



Civil's IAS
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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
- b. Gujarati Literature
- c. Anthropology
- d. Political Science
- e. Sociology
- f. Philosophy

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MODEL ANSWER

1. SOCIAL AUDIT

PRELIMS and MAINS TOPICS

TOPIC 1. ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY REGULATION BILL

1. Union Cabinet approved Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020 to monitor medical procedures used to assist people to achieve pregnancy.
2. **PRESENT STATE:**
 - a. India has one of highest growths in number ART centers and ART cycles performed every year.
 - b. India has become one of major centers of global fertility industry, with reproductive medical tourism becoming a significant activity. This has also introduced a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues; yet, there is no standardization of protocols and reporting is still very inadequate.
3. **OBJECTIVE:**
 - a. Provides for a **national Board** which will lay down a code of conduct to be observed by those operating clinics.
 - b. It will also formulate **minimum standards for laboratory and diagnostic equipment and practices** to be followed by human resources employed by clinics and banks.
 - c. The States and Union Territories will also have to form **State Boards and State authorities** within three months of the notification of the proposed legislation.
 - d. Under proposed law, a **national registry and registration authority** will maintain a database to assist national Board to perform its functions.
4. **Strict punishment**
 - a. The Bill also proposes stringent punishment for those who practise sex selection, indulge in sale of human embryos or gametes and those who operate rackets.
5. **Confidentiality clause**
 - a. "The Bill will also ensure confidentiality of intending couples and protect rights of child,"
 - b. Surrogacy Regulation Bill 2020, government was looking to restrict maximum age of surrogates from "above the marriageable age" to 50 years.

TYPES OF

ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY



IVF (In-Vitro-Fertilization)



IUI (Intrauterine Insemination)



Intrafallopian Transfer



ICSI (Intracytoplasmic Sperm injection)

Regulating ART



Illustration of in vitro fertilisation

regulate and supervise Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) clinics. It establishes ART banks to promote ethical practices

- It proposes stringent punishment for those who attempt to control the offspring's sex, sell embryos or gametes
- As of Feb. 20, there are 517 ART clinics under the National Registry of ART clinics and banks in India, according to the ICMR

