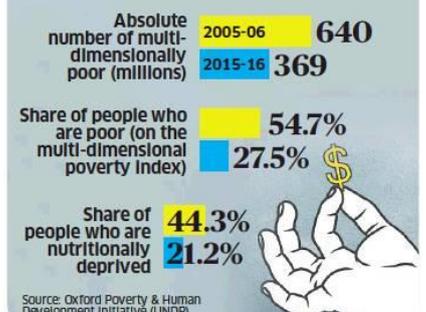
India is at the peak of its demographic dividend, and children are staying in school longer than before. Also, more girls are getting into higher education, and more Indians earning graduate degrees



Note: The numbers have been rounded off and may not add up to 100

Poverty Reduction

India lifted 271 million people out of poverty between 2005-06 and 2015-16 – the largest reduction in any country that period, according to UNDP



Source: Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

The writer is a Chennai-based journalist

Topic 3 INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure push

In the proposed ₹102 trillion capital expenditure plan (₹3 trillion to be announced later) over the next five years, a large proportion is towards roads, railways, urban infrastructure and power.

Sector-wise share (%) of capex

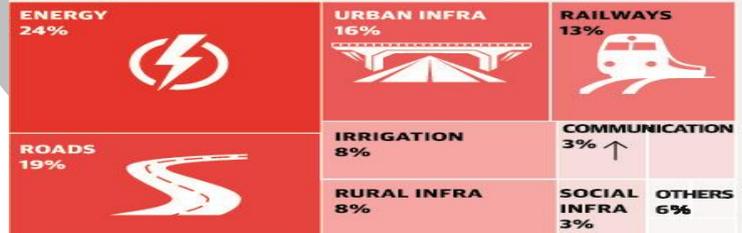


Source: ICICI Securities

1. Union Finance Minister outlined plans to invest more than **₹102 lakh crore** in infrastructure projects by 2024-25, with **Centre, States and Private sector** sharing capital expenditure in a **39:39:22** formula.
2. This will be a significant increase over 6 last 6 years, when Centre and 6 States together spent ₹51 lakh crore on infrastructure.
3. This is expenditure needed to achieve a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25
4. A task force of senior bureaucrats chaired by Economic Affairs Secretary had identified ₹102 lakh crore worth of projects in 18 States as part of a **National Infrastructure Pipeline**.
5. Another ₹3 lakh crore worth of projects are likely to be added soon
6. Large States yet to provide adequate data are Gujarat, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Bihar. **Investment is phased over a 6 year period**, including current financial year.
7. **The funds would come from budgetary and extra-budgetary resources, as well as those raised from market and internal accruals of relevant state-owned companies.**

A new infra push

The break-up of expenditure for select sectors in the ₹102 lakh crore infrastructure projects announced by the Centre:



During fiscals 2020 to 2025, sectors such as energy, urban, railways and roads accounted for close to 70% of the projected infrastructure investments in India

₹10,250,704cr
investment planned from 2019-20 to 2024-25

80% of investment to flow into energy, road, railways, urban infra, housing and irrigation

KEY TARGETS

<p>74% rise in power generation capacity – from 356GW to 619GW</p>  <p>50% of additional capacity to be in renewable and nuclear energy</p>	<p>50% rise in length of national highways</p>  <p>10% of NH to be expressways</p> <p>100% households to have piped water supply</p>	<p>Double farmer income</p>  <p>80% internet penetration – up from 40% today</p>  <p>73 new medical colleges</p>
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Topic 4 INFANT DEATHS

1. Every day, India witness's death of an estimated **2,350 babies aged less than one year**. Among them, an average 172 are from Rajasthan and 98 from Gujarat. In 2014, of every 1,000 children born in the country, 39 did not see their first birthday. Today, that figure has come down to 33. That is 1,56,000 fewer deaths every year.
2. As outrage continues over the deaths of babies in J K Lon Hospital in Kota, Rajasthan, and in civil hospital in Rajkot, Gujarat, fact remains that India has most child deaths in world. In 2017, UNICEF estimated 8,02,000 babies had died in India.
3. **How high are mortality numbers?**
 - a. India has an annual birth cohort of approximately **26 million**.
 - b. The **INFANT MORTALITY RATE (IMR)** in country currently stands at **33 per 1,000 live births**.
 - c. This means babies numbering in region of 8,50,000 die every year in India or an average daily toll to **2,350**.
 - d. **Gujarat** has an annual birth cohort of 1.2 million. In 2017, IMR in state was 30 per 1,000 live births. This means state sees about 36,000 deaths a year, or an average 98 a day.
 - e. In **Rajasthan**, an estimated 1.65 million births take place every year. IMR is 38 per 1000 live births which implies an estimated 62,843 deaths annually, or an average 172 every day.
4. **Do Gujarat and Rajasthan have highest infant mortality?**
 - a. No. Between 2014 and 2017, India's IMR has declined by 15.4%. At a decline rate of 17.4%, Rajasthan has been ahead of national average in reducing IMR while Gujarat has a decline rate of 14.3%.
 - b. IMR in Rajasthan dropped from 46 per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 38, and in Gujarat from 35 to 30.
 - c. In 2017, states such as Arunachal Pradesh (42), Madhya Pradesh (47), Assam (44), Uttar Pradesh (41), Meghalaya (39), Odisha (41) and Chhattisgarh (38) had a higher IMR than Gujarat and Rajasthan. Arunachal, Tripura and Manipur have recorded a negative reduction rate between 2014 and 2017, which means child death rates there have gone up.
 - d. In Arunachal it went up from 30 to 42, in Tripura from 21 to 29 and in Manipur from 11 to 12.
5. **Why do so many infants die in India every year?**
 - a. On January 1, 2020, according to a UNICEF estimate, India, with an estimated 67,385 babies born that day, accounted for **17%** of estimated 392,078 births globally. This is higher than 46,299 babies born in China that day, 26,039 born in Nigeria and 16,787 born in Pakistan.
 - b. Among the factors that have been proved detrimental to child survival are
 - i. **lack of education in mother,**
 - ii. **malnutrition (more than half of Indian women are anemic),**
 - iii. **age of the mother at time of birth,**
 - iv. **spacing**
 - v. **child is born at home or in a facility.**
 - c. According to a UNICEF factsheet on child mortality in India, **"... Children born to mothers with at least 8 years of schooling have 32% lesser chances of dying in neonatal period and 52% lesser chances in the post-neonatal period, as compared to the illiterate mothers."**
 - i. infant and under-five mortality rates are highest among mothers under age 20.
 - ii. The rates are lowest among children born to mothers between ages of 20-24, remain low up to 25-34, and increase again after that age.
 - d. According to National Family Health Survey-4, only 78.9% births in India happen in a facility. This means **21.1% or about 54 lakh births** in a year still happen outside of a facility where hygiene levels can be low, sometimes without help of a trained health worker.
 - e. Apart from obvious infection risks in a **non-institutional birth, vaccine compliance** too is usually worse in these cases.

f. According to the Health Ministry, vaccination cover in India after several rounds of Intensified Mission Indradhanush (MI) and original MI, now stands at 87%. This means over **33 lakh children continue to miss out** on some or all vaccinations every year.

6. What measures are in place for sick newborns?

- a. **Special newborn care units (SNCUs)** have been established at district hospitals and sub-district hospitals with an annual delivery load more than 3,000 to provide care for sick newborns: that is, all type of neonatal care except assisted ventilation and major surgeries. It is a separate unit in close proximity to the labour room with 12 or more beds, and managed by adequately trained doctors, staff nurses and support staff to provide 24x7 services.
- b. **“The death rates are usually higher in medical college-based SNCUs like J K Lon (Kota) because they tend to get sicker babies, sometimes from faraway districts when parents rush them there in a last-minute effort. J K Lon (Kota) for example has a 20% death rate.”**
- c. In AIIMS, usually only those newborns are admitted who are born there and these usually come from high-risk pregnancies. **“The mortality rate for intramural cases is about 1.5% but these are low birth weight babies, pneumonia, sepsis. Extramural cases we only take those that are very sick, babies that nobody else will take such a heart disease kidney failure etc. Overall 10% has been mortality figure since time SNCUs began to be monitored nationally”**

THE PROBLEM

THE SOLUTIONS

WHO IS DYING?
9 MILLION CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE DIE EVERY YEAR

3.8 million (under 28 days), 6.3 million (1 year), 9 million (5 years)

WHERE ARE THEY DYING?
 99% DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

INDIA: 2 million deaths
 NIGERIA: 1.1 million deaths
 DRC: 500,000 deaths
 PAKISTAN: 430,000 deaths
 CHINA: 300,000 deaths
 ETHIOPIA: 280,000 deaths

5 million deaths (60% of all child deaths in just 6 countries)

INEQUITY
 For every 10 women giving birth with the help of a skilled attendant in urban areas, only 5 women have the same access in rural areas

WHAT ARE THEY DYING OF?

40%	NEONATAL
18%	DIARRHOEA
19%	PNEUMONIA
10%	OTHER
2%	MALARIA
2%	MEASLES
2%	HIV/AIDS

INDIRECT CAUSES OF DEATH: malnutrition, water, sanitation & hygiene, access to healthcare, health education, prevention

but 2/3 of all child deaths are preventable

WHY ARE THEY DYING?

- LACK OF POLITICAL WILL TO PRIORITISE CHILD HEALTH
- FINANCIAL GAP BETWEEN FUNDING NEEDED AND AID RECEIVED
- NO FORMAL POLITICAL VOICE FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN
- FAILURE TO ADDRESS OTHER SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH
- DECISIONS ABOUT HEALTH EXCLUDE FAMILIES IN REAL NEED

THE SOLUTIONS

BY PROVIDING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES WITH SIMPLE SOLUTIONS, **6 MILLION** CHILDREN COULD BE SAVED EACH YEAR

- BED NETS
- ORAL REHYDRATION
- EXCLUSIVE BREAST-FEEDING
- SKILLED ATTENDANTS
- IMMUNISATION

THESE ARE SOME OF THE PROVEN, COST-EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS THAT COULD SAVE CHILDREN'S LIVES

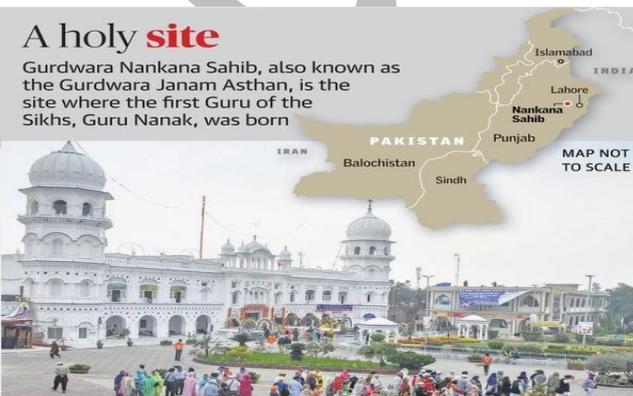
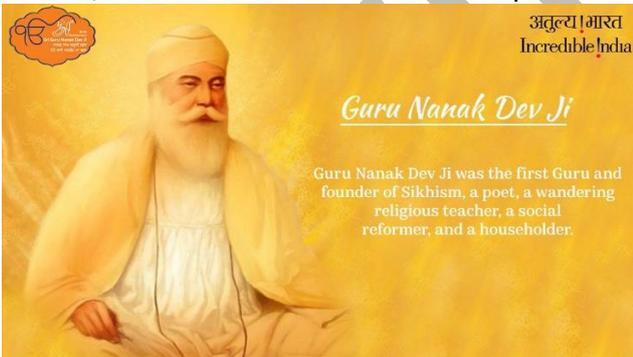
INFANT MORTALITY RATES (SELECTED STATES)

State	2014	2017	Decline
All India	39	33	15.4%
Mizoram	32	15	53.1%
Delhi	20	16	20%
Rajasthan	46	38	17.4%
Bihar	42	35	16.7%
Odisha	49	41	16.3%
UP	48	41	14.6%
Gujarat	35	30	14.3%
Chhattisgarh	43	38	11.6%
Assam	49	44	9.6%
Tripura	21	29	-38.1%
Arunachal	30	42	-40%

IMR = deaths per 1,000 live births
 Data source: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Topic 5 NANKANA SAHIB

1. On Friday, tension mounted in Nankana Sahib in Pakistan and there was outrage in India after a mob, led by family of a Muslim man who had married a Sikh teenage girl, hurled stones at Gurdwara Janam Asthan, birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev, and threatened to convert it into a mosque.
2. Punjab CM urged Pakistan PM to ***“immediately intervene to ensure that devotees stranded in Gurdwara Nankana Sahib are rescued and Gurdwara is saved from angry mob surrounding it”***.
3. **What is the historical significance of Nankana Sahib?**
 - a. Nankana Sahib is a city of 80,000 in Pakistan’s Punjab province, where Gurdwara **Janam Asthan** (also called Nankana Sahib Gurdwara) is located.
 - b. shrine is built over site where Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism was believed to be born in 1469.
 - c. It is 75 kms to the west of Lahore and is capital of **Nankana Sahib district**.
 - d. The city was previously known as **Talwandi**, and was founded by Rai Bhoi, a wealthy landlord.
 - e. Rai Bhoi’s grandson, Rai Bular Bhatti, renamed the town ‘Nankana Sahib’ in honour of the Guru. ‘Sahib’ is an Arabic-origin epithet of respect.
 - f. Besides Gurdwara Janam Asthan, Nankana Sahib has several important shrines including **Gurdwara Patti Sahib, Gurdwara Bal Leela, Gurdwara Mal Ji Sahib, Gurdwara Kiara Sahib, Gurdwara Tambu Sahib** — all dedicated to stages in life of first Guru.
 - g. There is also a Gurdwara in memory of Guru Arjan (5th Guru) and Guru Hargobind (6th Guru).
 - h. Guru Hargobind is believed to have paid homage to the town in 1621-22.
 - i. The Janam Asthan shrine was constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, after he visited Nankana Sahib in 1818-19 while returning from Battle of Multan.
 - j. During British rule, Gurdwara Janam Asthan was site of a violent episode when in 1921, over 130 Akali Sikhs were killed after they were attacked by Mahant of shrine. The incident is regarded as one of key milestones in **Gurdwara Reform Movement**, which led to passing of Sikh Gurdwara Act in 1925 that ended Mahant control of Gurdwaras. In 2014, Pakistan had a memorial for massacre built.
4. Until Independence, Nankana Sahib’s population had an almost equal number of Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, which since Partition has been predominantly Muslim.



550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji



The Union Cabinet of India, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has passed a Resolution to celebrate the 550th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Devji, which falls next year, throughout the country and across the globe, in a grand and befitting manner along with State Governments and the Indian Missions abroad. Guru Nanak Devji's teachings of love, peace, equality and brotherhood have eternal value.

The following are the highlights of the decisions taken in the Cabinet meeting:

Development of Kartarpur Sahib corridor:

In a significant decision, the Union Cabinet approved the building and development of the Kartarpur corridor from Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district to the international border, in order to facilitate pilgrims from India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur on the banks of the Ravi river, in Pakistan, where Shri Guru Nanak Devji spent eighteen years. Pilgrims would then be able to visit the holy shrine throughout the year.

The Kartarpur corridor will be implemented as an integrated development project with Government of India funding, to provide smooth and easy passage, with all the modern amenities. Government of India will put in place suitable facilities for smooth passage of pilgrims. Government of Pakistan will be urged to recognize the sentiments of the Sikh community and to develop a corridor with suitable facilities in their territory as well.

Development of Sultanpur Lodhi:

The Union Cabinet also decided that the historic town of Sultanpur Lodhi, associated with the life of Shri Guru Nanak Devji, shall be developed as a heritage town and on the Smart City principles, including energy efficiency, to highlight Shri Guru Nanak Devji's emphasis on sustainability and reverence for nature. As a major attraction for pilgrims and tourists, a heritage complex at Sultanpur Lodhi, "Pind Babe Nanak da" will be established to depict life in the times of Shri Guru Nanak Devji. Sultanpur Lodhi railway station will be upgraded and developed with all the modern amenities. Centre for inter faith studies and Chairs in foreign Universities:

A centre for inter faith studies will be set up at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. Chairs on Shri Guru Nanak Devji will be set up in one University each in UK and Canada. An international seminar on the life and teachings of Shri Guru Nanak Devji will be organised in New Delhi.

Celebrations throughout the country and globally:

States/Union Territories will also be requested to celebrate 550th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Devji in a befitting manner. Indian missions overseas will organize special events on the occasion.

Commemorative coin and stamps:

Commemorative coin and postage stamps will be released by the Government of India to mark this momentous occasion.

Religious activities and publications:

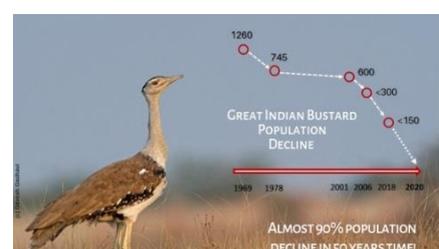
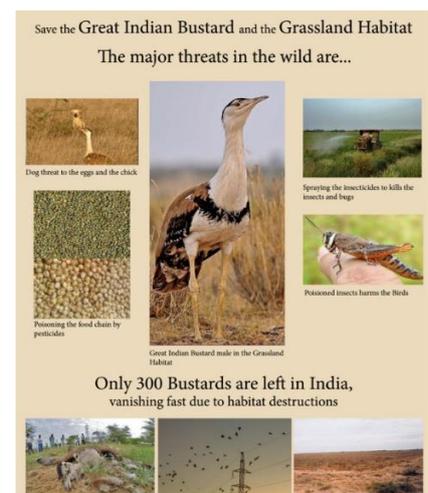
Religious activities will be organised throughout the country. Doordarshan will telecast programmes on Shri Guru Nanak Devji and the Gurbani. National Book Trust will publish Gurbani in different Indian languages. UNESCO will be requested to publish Shri Guru Nanak Devji's writings in world languages.

Special train for pilgrims:

Ministry of Railways will run a train passing through the various holy places associated with Shri Guru Nanak Devji, for pilgrims and tourists.

Topic 6 GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

1. Once frontrunner for India's national bird, Great Indian Bustard has long been on brink of extinction.
2. Great Indian Bustard (GIB), is **one of heaviest flying birds, and is found mainly in Indian subcontinent.**
3. Barely 150 of these birds are estimated to be surviving now globally. However, a major conservation effort launched about four years ago is bringing a ray of hope.
4. Since June 2019, 9 GIB eggs collected from **Desert National Park in Jaisalmer** where a conservation centre has been set up, have hatched, and chicks are reported to be doing well. This is largest number of hatchings reported within a 6-month frame by any **GIB conservation Programme** in world
5. Forest officials have identified 7 females and 1 male among GIB chicks; sex of ninth and youngest chick, which hatched a couple of months ago, is not yet known.
6. GIB is known **to eat insects, harvested food grains and fruit.**
7. **THREATS:**
 - a. Vanishing grasslands
 - b. attacks by dogs and foxes
 - c. **uncontrolled use of pesticides and insecticides in farms has badly hit their food habitat.**
 - d. **high voltage power lines** – it has poor frontal vision, which restricts from spotting power lines.
8. **Conservation**
 - a. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun are working to save the GIB.
 - b. Ministry is to set up incubation and chick-rearing Centre in Jaisalmer.
 - c. WII said extensive land surveys have been carried out to locate suitable habitats for chicks.
 - d. Officials have zeroed in on 14 spots, based **rainfall, accessibility, proximity to wild source, habitat and topographic suitability, availability of water, temperature** etc. and identified **SORSAN** as site most conducive for their rearing.
 - i. would allow birds to breed more frequently unlike Jaisalmer which sees frequent droughts.
 - ii. Also, with access via road and suitable flat grassland habitat is available.
 - iii. The centre will be birds' a safe habitat for some years, then they can be released into wild.
9. **Challenges**
 - a. Male birds reach sexual maturity between ages of 4 and 5; females at age 3-4. Generally, GIB lives up to age 15 or 16. A female lays an egg once in 1-2 years, and chicks' survival rate is 60%-70%. **"Being such long-lived and slow reproducing species, adult mortality remains high".**
 - b. Once these birds mature and can produce offspring, there must be enough habitats to support their growth. **Readying the necessary habitat** will be key in the coming months and years.
 - c. According to WII report, bird was once abundant in Kutch, Nagpur, Amravati, Solapur, Bellary, and Koppal districts in states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka.