TOPIC 2. BODO ACCORD

1. **Ministry of Home Affairs, Assam government** and **Bodo groups** including All Bodo Students' Union and militant outfits signed an agreement on Jan 27, New Delhi's third attempt at conflict resolution after 1993 and 2003 accords.
2. The new deal offers more hope than earlier accords; some of most potent factions of National Democratic Front of Bodoland that had stayed away from earlier agreements are now on board.
3. More significantly, stakeholders have agreed that **updated political arrangements would remain confined to realm of wider autonomy within State of Assam**, giving statehood and Union Territory demands a final burial.
4. **Is all well with the peace accord?**
 - a. The third peace accord with Bodos threatens to intensify sociopolitical contestation among groups in State not just in expanded area, which will be renamed as Bodoland Territorial Region, but also regions where so-called Scheduled Hill Tribes reside in large numbers. While greater contiguity of Bodo-populated areas would aid more efficient governance in Sixth Schedule administrative unit, it has deepened insecurity among other groups such as Koch Rajbongshis, Adivasis and Muslims in the existing Bodoland Territorial Area Districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.
 - b. The Bodoland Peoples Front, which has dominated **Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)** since inception in 2003, is also not pleased with newer claimants to power in council elections due soon.
 - c. The agreement stipulates that **Bodos living in hill areas outside BTAD will be conferred Scheduled Tribe (Hills) status**, something that has not gone down well with tribes such as Karbis.
5. **Why are the hill tribes up in arms?**
 - a. In Assam, there are as many as 14 recognized plains tribe communities, 15 hill tribe communities and 16 Scheduled Caste communities.
 - i. The plains tribes are **Barmans in Cachar, Bodos, Deoris, Hojais, Kacharis, Sonowals, Lalungs, Mechs, Misings, Rabhas, Dimasas, Singphos, Khamtis and Garos**.
 - ii. The ST (Hills) status is primarily reserved for tribes residing in two autonomous hill districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, where Karbis and Dimasas are most dominant in their respective areas.
 - b. At present, while 16 seats are reserved for STs in 126-member Assam Assembly, two are reserved for existing tribes in 14 Lok Sabha seats of State. Students' bodies of the hill districts, chiefly the Karbi Students' Association and the Dimasa Students' Union, have risen in unison against the Centre's assurance of granting ST (Hills) status to the Bodos living in the hill areas.
 - c. Militant group Karbi Longri and North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF), which signed a ceasefire with the Centre in 2009, has also opposed the move saying it would adversely impact the "identity of the Karbis".
 - d. While political configurations at State level will not be largely altered because of the measure in the five Assembly seats of hill districts, elections to the local autonomous tribal councils in Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, which also enjoy Sixth Schedule protections, could witness realignments.
 - e. The **Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council**, which has 26 seats, is due for elections in 2022.
 - f. The **Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council** has 30 seats.
 - g. The Karbis comprise over 46% of population in KAAC area and Dimasas around 35% in DHADC.
6. **Will it have a ripple effect?**
 - a. Other insurgent groups at the talks table with the Centre, including the KLNLF, have taken note of the Bodo pact and are likely to push for similarly generous terms.
 - b. The pot is likely to be stirred further in Assam if the plan to accord ST status to six communities from the State — **Tai Ahom, Koch Rajbongshi, Sootea, Moran, Matak** and 36 different Adivasi groups clubbed together as '**Tea Tribes**' — gets the final nod.
 - c. The communities are estimated to make up almost 27% of Assam's population.
 - d. The impending Naga peace accord, in the works in its latest iteration since 2015, could also spur a demand for territorial and administrative rights in the Naga territories of Manipur even as the dominant **Meiteis** of the valley push their own agenda of inclusion in the ST category.

TOPIC 3. INDIA-U.S. TRADE

1. Where do the two countries stand on trade cooperation?

- a. The world's oldest and largest democracies have been, by and large, stable trading partners to each other, yet this area has not been without wrinkles in recent years, especially since Mr. Trump entered Oval Office. At a broad level, U.S.-India trade in goods and services has grown at a steady clip from \$16 billion to \$142-billion during 1999-2018.
- b. As a recent report by Council on Foreign Relations noted, "U.S. and India have disagreed for years on tariffs and foreign investment limitations, but also on other complicated issues, particularly within agricultural trade. Concern for intellectual property rights has preoccupied U.S. for thirty years, while issues concerning medical devices and fast-growing digital economy have more recently emerged."
- c. At heart of Mr. Trump's foreign policy strategy are concerns about trade deficit that U.S. has with its economic partners worldwide. Although India does not rank among top 10 in this regard — for example, its 2019 trade deficit with U.S. of \$23.3-billion is dwarfed by China's corresponding figure of \$346-billion — there have been a series of skirmishes between Washington and New Delhi over tariffs in specific sectors, and that has destabilized bilateral balance to a certain extent.

2. What is the chronology of U.S.-India trade squabbles?

- a. In March 2018, Trump administration slapped "**national security**" tariffs of 25% on \$761-million worth of steel and of 10% on \$382 million of aluminum imported from India.
- b. Despite formal World Trade Organization disputes initiated by India protesting these tariffs, Washington ended a year-long review of U.S. **Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)** in June 2019 by removing India from the tariff concession system.
- c. This is said to have impacted nearly \$5.8 billion of India's exports, or more than 12% of exports to U.S. in 2017. India immediately imposed higher retaliatory tariffs on 28 U.S. products including almonds, walnuts, cashews, apples, chickpeas, wheat, and peas.
- d. Besides other agricultural products such as dairy, Trump administration remains wary of India's position on **intellectual property rights protection, barriers to free-flowing foreign direct investment**, symbolically important trade sectors such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles and medical devices.
- e. The U.S. also recently changed status of India, among other countries, to a "**developed**" country, to further reduce trade concessions that it could receive from the U.S.
- f. The other side of coin is concern that India has expressed on multiple occasions regarding **restrictions on visas for highly skilled professionals** seeking to take up employment in U.S. — even though laws that brought in restrictions, for example by imposing higher visa fees, were passed before Mr. Trump entered office.

3. Is there any hope for a positive announcement on trade?

- a. While there were initial signs that a "limited trade deal" might be hammered out when Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi meet, that aspiration fell through when it became clear that nothing on that scale would likely be finalized in this space until after November 2020 U.S. presidential election. Thus U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer's planned visit to India just prior to Mr. Trump's was put off to a future date.
- b. What unconfirmed reports point to presently is possibility of a "mini trade deal" or more simply a smaller trade package announcement. This might include, reports suggest, an increase in India's LNG imports from U.S. In a similar vein, "An MoU for India's gas importer Petronet to invest \$2.5 billion in U.S. company Tellurian Inc's LNG project, that was signed during Mr. Modi's visit to Houston, is likely to be formalised during Mr. Trump's visit."

4. What are the priorities in the defence and strategic spaces?

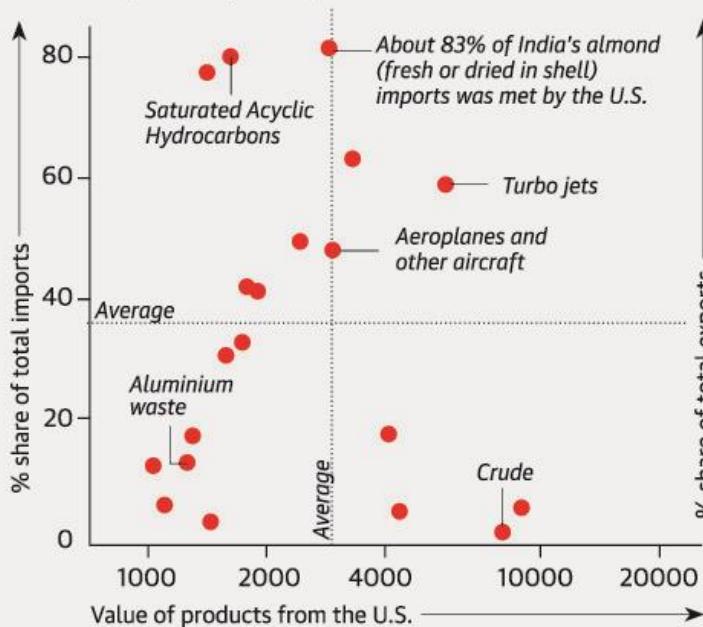
- a. There is more positive news on defence cooperation and trade front, with likely announcement during visit of Mr. Trump of a deal for 24 Lockheed Martin-built MH-60R Seahawk Multi-Role Helicopters for Indian Navy; India's Cabinet Committee on Security has cleared their purchase. These 24 helicopters,

said to be worth \$2.4-billion, are likely to be procured through the Foreign Military Sales route of the U.S. government. India and the U.S. are also said to be in negotiations regarding India's potential purchase of drones, additional P-8I long-range, multimission maritime patrol aircraft and also Raytheon intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) aircraft.

- b. On strategic front, Mr. Trump's oft-reiterated promise to stop U.S.'s "endless wars," particularly by bringing home U.S. troops from Afghanistan, will possibly pose some thorny questions for Indian strategies in its neighborhood. If American withdrawal proceeds apace and alongside possible revival of Taliban's influence, Pakistan-based terror elements or Inter-Services Intelligence gain a stronger foothold in power vacuum that will inevitably develop there, this could compromise Indian interests considerably. Mr. Modi may privately seek reassurances from his American counterpart to mitigate fallout of such a scenario