Topic 7 IRAN'S CULTURAL SITES

1. Following assassination of Maj Gen Qassem Soleimani, US President tweeted on that if “Iran strikes any Americans, or American assets” in retaliation, US would target 52 sites in Iran, “some at a very high level & important to Iran & Iranian culture”.
2. It was not clear what Trump would achieve by deliberately destroying Iran’s cultural heritage, but such a step, should he follow through on his threat, could be considered a **WAR CRIME**.
3. **Iran is home to one of the world’s oldest civilizations dating back to 10,000 BC.**
4. **Its rich heritage and culture is an amalgam of Arab, Persian, Turkish and South Asian cultures.**
 - a. 24 Iranian sites are on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, 2 - natural sites & 22 - cultural sites.
 - b. Among main World Heritage Sites in Iran are
 - i. **Meidan Emam and Masjed-e-Jame in Isfahan;**
 - ii. **Golestan Palace** in historic heart of Tehran;
 - iii. **Pasargadae and Persepolis**, capitals of Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus II and Darius I in 6th century BC;
 - iv. archaeological site of **Takht-e Soleyman**, which has remains of an ancient Zoroastrian sanctuary.
5. **What is the problem with targeting cultural heritage?**
 - a. Following the unparalleled destruction of cultural heritage in World War II, nations of world adopted at **Hague in 1954, The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict**, first international treaty focused exclusively on protection of cultural heritage during war and armed conflict.
 - i. defined **CULTURAL PROPERTY** as “movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites....”, etc.
 - ii. The signatories, referred to in the Convention as “**HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES**”, committed themselves to protecting, safeguarding, and having respect for cultural property.
 - iii. There are currently **133** signatories to Convention, including countries that have acceded to and ratified treaty. Both United States and Iran (as well as India) signed Convention on May 14, 1954, and it entered into force on **August 7, 1956**.
 - b. **Rome Statute of 1998**, founding treaty of International Criminal Court, describes as a “**war crime**” **any intentional attack against a historical monument, or a building dedicated to religion, education, art, or science.**
 - i. International Criminal Court started functioning in 2002 with jurisdiction over four main crimes: **GENOCIDE, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, WAR CRIMES and CRIME OF AGGRESSION.**
 - ii. Article 8 of Rome Statute deals with war crimes. Article 8(2)(b)(ii) says war crimes include “**intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects, that is, objects which are not military objectives**” and 8(2)(b)(ix) mentions “**intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals and places where sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives**”.
 - iii. 122 countries are States Parties to Rome Statute of International Criminal Court.
 - **United States is a signatory that has not ratified Statute.**
 - **India has neither signed nor ratified Statute.**
6. **When has cultural property been targeted earlier?**
 - a. During Siege of Dubrovnik in 1991-92 by Yugoslav People’s Army, old town of Dubrovnik in Croatia was targeted in an attempt to wipe out Croatian history and cultural heritage.
 - b. Subsequently, during Croat-Bosniak war, Croat paramilitary forces destroyed 16th century Stari Most bridge in Mostar in today’s Bosnia-Herzegovina, in 1993.

- c. In 2001, Taliban destroyed statues of Buddha that had been carved into sandstone cliffs in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, between 3rd and 6th centuries AD.
- d. In 2006, UN and Cambodian government established Khmer Rouge Tribunal to prosecute destruction of Cambodia's cultural assets that included mosques, churches and temples along with other sites of cultural significance.
- e. Between 2014 and 2017, IS destroyed several places of religious and cultural significance.
- f. 2015, IS captured and destroyed ancient Syrian city of Palmyra, UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Topic 8 WEST ASIA

Road to conflict
Tensions between Iran and the U.S. have been steadily escalating with Washington tightening sanctions, Tehran resuming nuclear activity and a series of incidents in the flashpoint Gulf

The trigger
May 8, 2018: President Donald Trump unilaterally pulls the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal. Announces sanctions on Iran
On April 8, 2019: Washington declares Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps a "terrorist" group. Its Quds Force, which operates abroad, is also put on the blacklist

Attacks on ships
May 12: Four ships, including three oil tankers, are damaged in mysterious attacks in the Gulf that the U.S. blames on Iran
June 13: Two tankers, Norwegian and Japanese, come under attack in the Gulf of Oman

U.S. drone shot down
June 20: Iran's Revolutionary Guard says it shot down a U.S. drone, which violated Iranian airspace near the Strait of Hormuz
 • Trump approves a retaliatory strike, but cancels it at the last minute
June 24: Trump announces "hard-hitting" financial sanctions on Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and senior Iranian military leaders
July 18: Trump says the U.S. military has taken down an Iranian drone that came dangerously close to one of its naval vessels in the Strait of Hormuz

Saudi oil attack
September 14: Aerial attacks claimed by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels spark fires at two major Saudi oil facilities
 • Tehran is accused by the U.S. and other powers of being responsible but denies involvement
September 20: Trump announces "the highest sanctions ever imposed on a country", hitting Iran's central bank

Killing the commander
December 29: The U.S. carries out air strikes against bases of a pro-Iran group in Iraq, in retaliation for an attack on U.S. interests
Dec. 31: Pro-Iran protesters storm the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad expressing fury over the strikes
Jan. 3, 2020: A U.S. strike kills commander Qasem Soleimani, the Quds Force chief, in Iraq
The Pentagon says Trump ordered the "killing" after the siege of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad

Jan. 2: Soleimani and the deputy commander of Iran-backed militias in Iraq killed in airstrike at Baghdad's International airport

Dec. 31: U.S. Embassy breached by Iran-backed militias

The U.S. act of terrorism is extremely dangerous. The U.S. bears responsibility for all consequences of its rogue adventurism
 JAVAD ZARIF, IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER

The killing of Soleimani risks provoking a dangerous escalation of violence
 NANCY PELOSI, SPEAKER OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

1. Relations between United States and Iran hit a dangerous new low on 3rd Jan 2020, when Major Gen. Soleimani, a top Iranian commander, was killed in a U.S. air strike outside Baghdad airport.
2. Gen. Soleimani, who U.S. held responsible for deaths of scores of American soldiers in Iraq, was commander of Qods Force, external intelligence and security unit of elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). A furious Iran has now vowed a forceful revenge for killing, raising risks of a direct war between U.S. and Iran to an all-time high.
3. **Why did the U.S. launch the drone attack?**
 - a. As the main architect of Iran's foreign operations, Gen. Soleimani has been in cross hairs of U.S. for years. Ever since he took over Qods Force in 1998, he expanded operations of unit, by deepening Iran's links with its proxy groups such as Hezbollah and Badr Organization or building new militias such as Shia Popular Mobilization Units and Houthis.
 - b. As a leading figure of Iranian regime, he was seen in public quite often, either attending events in Iran or on front lines of Iraq or Syria. Attacking him with high-precision air strikes was not an impossible option for U.S., but U.S. President Donald Trump's predecessors chose not to take that path as risks outweighed possible benefits.
 - c. The latest spell of crisis was triggered after a rocket attack by Iran-trained Iraqi militias in which an American military contractor was killed in Iraq last month. In retaliation, U.S. launched air strikes at Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq, a Shia paramilitary group trained and funded by Iranians, killing at least 25. This was followed by an attack on American Embassy in Baghdad by protesters. Trump administration held Iran responsible for storming of Embassy and warned of serious repercussions.
 - d. On Friday, in retaliation, Mr. Trump ordered drone hit on Gen. Soleimani, who was practically commander of Kataib Hezbollah and other Shia militias operating in Iraq U.S. officials also say that Iran proxies under Gen. Soleimani's leadership were planning to carry out more attacks on U.S. interests in West Asia and that assassination was carried out to deter them.
4. **Why is U.S. targeting Shia militias?**

- a. Also killed in Friday's air strike was Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), an umbrella organisation of pro-Iran Iraqi militias in which Kataib Hezbollah is a member.
- b. PMF was founded in 2014 under Gen. Soleimani's supervision when Iran was trying to put together militias in Iraq and Syria in wake of civil wars in both countries. Iran's main goal was to save embattled regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and defeat Islamic State (IS) in Iraq, which was threatening Baghdad government in 2014.
- c. PMF is constituted of dozens of militias, including Kataib Hezbollah, Badr Organisation and Kataib al-Imam Ali, through which Gen. Soleimani and Iran in general exercised enormous influence on Iraqi politics. PMF played an instrumental role in defeating IS. The militias fought alongside Iraqi Army, with U.S. providing air cover, and liberated Iraqi cities in north and west from clutches of IS.
- d. But once IS Caliphate was destroyed and tensions were on rise between Iran and U.S. after U.S. pulled out of Iran nuclear deal in 2018, the PMF militias started targeting U.S. forces in Iraq.
- e. In September, the U.S. State Department shut the consulate in the southern Iraqi city of Basra, citing "repeated incidents of fire from Iran-backed militias". The decision followed a rocket attack on Basra airport close to where consulate is located. As U.S.-Iran tensions soared in wake of Washington doubling down sanctions on Iran, U.S. forces in Iraq came under several rocket attacks. U.S. repeatedly blamed Iran-backed militias for attacks. Unlike previous attacks that did not have any American casualty, rocket attack on a military base in Kirkuk on December 28 killed an American civilian contractor, following which U.S. launched the hit on Kataib Hezbollah.

5. What is Iraq's position?

- a. Iraq is caught between U.S. and Iran. U.S. since Saddam Hussein's regime was toppled, has been a major security partner of Iraq. At present, US has about 5,000 troops deployed in various parts of Iraq. On other side, Iran is Iraq's more powerful neighbour. Most Shia political parties and leaders in Iraq have deep, historical ties with Iranian regime. Also, Shia militias are a parallel military force; it takes its orders directly from Tehran rather than from Baghdad. Thus, Iraq cannot totally ignore Iran. U.S.'s unilateral use of air power within Iraq targeting Iraqi militias without permission of government has upset Baghdad. Iraqi government had strongly condemned U.S. air strikes on Kataib Hezbollah; a huge crowd participated in siege of US Embassy. The assassination of Gen. Soleimani triggered instant street protests in Iraq, with protesters chanting "Death to America".
- b. It is a complex situation. The Iraqi government is being pushed to a point where it has to choose between Iran and U.S. And given the intricacy of Iraq's domestic power dynamics and the influence Iran wields over Iraqi polity, Baghdad is unlikely to antagonize a wounded Tehran.
- c. Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi has said Parliament will meet in the coming days to discuss "appropriate measures to preserve the dignity of Iraq and its security and sovereignty".
- d. The question is whether the Iraqi government will ask the U.S. to leave the country. Already, calls are getting louder from the Iraqi political class to expel U.S. troops from the country.

6. So, is war inevitable?

- a. It depends on Iran's response. After killing Gen. Soleimani, the U.S. has said it is committed to de-escalation. The U.S. is saying that it does not want the situation to spiral out of control. But for Iran, this is not just another attack. Gen. Soleimani was one of the top generals of the regime. Self-preservation or protecting the lives of the top leaders is the primary objective of any regime. A failure means a hole in its deterrence. If Iran's deterrence capacity prevented previous American Presidents from taking such a step, Mr. Trump decided to ignore that, taking a huge risk. So it is upon Iran not only to take revenge for Gen. Soleimani's death but also to bolster its deterrence. If not, there is no guarantee that the U.S. or Israel would not carry out attacks in the future, targeting other Iranian leaders. Iran cannot afford to take such a risk.
- b. Iran has multiple options for retaliation.

- c. It can target U.S. troops in Iraq, either using mid-range rockets or ballistic missiles. Iran-backed proxies in the region, from Hezbollah in Lebanon to the PMF in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen, can carry out attacks, targeting America's allies and assets.
- d. The decision is up to Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He could also wait for an appropriate time, plan and execute a surprise asymmetric attack — which is Iran's main military response model — on Americans in region. The risk is that an Iranian attack could trigger a cycle of violence, with both sides targeting each other in West Asia. That is path to war.

Where and how big was Iran's counterattack?

- 7. Early on Wednesday, Iran launched a barrage of missiles at two American military bases in Iraq. The attacks began at 1.20 AM, same time that Maj Gen Soleimani was killed by a US missile in Baghdad on Friday and hours after remains of general reached his hometown Kerman for burial.
- 8. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei posted on Twitter that US had been ***"slapped..., but such military actions are not enough; corruptive presence of US in region of West Asia must be stopped"***. President Hassan Rouhani tweeted: ***"Our final answer to [Soleimani's] assassination will be to kick all US forces out of region."***
- 9. As of December 2019, US had an estimated 6,000 soldiers in Iraq. After Soleimani was assassinated, Iraq's Parliament voted to throw Americans out of their country and President Donald Trump responded with a threat of sanctions ***"like they've never seen before ever"***.

10. What was the scale of Iran's attack?

- a. **NUMBER OF MISSILES:** The US Department of Defence said in a statement that Iran had launched "more than a dozen ballistic missiles" that "targeted at least two Iraqi military bases hosting US military and coalition personnel".
- b. Western media reports quoted unnamed Iraqi military officials as saying Iran had fired 22 missiles. The editor-in-chief of Mashregh, the IRGC's main news website, said more than 30 ballistic missiles had been fired at the Ain al-Asad air base, one of the two bases that were targeted.
- c. **CASUALTIES:** Late on Wednesday evening (India time) President Donald Trump confirmed that the United States had not suffered any loss of lives. He had tweeted earlier that "all is well!", the "assessment of casualties & damages [were] taking place now", but "so far, so good!"
- d. Other countries who have troops in Iraq — Australia, UK, Denmark, Poland, Sweden — also said that none of their service members had been killed.
- e. However, Iran's semi-official Fars news agency, in an account headlined "US army sustains heavy casualties in Iran missile attacks", said "some 80 US army personnel have been killed and nearly 200 more wounded" in the reprisal attacks.

11. Where are the two bases that were hit?

- a. **AIN AL-ASAD:** This vast air base is located in Iraq's western al-Anbar governorate, about 160 km west of Baghdad, and nearly 220 km from the border with Syria. The base, for long a major hub for US military operations in western Iraq, has also hosted Danish and British troops. In 2015, as the Islamic State swept through Iraq and Syria, Iraqi forces repelled an IS attack on Ain al-Asad.
- b. In 2017, as the US entered the war against the IS, some 500 American military and civilian personnel were stationed at the base, including, a report in The New York Times said, a shock trauma medical unit, a targeting cell, a Navy SEAL Special Operations task force, and a company of Marines. After the defeat of the IS in 2019, the base scaled down, but it still houses significant numbers of soldiers, who are now helping train Iraqi security forces.
- c. Trump visited the base along with his wife Melania on December 26, 2018. On November 23, 2019, Vice President Mike Pence and his wife Karen paid a thanksgiving visit to US troops at the base.
- d. **ERBIL:** The other base that came under attack, is located in Erbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq. The base is adjacent to the city's airport, which American transport aircraft, gunships, and reconnaissance aircraft have used for operations in northern Iraq

and eastern Syria. The base has been a Special Operations hub to hundreds of American and other allied troops, logistics personnel and intelligence specialists throughout the fight against IS.

- e. In October 2019, commandos stationed at the base launched the operation that ended with the death of the leader of the IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who detonated a suicide vest after being cornered in a compound outside the village of Barisha in northwestern Syria's Idlib governorate.

Qassim Suleimani Anchored The Spread Of Iranian Influence In Middle East. A Look At Why His Death Is A Blow To Iran's Regional Ambitions

The second most powerful man in Iran

- Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, 62, led the Quds Force, an elite arm of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that works across borders, since 1998

- Considered the second-most powerful person in Iran after supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, he was key in Iran's efforts to expand its influence across Middle East

- Born in 1957 to a poor family in eastern Iran, rose through the ranks during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s

- Enjoyed immense popularity. A former CIA analyst said that "to the Middle Eastern Shi'ites, he is James Bond, Erwin Rommel and Lady Gaga rolled into one". Awarded 'Order of Zolfiqar', Iran's highest military honour, in 2019

- Sanctioned multiple times by US government

- Survived numerous assassination bids over two decades. Was rumoured to have



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

Major General Qassim Suleimani



Countries where Iran supports proxies & allies



died in a 2006 plane crash in Iran, in a Damascus bombing in 2012, and while leading pro-Assad forces in Aleppo in 2015. In October 2019, Iran said it had thwarted another attempt by Israeli and Arab agencies

His departure to God does not end his path or his mission

—Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Suleimani's death

Quds' 'Holy' wars 10,000-20,000

SIZE OF THE QUDS FORCE

- Quds Force provides military help to pro-Iranian and pro-Shiite movements and leaders. It was created during the Iran-Iraq War in 1980

- Quds refers to Jerusalem and means 'Holy' in Persian. It has been sanctioned since 2007 by US for terrorism

Involved in Mideast conflicts

- After US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Quds was involved with Shiite-dominated Iraqi government
- During Syrian civil war, starting 2011, Suleimani mobilised militias in support of President Bashar al-Assad
- Quds is helping Houthi rebels fighting the government in Yemen, locking it in a

conflict with a Saudi Arabia-led coalition

- In Iraq, Quds helped the Popular Mobilisation Forces, an Iran-backed paramilitary outfit, in fight against Islamic State

Quds' parent – the Guard – key to Iran's military, economy

150,000 The Guard's size is much smaller than

Iran's conventional army of 350,000. It has ground forces, naval and air forces. It's also in charge of Iran's ballistic missiles and nuclear programmes

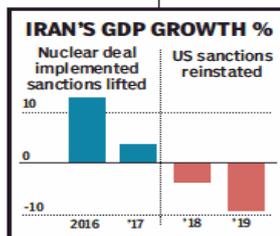
- The Guard was created to protect the ideals of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. It reports to Ali Khamenei

- The Guard are tasked with patrolling Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of world's oil supply passes

- It is thought to control around a third of Iran's economy through a series of front companies

Also killed: Iraqi militia leader

- Iraqi-origin Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, 66, was the leader of the Iran-backed Iraqi militia, Kataib Hezbollah. As deputy head of Popular Mobilisation Forces, he also led fight against Islamic State in Iraq
- In 2009, he and Kataib Hezbollah were designated as terrorist outfits by US



US-IRAN: ON THE BRINK FOR DECADES



Source: Media reports, USIP, US dept of treasury, US Congressional Research Service

Topic 9 STATE OF FOREST REPORT (SFR) 2019

1. India's forest cover has increased by 3,976 sq km or 0.56% since 2017. For the second successive time since 2007, biennial State of Forest Report (SFR) recorded a gain — an impressive 1,275 sq km — in dense forest (including Very Dense Forest with a canopy density of over 70%, and Moderately Dense Forest with a canopy density of 40-70%).
2. **Balance sheet**
 - a. 2,145 sq km of dense forests became non-forests since 2017. A dense forest can deteriorate into an open forest (10-40% canopy density) but conversion to non-forest signifies total destruction.
 - b. Since 2017, plantations with high canopy density have added 2,441 sq km to dense forest category, while 1,858 sq km of non-forests have become dense forests. These are plantations of fast-growing species since natural forests rarely grow so fast.
 - c. While hill forests have gained in quality, large tracts of tropical forests have fallen off the “dense” category since 2017. The biggest loss — 23,550 sq km — is under the tropical semi-evergreen head in SFR 2019. ***In India, tropical semi-evergreen forests are found along the western coast, lower slopes of the eastern Himalayas, Odisha and Andamans.***
 - d. Of India's 7.12 lakh sq km forest cover, 52,000 sq km is plantations that, in any case, cannot substitute natural forests in biodiversity or ecological services.
 - e. Of 7,28,520 sq km recorded forest area from digitised data and Survey of India's topographic maps of greenwash areas (forestland), 2,15,084 sq km (nearly 30%) recorded no forest cover.
3. **Finer detail than before**
 - a. Forest Survey of India (FSI) uses satellite images to identify greenery as forest cover.
 - i. The 1:50,000 scale now scans patches as small as 1 hectare and any unit that shows a **10% tree canopy density is considered “forest”**.
 - b. While the SFR never segregated natural forests from thickets of weeds such as juliflora or lantana, and commercial monocultures such as palm, coconut, rubber etc. it has capacity to identify plantations.
 - c. Fast-growing species such as bamboo, rubber, coconut etc. contributed to rapid change in canopy density converting no-forest areas to dense forests.
 - d. While accepting that the gain in forest cover is outside forestland.
4. **What is relationship between forests and carbon?**
 - a. Forests by absorbing carbon dioxide from atmosphere for process of photosynthesis act as a natural sink of carbon.
 - b. Together with oceans, forests absorb nearly half of global annual carbon dioxide emissions.
 - c. In fact, carbon currently stored in forests exceeds all carbon emitted in atmosphere since start of industrial age. An increase in forest area is thus one of most effective ways of reducing emissions that accumulate in atmosphere every year.
 - d. An assessment FSI last year had projected that, by 2030, carbon stock in forests as well as tree cover was likely to reach 31.87 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent
 - e. An additional 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of sink as India has promised to do would mean taking the size of the sink close to 35 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.
5. **way forward?**
 - a. **selection of baseline year and addition of contribution of agriculture sector to carbon sink.**

CARBON STOCK IN INDIAN FORESTS

(not including tree cover)

Year	Carbon stock (in mn tonnes)
2005	6,621.5
2013	6,941
2017	7,082
2019	7,124

GAINS & LOSSES (in sq km)

	2003 -15	2015 -19	Total (2003-19)
FORESTLAND LOST			
VDF to NF	545	575	1,120
MDF to NF	8,968	7,977	16,945
Total lost	9,513	8,552	18,065
FORESTLAND GAINED			
NF to VDF	200	233	433
NF to MDF	4,569	5,225	9,794
Total gained	4,769	5,458	10,227