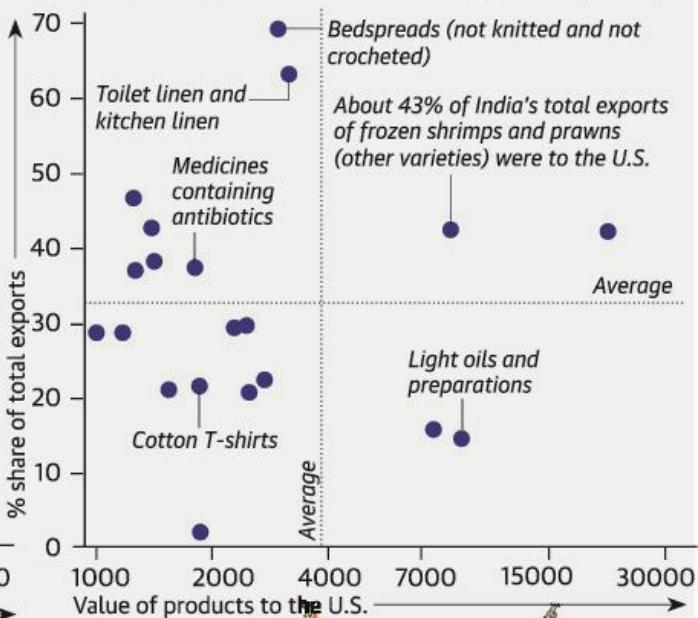
Business diary

India's imports | The graph shows imports from the U.S. in \$-million for various products and their % share of total imports between FY15 and FY20 (Apr. to Dec. '19). For instance, India imported \$2.8-bn worth U.S. almonds



It is unlikely that a major trade pact will be signed between India and the U.S. during U.S. President Donald Trump's first official visit to India next week. However, Mr. Trump has said that he is "saving the big deal for later on" but has not specified when this will be because of the U.S. presidential elections later this year. A look at the specifics of India-U.S. trade over time:

India's exports | The graph shows exports to the U.S. in \$-mn for various products and their % share of total exports between FY15 and FY20 (Apr.-Dec. '19). For eg., India exported \$8.2-bn of frozen shrimps/prawns (others)



History of imports from the U.S.

Period	Value*	% share
2014-2019	128	5.84
2009-2014	108	5.18
2004-2009	678	6.77
1999-2004	192	6.59

* in \$-billion

History of exports to the U.S.

Period	Value*	% share
2014-2019	225	15.20
2009-2014	154	11.48
2004-2009	918	13.89
1999-2004	485	20.10

Compiled by Suman Sen & Naresh Singaravelu

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India

TOPIC 4. SYRIA'S CIVIL WAR

1. Recent advances by Syrian government forces in Idlib, last major rebel-held territory in war-torn country, have triggered a massive displacement besides raising possibility of a wider conflict with neighboring Turkey.

2. The Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad is backed by **Russia and Iran** in operation to recapture Idlib, while some rebel factions within the province get support from Turkey.

3. Ankara's protests have also threatened to disrupt the delicate Turkish-Russian cooperation, which had gained traction in recent years. However, despite Turkey's protests and mounting international concerns, the Syrian government seems determined to press ahead with the operation.

4. Why is Idlib strategically important?

- The province in northwestern Syria that borders Turkey fell into rebel hands in 2015 at the height of the Syrian civil war. The Assad regime at that time was on the verge of defeat.
- Rebels and jihadists had captured huge swathes of the country from the regime, including parts of **Aleppo, Hama, Homs**, outskirts of **Damascus**, capital, and several towns in the south near the Jordan border. But since arrival of Russians in September 2015, regime forces have recaptured almost all of these territories from the rebels.
- The Kurdish region in northern Syria is run by an autonomous government but the Kurdish rebels, under attack by Turkish forces and pro-Turkish rebels, recently bought peace with Damascus.
- So, in effect, Idlib is the last rebel stronghold, which is also seat of Syrian Salvation Government, the rebel administration that claims to represent the whole of Syria. If the government forces recapture Idlib, the Syrian civil war would practically be over, handing final victory to Mr. Assad.
- With Idlib under control, regime can also take over, or come close to taking over, 130-km border province shares with Turkey. The government will also have control over key highways that run through Idlib connecting Aleppo, which before civil war was commercial capital of Syria, to Damascus. The government version is that it wants to "liberate" Idlib from terrorists.

5. Who controls Idlib?

- There have been several rival rebel and jihadist factions present in Idlib ever since it fell from government control. The dominant group among them is Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) whose roots go back to al-Qaeda's Syria branch.
- The group is commanded by Abu Mohammad al-Joulani, who was originally sent to Syria in the early years of the civil war by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the then chief of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), to establish an al-Qaeda branch in Syria.
- Joulani set up Jabhat al-Nusra, which emerged as the most ferocious jihadist group in the Syrian theatre. When Baghdadi announced the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Joulani broke links with him and continued to command the Nusra Front, which remained the official Qaeda unit.
- Al-Nusra later rechristened itself a few times to shed the al-Qaeda tag and operate as a Syrian nationalist front. In January 2017, the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (another name for al-Nusra) and a few other Salafi-jihadist groups merged to create the HTS.
- The group has implemented a strict Sharia code in Idlib and has been ruling the province through fear and force ever since. Though the HTS has renounced al-Qaeda ties, it is still widely seen as the Syrian front of the transnational jihadist group.
- The Free Syrian Army and other pro-Turkish rebel groups are also part of the alternative government in Idlib, in an uneasy alliance with the HTS.

6. Why is Turkey protesting?

- There are largely two aspects to Turkey's strong opposition to the Syrian government's bid to take Idlib. First, the humanitarian angle. Turkey already hosts more than three million Syrian refugees.
- It always feared that an attack on Idlib would trigger another refugee exodus towards its borders. The UN estimates that about one million people have already been displaced in Idlib over the past three months.

- c. Turkey has now shut its border with the province. But the pressure on Turkey will mount to open the border if more and more displaced people move towards it. Ankara does not want that situation to arise.
- d. The second is strategic. Turkey has made it clear that it wants the Syria-Turkish border to be controlled by pro-Turkish rebels, not by the Syrian government, nor by the Syrian Kurds.
- e. It had launched a few military offensives in the past to carve out buffer zones on the border. If the Syrian government recaptures Idlib, it will alter the balance of power in the border region, giving an upper hand to the Syrians, and of course, the Russians.
- f. The pro-Turkish rebels will be weakened, which means Turkey's ability to manoeuvre in the Syrian conflict will be enfeebled. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan wants to prevent such an outcome.

7. What is Putin's game plan?

- a. Russian President Vladimir Putin, the main backer of the Syrian regime, has always maintained that his single most priority in the Syrian civil war is to help the government win the war.
- b. The Russians had taken tactical retreats in the past, like the de-escalation agreement they reached with Turkey to reduce violence in Idlib in 2017 or the pact reached between the two sides to neutralize Kurdish rebels in northern Syria.
- c. But Mr. Putin, it seems, never backed off from recapturing Idlib, and seal off the civil war. With the focus of the United States turning towards domestic issues in an election year, Mr. Putin and Mr. Assad have a window of one year to achieve this goal.
- d. This explains the timing of the attack. Turkey's protests were predictable. But the question is whether Mr. Erdogan has the wherewithal to stave off the Russians within Syria.
- e. Even if Turkey makes a limited intervention along with the rebels, it may be able to delay the Syrian-Russian advances, not deter them. And if Turkey launches a full-scale war, the consequences would be disastrous for all sides.