VDF: very dense forest; MDF: mid-dense forest;
NF: non-forest Source: Forest Survey of India

DENSE FOREST (VDF + MDF, in sq km)

FOREST TYPE	2019	2017	CHANGE
Tropical wet evergreen	17,217	17,783	-566
Tropical dry evergreen	565	633	-68
Tropical semi-evergreen	39,596	63,146	-23,350
Tropical moist deciduous	91,399	96,894	-5,495
Tropical thorn	3,765	3,877	-112
Tropical dry deciduous	150,854	146,396	2,458
Littoral and swamp	3,230	4,242	-1,012
Subtropical pine	10,457	11,977	-1,520
Himalayan moist temperate	19,914	21,856	-1,942
Subtropical broad-leaved hill	22,050	10,538	11,512
Subtropical dry evergreen	69	68	1
Montane wet temperate	18,425	3,554	14,871
Himalayan dry temperate	4,077	3,520	557
Sub-alpine	9,740	8,407	1,333
Moist alpine scrub	919	625	294
Dry alpine scrub	712	639	73
Plantation	14,762	12,321	2,441
Total dense forests	407,751	406,476	1,275

Topic 10 BELAGAVI

1. Maharashtra CM appointed Ministers Chaggaan Bhujbal and Eknath Shinde as coordinators to oversee State government's efforts to expedite case related to boundary dispute with Karnataka. On floor of Assembly CM said Prime Minister understands PoK issue, but not Maharashtra's border issue.
2. This triggered a response on the Karnataka side, with the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike condemning CM statement. Adding fuel to fire was case of blackening of Kannada boards in Kolhapur in Maharashtra and stopping of a Kannada film being screened citing law and order issues. The border areas, including Belagavi (earlier Belgaum), epicentre of issue for over six decades, remain tense.
3. **What is the controversy?**
 - a. In 1957, slighted by implementation of States Reorganization Act, 1956, Maharashtra demanded readjustment of its border with Karnataka. It invoked Section 21(2)(b) of Act and submitted a memorandum to Ministry of Home Affairs stating its objection to Marathi-speaking areas being added to Karnataka. It claimed an area of 2,806 square miles that involved 814 villages, and three urban settlements of Belagavi, Karwar and Nippani with a total population of about 6.7 lakh, all part of Mumbai Presidency before Independence. The villages are spread across Belagavi and Uttar Kannada in north-western Karnataka, and Bidar and Gulbarga districts in north-eastern Karnataka — all bordering Maharashtra.
 - b. Later, when a four-member committee was formed by both States, Maharashtra expressed a willingness to transfer 260 predominantly Kannada-speaking villages with a population of about 3.25 lakh and total area of 1,160 square miles in lieu of accepting its demand for 814 villages and three urban settlements, which was turned down by Karnataka.
4. **What was the basis of Maharashtra's claim?**
 - a. Maharashtra's claim to seek the readjustment of its border was on the basis of contiguity, relative linguistic majority and wishes of the people. If the claim over Belagavi and surrounding areas was based on Marathi speaking people and linguistic homogeneity, it laid its claim over Karwar and Supa where Konkani is spoken by citing Konkani as a dialect of Marathi. Its argument was based on the theory of village being the unit for calculation and enumerated linguistic population in each village. Maharashtra also points out the historical fact that the revenue records in these Marathi-speaking areas are also kept in Marathi.
5. **What is Karnataka's position?**
 - a. Karnataka has argued that the settlement of boundaries as per the States Reorganization Act is final. The State argues that the issue would reopen border issues that have not been contemplated under the Act, and that such a demand should not be permitted. Initially, Karnataka was open to adjusting border in 10-mile belt from drawn boundary.
6. **Did the States make an effort to find a solution?**
 - a. In 1960, both States agreed to set up a four-man committee with two representatives from each State. Except on issue of contiguity, committee could not arrive at a unanimous decision, and respective representatives submitted reports to their government. Between 1960s and 1980s, CM of Karnataka and Maharashtra have met several times to find a solution but with no avail.
7. **How has the Union Government responded?**
 - a. Under sustained pressure from Maharashtra, in 1966, Centre announced setting up a one-man commission under former Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India, Meher Chand Mahajan, to look into border issues between Karnataka (then Mysore state) and Maharashtra. The commission was also asked to look into Karnataka's demand for integration of Kannada-speaking areas in Kasargod in Kerala.
 - b. While Maharashtra reiterated its demand, Karnataka sought areas in Kolhapur, Sholapur and Sangli districts from Maharashtra, and Kasargod from Kerala. The commission received more than 2,200 memoranda and met over 7,500 people. It submitted its report to the Union Government in 1967. The commission's report was placed in Parliament in 1972. The commission

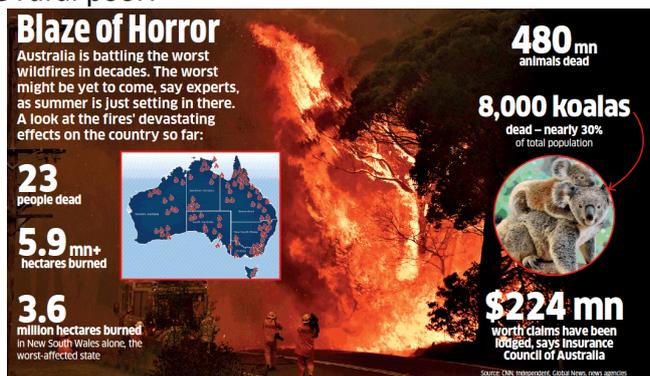
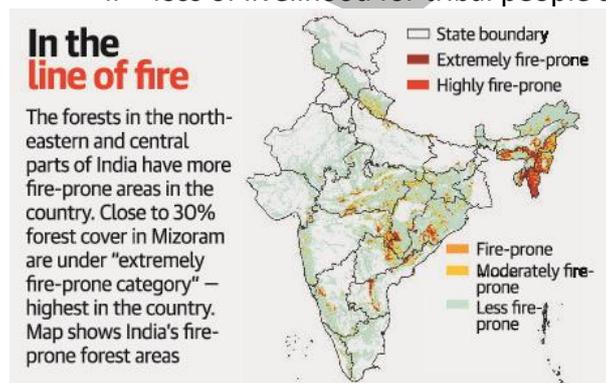
rejected Maharashtra's claim over Belagavi city while recommending transfer of about 260 villages to Maharashtra and about 250 villages in Maharashtra to Karnataka. Maharashtra said the report was inconsistent and an unfair application of its own principle. It also said that the report was not a final word on the issue. Karnataka, however, agreed to the report.

- c. Last week, in response to CM statement, Karnataka CM reiterated that Mahajan Commission report was final and "question of transferring even an inch of land does not arise". In 2004, Maharashtra had approached Supreme Court for a settlement under Art 131 (b) of Constitution. Karnataka has questioned it. With one of judges recusing, court has to set up a new bench.



Topic 11 FORESTS FIRES

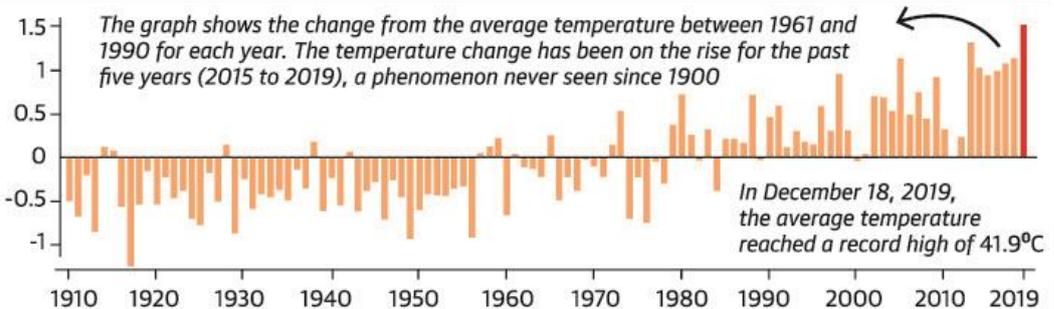
- About **21.40% of forest cover** in India is prone to fires, with forests in **north-eastern** and **central India** being most vulnerable, 2019 report by Forest Survey of India (FSI). The finding has emerged from a study carried out by FSI along forest fire points identified across country from 2004-17.
 - EXTREMELY FIRE PRONE AREAS** account for **3.89%** of total forest cover,
 - VERY HIGHLY FIRE PRONE AREAS** account for **6.01%** and
 - HIGHLY FIRE PRONE AREAS** for **11.50%**.
- The **forest fire points (FFP)** identified during 13 years add up to 2,77,758. They were analyzed using a moderate resolution imaging spectroradiometer (MODIS) by overlaying points coverage over grid coverage of 5 km x 5 km.
- The total number of alerts issued for each state based on MODIS data from Nov 2018 to June 2019 were 29,547 and Mizoram recorded highest number of fire alerts (2,795). The seven States of north-eastern region accounted for 10,210 fire alerts, which make up about 1/3rd of alerts in country.
- one of major reasons for forest fires in north-east is **slash-and-burn cultivation** commonly called jhoom or jhum cultivation.
 - The fires happen between months of January and March.
 - The north-east has tropical evergreen forests and, unlike dry deciduous forests of central India, these are not likely to catch fire easily
 - While the overall green cover has increased in country, forest cover in north-east — particularly in Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland has decreased. Fires could be one of the causes.
- Central Indian States also recorded a high number of forest fire alerts, with Madhya Pradesh accounting for 2,723 alerts; Maharashtra 2,516; Odisha 2,213 and Chhattisgarh 1,008 alerts between November 2018 to June 2019.
 - reasons for fires here are manmade, particularly in cases where people visit forests and leave **burning bidis, cigarette stubs or other inflammable materials**.
 - In cases of natural reasons, scientist pointed to **thunderstorms** as most likely cause.
- EFFECT OF FOREST FIRE**
 - loss of valuable timber resources
 - degradation of catchment areas
 - loss of biodiversity and extinction of plants and animals
 - loss of wildlife habitat and depletion of wildlife
 - loss of natural regeneration and reduction in forest cover
 - global warming
 - loss of carbon sink resource and increase in percentage of CO₂ in atmosphere
 - change in the microclimate of the area with unhealthy living conditions
 - soil erosion affecting productivity of soils and production
 - ozone layer depletion
 - health problems leading to diseases
 - loss of livelihood for tribal people and the rural poor.



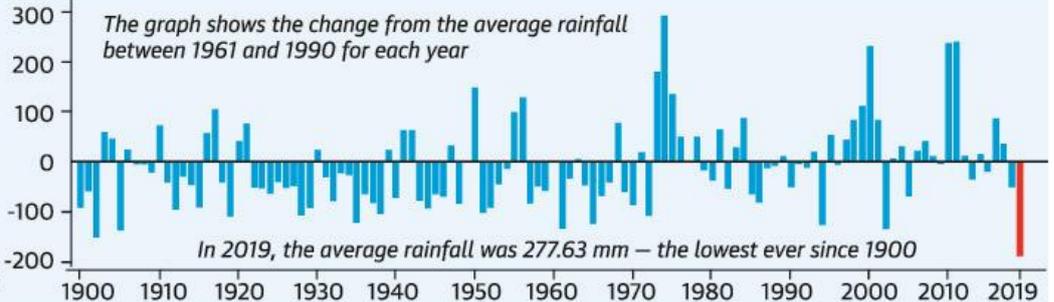
Fire and fury down under

Australia is facing one of its worst bushfire seasons in history, killing at least 24 people and more than one billion animals* as on January 8. Though bushfires are common in the country, the current spell has witnessed more than 80,000 fires, a scale not seen in at least two decades. The 2019 fires have been a double whammy to the nation that is reeling under the hottest and driest-ever conditions in 100 years. By **Naresh Singaravelu & Sumant Sen**

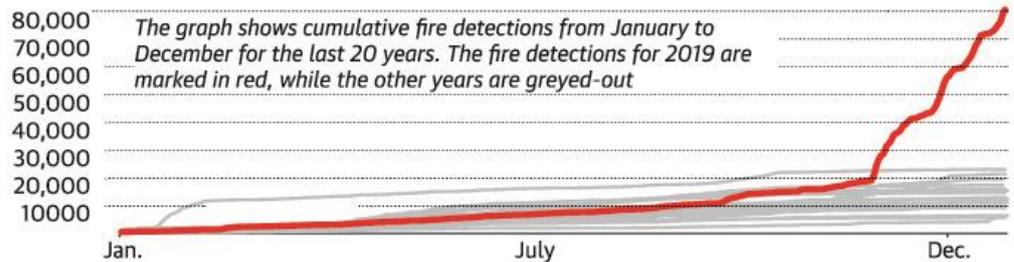
Searing-heat | In 2019, Australia was 1.52°C warmer than the average temperature between 1961 and 1990, the hottest year on record since 1900. This caused the "fuel load" (amount of fallen bark, leaf litter and small branches) to catch fire or continue to burn



Bone dry | In 2019, Australia received its lowest-ever rainfall. It also recorded the biggest annual drop in rainfall (187.56 mm lower than the 1961-1990 average). Low relative humidity causes fuel load to dry up and become more flammable



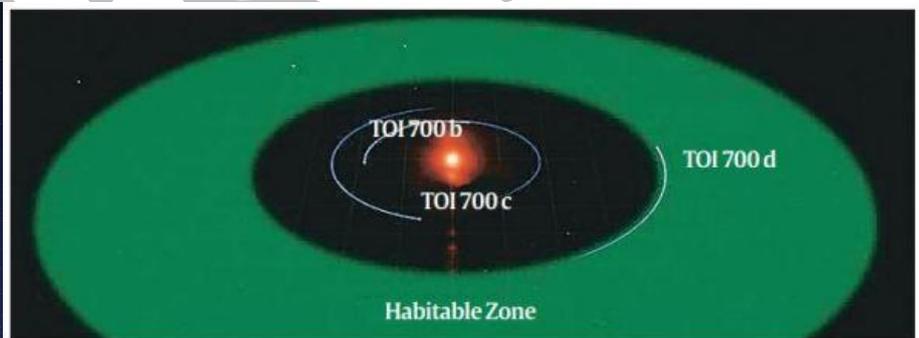
Extreme blaze | The record-breaking heat accompanied by extreme drought has resulted in the bushfires spiralling out of control, especially in New South Wales, which is battling its worst fire season in at least 20 years



Source: Bureau of Meteorology of Australian Government; NYT Graphic Service; *an estimate by The University of Sydney

Topic 12 GOLDILOCKS ZONE

1. NASA reported discovery of an Earth-size planet, named **TOI 700 d** (Source: Wikimedia Commons)
2. NASA reported discovery of an Earth-size planet, named TOI 700 d, orbiting its star in “habitable zone”.
3. **A habitable zone, also called the “Goldilocks zone”, is area around a star where it is not too hot and not too cold for liquid water to exist on surface of surrounding planets.**
 - a. Obviously, our Earth is in Sun’s Goldilocks zone. If Earth were where dwarf planet Pluto is, all its water would freeze; on other hand, if Earth were where Mercury is, all its water would boil off.
 - b. Life on Earth started in water, and water is a necessary ingredient for life as we know it. So, when scientists search for possibility of alien life, any rocky exoplanet in habitable zone of its star is an exciting find.
4. The newest such planet was found by NASA’s Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission, which it launched in 2018. Very few such Earth-size planets have been found so far, including some by NASA’s Kepler mission, and this one is the first such discovery by TESS. The find was confirmed by the Spitzer Space Telescope, which sharpened the measurements that TESS had made, such as orbital period and size.
5. TOI 700 d measures 20% larger than Earth. It orbits its star once every 37 days and receives an amount of energy that is equivalent to 86% of the energy that the Sun provides to Earth. The star, TOI 700, is an “M dwarf” located just over 100 light-years away in the southern constellation Dorado, is roughly 40% of our Sun’s mass and size, and has about half its surface temperature.
6. Two other planets orbit the star — TOI 700 b, which is almost exactly Earth-size, probably rocky, and which completes an orbit every 10 days, and TOI 700 c, the middle planet, which is 2.6 times larger than Earth, is probably gas-dominated, and orbits every 16 days. TOI 700 d is the outermost planet, and the only one in the star’s habitable zone. NASA said future missions may be able to identify whether the planets have atmospheres and, if so, even determine their compositions.

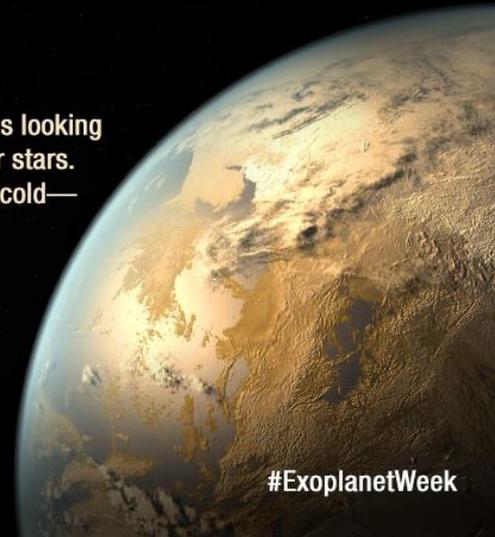


artist's concept

GOLDILOCKS ZONE

Part of the hunt for water on other worlds means looking for planets orbiting a certain distance from their stars. Planets in this zone are neither too hot, nor too cold—conditions could be just right for liquid water.

Kepler-186f



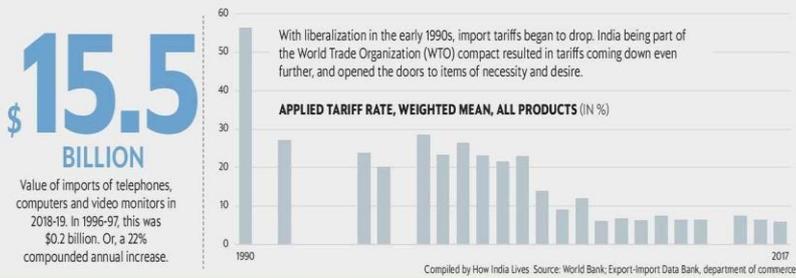
#ExoplanetWeek

Topic 13 MILLENNIALS

A short history of millennial India

1. **Millennials, generation of Indians born between 1981 and 1996, came of age in a country that was opened up, not just in terms of economy and markets, but also to ideas, cultural influences and innovation.**
2. Growing up as digital natives with exposure to a diversity of ideas, millennials are a generation with hustle and hunger to do more.

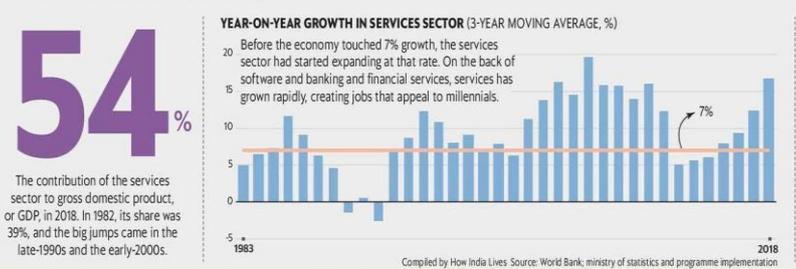
THE CONSUMPTION SHIFT



THE RIGHT NOTES

Carnatic musician T.M. Krishna is likely to have remained little known outside of classical music circles if he hadn't started speaking out against caste hierarchy, intolerance and social injustice, and raised the question of whether art can bring about social change. In 2016, he won the Magsaysay award for his work on inclusion, the same year as activist Bezwada Wilson.

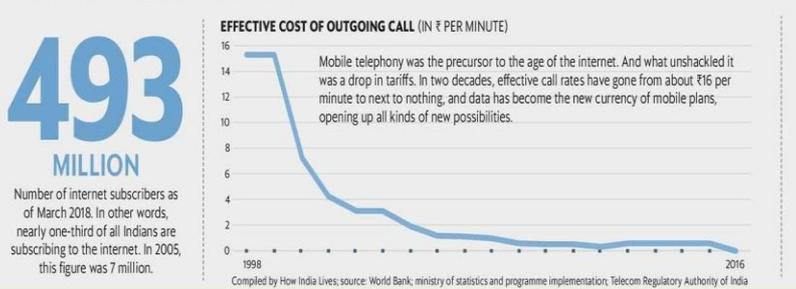
THE SERVICES SHIFT



WINNING WORDS

In 1997, Arundhati Roy won the Man Booker for her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, and contemporary literary fiction gained ground in India. She became an outspoken advocate of social justice and equality. The win opened doors for Indian authors writing in English and sparked publishers' interest. In 2006, Kiran Desai won the prize, followed by Aravind Adiga in 2008.

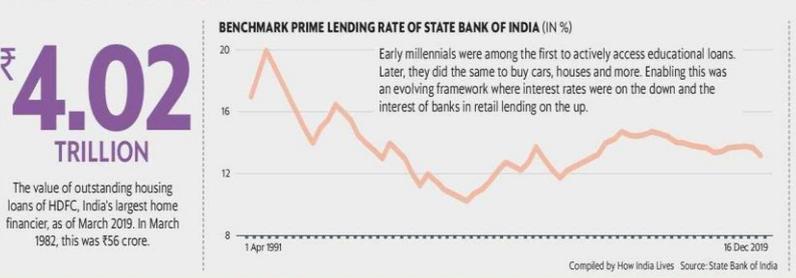
THE DIGITAL SHIFT



MUSICAL MAVEN

With his ability to merge sounds, genres, styles, languages and schools, with technology, A.R. Rahman has transformed film music in India. He began his career with *Roja* (1992) and in 2009, won two Grammy awards for his soundtrack for *Slumdog Millionaire*. He's performed with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Mick Jagger and most recently, with U2 in Mumbai.

THE BORROWING SHIFT



LITERATURE LITE

Love him or hate him, Chetan Bhagat made a mark with his first book, *Five Point Someone*. He created characters who had the same compulsions and anxieties as ordinary millennials and captured young India's imagination. For better or worse, he kicked off a trends of easy reading, books priced at ₹99-150, and people from the management industry turning authors.

MINT GRAPHITI

INDIA'S JOURNEY TO THE MOON SO FAR

Chandrayaan-3 is driven by India's ambition to successfully demonstrate its capabilities of making a soft landing on the Moon.



CHANDRAYAAN 1

India's first mission to the Moon

Launched in **October 2008**

Cost **₹386 crore**

Gave evidence of water on Moon

CHANDRAYAAN 2

India attempts soft landing on Moon

Launched on **22 July 2019**

Cost **₹978 crore**

Consists of orbiter, lander and rover

CHANDRAYAAN 3

Pegged to be launched this year

Announced on **1 January 2020**

Will consist of only lander and rover

India's 2nd attempt to land on Moon

OTHER MISSIONS

GAGANYAAN

India's 1st human space flight mission set for **2021 launch**

FIRST MISSION sans crew expected in **December 2020**

TOTAL FUNDS **₹10,000 crore**

SO FAR only US, China and Russia have sent human astronauts into space

MINT GRAPHITI

FASTag in the slow lane

Several commuters have complained of technical glitches in FASTag, with money getting deducted twice from their bank accounts or e-wallets, and the tag not working.

What is FASTag?

FASTAG is an e-toll collection device fixed on windshield of a vehicle to enable drivers zip through toll plazas without having to stop. Toll is directly deducted from a prepaid wallet.

What are the benefits?

USING FASTag can make your journey hassle free as there is no need to carry cash for toll. The tag can be recharged through debit card, credit card, or via the Unified Payments Interface.

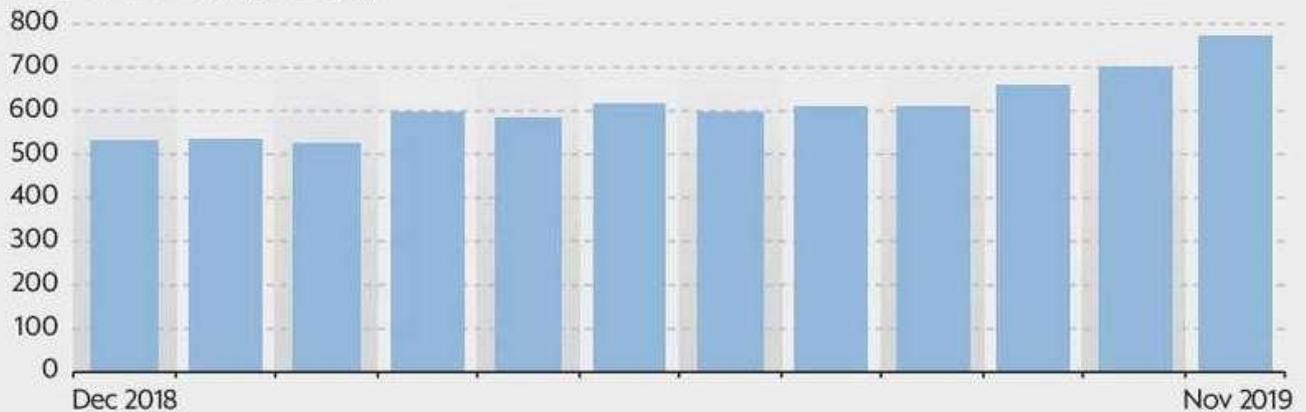
Why is it compulsory?

THE govt decided to make the use of FASTag compulsory from 15 Jan at all national highway (NH) toll plazas, to promote digital payments, reduce cash handling and congestion.

What are the challenges?

TEETHING issues have taken a toll on implementation forcing the govt to delay compulsory rollout twice. Several commuters have complained of glitches present in the system.

Toll collected (in ₹ crore)



Source: NPCI

Topic 16 HUMAN – ANIMAL CONFLICT

1. In Gujarat, terror of **leopard** is greater than **sher**! Forest department data of man animal conflict reveals that leopard was biggest killer having taken out 109 lives in past 8 years from 2012-12 to 2019-20.
2. This is a lion's share of 62% of the total 176 persons killed by Schedule I and II animals in state in this period. A total of 1,297 people was injured in animal attacks.
3. **Crocodiles**, whose burgeoning numbers in central and south Gujarat have become a cause of major concern, claimed second highest 45 lives. Even as the scare value of 'sher aa jayega' is more, it killed 13 persons in the state over a period of eight years.
4. The forest department has compiled data of man-animal conflict involving other animals too namely **slothbears, hyenas, wolves, jackals and monkeys**. The tree hopping simians too have claimed one life, the data reveals.
5. population of Big Cats including lions and leopards have doubled along with more humans moving closer to protected areas. **"This has led to sharp rise in man animal conflicts,"**
6. Leopard census 2017 pegged its population at 1,395 while unofficial figures suggest number has grown to nearly 3,000. Similarly, lion census 2015 suggested 523 lions but sources estimate it to have crossed 1,000 mark now.

JAWS OF DEATH



	Lion	Leopard	Sloth bear	Crocodile	Hyena	Wild boar	Other	Total
2017-18	20	94	13	8	1	0	0	136
2018-19	15	130	11	13	0	6	0	175
2019-20*	5	108	2	8	2	5	3	133

	Lion	Leopard	Sloth bear	Crocodile	Hyena	Wild boar	Other	Total
2017-18	0	13	0	5	0	0	0	18
2018-19	2	14	0	3	0	0	0	19
2019-20*	1	21	0	3	0	1	2	28

*Till December 2019



REASONS

- > Shrinking habitat
- > Increase in population of both lion and leopard
- > Lack of adequate policy intervention to protect animal habitats
- > Human getting close to sanctuaries
- > Eroding tolerance among humans
- > Lack of prey base
- > Electricity supply to farmers at night making them vulnerable to nocturnal animal attacks

“Man-animal conflict involving carnivores is a serious challenge. Shrinking habitat and hike in population through effective conservation like in Gujarat has brought animals in close contact with humans”



Priyvat Gadhi
MEMBER, STATE WILDLIFE BOARD

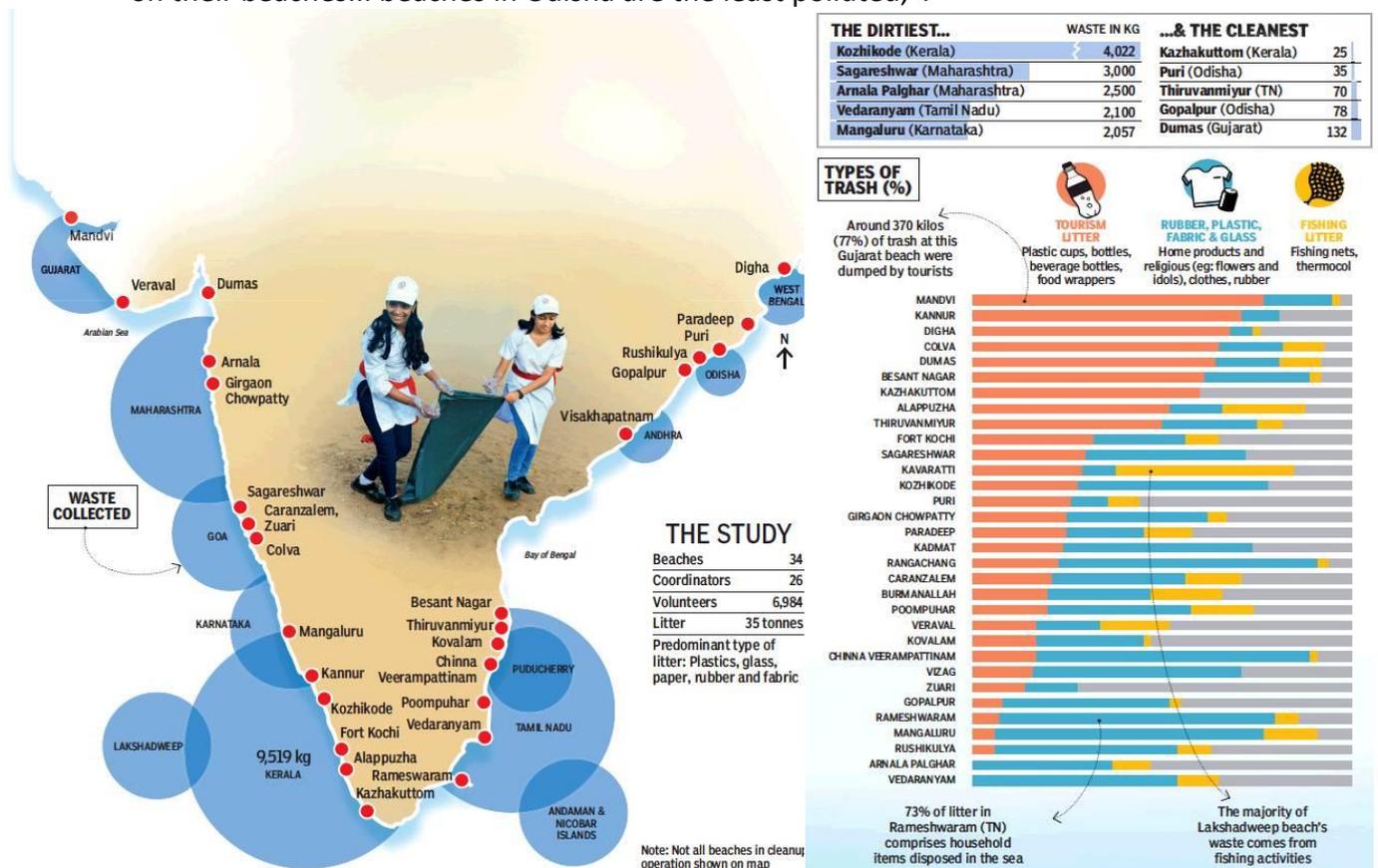
“Habitat of lions and leopards are getting destroyed pushing them in close proximity of humans. Policy decisions are needed to improve habitats”

Divya Bhanu Singh
FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Topic 17 BEACHES

1. Thirty-four Indian beaches have together produced 35 tonnes of waste in a coastal clean up operation conducted by professionals towards the end of last year. The litter recovered mostly comprised **plastic and glass, paper, rubber and general waste** left behind by tourists and local populace.
2. Volunteers, who were part of the operation conducted by MoES lab National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) in September, picked up 35 tonnes or 2.39 lakh pieces of litter across 34 beaches.
 - a. **Kerala's** sandy beaches and pristine backwaters are probably reeling under the weight of hectic tourism activity, as 9,519kg of litter, the highest in the country, was collected across its five beaches in two hours by volunteers, making it the most polluted coast in the country.
 - b. Around 6,804kg of litter was collected on 6 beaches of **Tamil Nadu**, the runner-up,
 - c. while 5,930kg of waste came from three beaches of **Maharashtra**.
 - d. **Odisha**, where 478kg of litter was collected on four beaches, has the least polluted coastline.
3. NCCR researchers said
 - a. about half of 35 tonne litter was plastic dumped by beach-goers looking for a whiff of fresh air.
 - b. While the remaining trash comprised leavings of fishing activity and household items disposed in the sea,
 - c. 20% of the waste was glass bottles.
4. "The major source of litter on 22 beaches is **tourism and recreational activity**. Plastic waste such as cups, bottles, bags, bottle caps and food wrappers were found,"
 - a. **Plastic items left on the beach generally break down into microplastics (less than 5mm) during the weathering process. When this is swept out to sea, microplastics enter the marine food chain and settle in the gut of fish eventually consumed by humans.**
 - b. "Other types of litter picked up were glass bottles, footwear, tyres, gloves, organic waste, clothes, and items such as flowers and coconuts used for religious purposes,"
 - c. In Maharashtra, main sources of pollution were **untreated sewage, industrial effluents and fish waste** generated at fish landing centres. "Big cities with large populations have more garbage on their beaches... beaches in Odisha are the least polluted,".



FACTS for ANSWER WRITING

FACT 1 MISSION INDRADHANUSH

MINT GRAPHITI

Prevention is better than cure

Aiming to achieve full immunization coverage by 2020, Mission Indradhanush, later transformed into intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI), is being further reoriented in the form of Mission Indradhanush 2.0. Will focusing on increasing coverage of vaccinations ensure prevention of vaccinated preventable diseases among children?

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

- 5%** increase in full immunization coverage since the launch of Mission Indradhanush to 7%, resulting in 6.7% annual expansion in the immunization cover
- 20.5 million** children covered under the total four phases till 2017-18
- 7.5 million** children covered in Phase I (2015), of which 2 million were fully vaccinated
- 10.5 million** children covered in phases I and II (2016-2017). Of these 3.9 million were fully immunized
- 10.61 million** children immunized in 2017-18

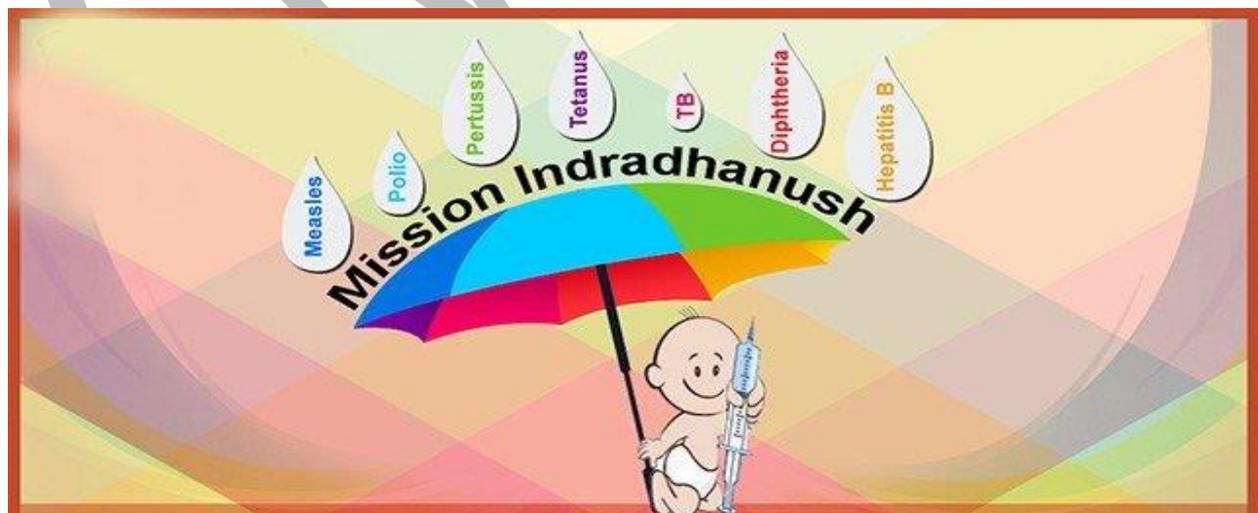
WHAT IS MI 2.0

- ➔ **CONDUCTION** of four rounds of immunization activity over seven working days, excluding the restricted holidays, Sundays and holidays
- ➔ **ENHANCED** immunization session with flexible timing, mobile session and mobilization by other departments
- ➔ **GREATER** focus on left outs, dropouts, and resistant families and remote areas
- ➔ **FOCUS** on urban, underserved population and tribal areas
- ➔ **INTER-MINISTERIAL** and inter-departmental coordination
- ➔ **ENHANCED** political, administrative and financial commitment, through advocacy
- ➔ **MI 2.0** drive is being conducted in the selected districts and urban cities between December 2019–March 2020

THE DISEASE BURDEN

Vaccine preventable diseases are not witnessing a decreasing trend, according to WHO data.

■ 2017 ■ 2018



FACT 2 DISCOMS

'Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos up 45% in Nov'

Total outstanding dues owed by discoms to power gencos, rose around 45 per cent to Rs 81,085 crore in November 2019 over the same month last year, according to the PRAAPTI portal

₹54,834 CRORE:

Amount owed by distribution companies, or discoms, to power generation companies, or gencos, in November 2018

₹71,782 CRORE:

Total overdue amount not cleared by discoms in November 2019

₹41,503 CRORE:

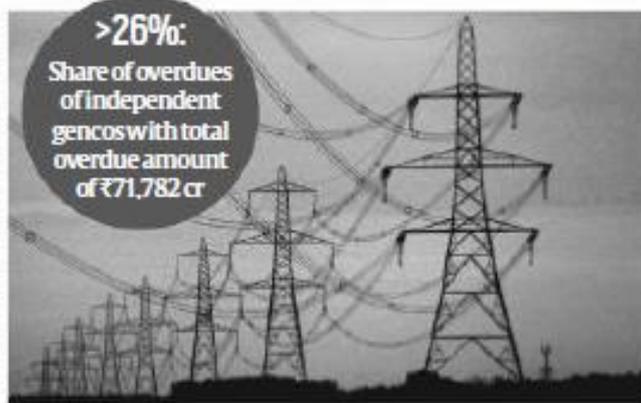
Total overdue amount in November 2018

₹80,635 CRORE:

Total outstanding dues on discoms in October 2019

₹70,477 CRORE:

Total overdue amount on discoms in October 2019



OUTSTANDING DUES AND OVERDUES:

Gencos give 60 days to discoms for paying bills for supply of electricity. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases

PRAAPTI PORTAL:

The Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators (PRAAPTI) portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase transactions

OVERDUES OF CENTRAL PUBLIC SECTOR GENCOs:

NTPC: ₹12,483.16 cr

NLC India: ₹4,380.22 cr

NHPC: ₹3,165.11 cr

THDC India:

₹2,078.30 cr

Damodar Valley Corporation:

₹936.59 cr

OVERDUES OF PRIVATE GENCOs ON DISCOMS:

Adani Power:

₹3,201.68 cr

Lalitpur Power Generation Company Ltd:

₹2,212.66 cr

GMR: ₹1,930.16 cr

Source: PRAAPTI/PTI

MODEL ANSWER

Q 1. Initially **Civil Services** in India were designed to achieve the goals of **neutrality and effectiveness**, which seems to be lacking in the present context. **Do you agree** with the view that drastic reforms are required in Civil Services? **Comment [12.5 Marks, 200 words]**

a. **UNDERSTANDING KEYWORDS**

- Civil Services
- Neutrality
- Effective

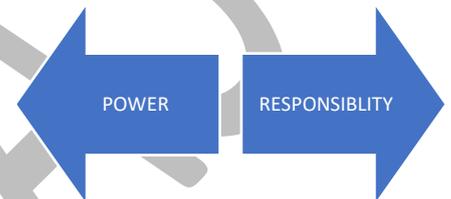
b. **WAY OF WRITING (STRUCTURE)**

- Do you Agree – Viewpoint
- Comment
 - Be neutral and give viewpoint
 - ASSUMPTION

ANSWER

Introduction

- Civil servant is permanent executive who provide continuity in governance and policy when election in parliamentary democracy like India result in change political executive.



Body

- There were numerous occasions in the past when civil servants were neutral and effective, while at some instances they were ineffective and affected by a partisan approach.
- Civil servants were effective and neutral in the following instances
 - When TN Seshan was Chief Election Commissioner, his conduct was above party lines and without fear or favour.
 - Recently, a Police officer presented a rare example of upholding the rule of law by issuing a challan to senior leader Nitin Gadkari and Rahul Gandhi for violating traffic rules.
- Civil servants were ineffective and worked with a partisan approach in the following manner
 - Indulged in rampant corruption such as Adarsh housing scam, irrigation scam etc.
 - Civil servants working in collusion with political executives to target political opponents i.e. allegation against the ruling party for misusing central agencies such as CBI, ED etc.
 - Civil servants joining political parties immediately after retirement or indulging in political activities during service.

Conclusion

- Following reforms if implemented in a similar spirit will make civil service more effective and neutral
 - Fixed term and removal or transfer of civil servant only by valid and written order.
 - Posting of officer according to their ability and interest.
 - Developing institutional mechanisms to appreciate civil servants for their good work while punishing them for their wrong actions.
 - Civil servants should be punished only for their malafide intentions, not for lapses of judgement; we should have arrangements in place to identify differences between them.
 - Maintaining the highest level of deliberation and scrutiny in recruitment and training of civil servants.