TOPIC 4. CHIEF VIGILANCE COMMISSIONER

- 1. When and Why did the Government set up a body like CVC?**
 - a. Central Vigilance Commission was set up by Government in February, 1964 on recommendations of Committee on Prevention of Corruption, headed by Shri K. Santhanam, to advise and guide Central Government agencies in field of vigilance.
- 2. What is the background of Central Vigilance Commission?**
 - a. CVC are conceived to be apex vigilance institution, free of control from any executive authority, monitoring all vigilance activity under Central Government and advising various authorities in Central Government organizations in planning, executing, reviewing and reforming their vigilant work.
 - b. Consequent upon promulgation of an Ordinance by President, Central Vigilance Commission has been made a multi member Commission with "statutory status" with effect from 25th August, 1998.
- 3. What is the present status of the Central Vigilance Commission?**
 - a. CVC Bill was passed by both houses of Parliament in 2003 and President gave its assent on September 11, 2003. Thus Central Vigilance Commission Act 2003 (No 45 Of 2003) came into effect from that date.
- 4. The Commission shall consist of:**
 - a. A Central Vigilance Commissioner - Chairperson;
 - b. Not more than two Vigilance Commissioners - Members;
- 5. By GOI Resolution on "Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informer" dated April 2004, Government of India has authorized Central Vigilance Commission as "**Designated Agent**" to receive written complaints for disclosure on any allegation of corruption or misuse of office and recommend appropriate action.**

- 1964 on the recommendations of the Committee on Prevention of Corruption, headed by Shri K. Santhanam, to advise and guide Central Government agencies in the field of vigilance.
- Central Vigilance Commission Act 2003 as statutory body
- Nittoor Srinivasa Rau became the first Chief Vigilance Commissioner of India.
- appointed by the president on recommendations of a committee of PM + Home minister + leader of opposition Lok Sabha.
- consist of a Central Vigilance Commissioner – Chairperson and not more than 2 Vigilance Commissioners – Members.
- president can remove the Central Vigilance Commissioner or any vigilance commissioner if found insolvent, convicted on moral grounds, infirmity of mind or body
- For 4 yrs or till age of 65 yrs whichever is earlier.
- only an advisory body. Central Government Departments are free to either accept or reject CVC's advice in corruption cases.

Scouting for talent

The Prime Minister heads the selection committee for choosing the CVC chief. The Home Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha or the leader of the largest Opposition party make up the rest of the panel

- The post of Chief Vigilance Commissioner has been vacant since June 2019, after K.V. Chowdary completed his tenure. Vigilance Commissioner Sharad Kumar has been functioning as the interim CVC
- After the Personnel

Ministry called for applications for the post in March 2019, the deadline for submission was extended thrice between May and June 2019

- The CVC is led by the Central Vigilance Commissioner and has two Vigilance Commissioners



TOPIC 5. FATF

1. Who we are?

- a. Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.
- b. The inter-governmental body sets international standards that aim **to prevent these illegal activities and the harm they cause to society**.
- c. As a policy-making body, FATF works to generate necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- d. With more than 200 countries and jurisdictions committed to implementing them.
- e. FATF has developed FATF Recommendations, or FATF Standards, which ensure a co-ordinated global response **to prevent organised crime, corruption and terrorism**.
- f. They help authorities go after money of criminals dealing in illegal drugs, human trafficking and other crimes.
- g. FATF also works to stop funding for **weapons of mass destruction**.
- h. The FATF reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and continuously strengthens its standards to address new risks, such as the regulation of virtual assets, which have spread as cryptocurrencies gain popularity.
- i. The FATF monitors countries to ensure they implement the FATF Standards fully and effectively, and holds countries to account that do not comply.

2. What do we do?

- a. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was established in July 1989 by a Group of Seven (G-7) Summit in Paris, initially to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
- b. In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering. In April 2012, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- c. Since its inception, FATF has operated under a fixed life-span, requiring a specific decision by its Ministers to continue.
- d. Three decades after its creation, in April 2019, FATF Ministers adopted a new, open-ended mandate for FATF.
- e. The objectives of FATF are
 - i. to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
 - ii. Starting with its own members,
 - monitors countries' progress in implementing FATF Recommendations;
 - reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures;
 - promotes the adoption and implementation of the FATF Recommendations globally.

FATF Members and Observers

- FATF currently comprises 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organizations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of globe.
- Argentina ,Australia ,Austria, Belgium, Brazil , Canada, China , Denmark , European Commission , Finland, France, Germany, Greece , Gulf Co-operation Council , Hong Kong , Iceland , India , Ireland , Israel , Italy , Japan , Republic of Korea , Luxembourg , Malaysia , Mexico , Netherlands , New Zealand , Norway ,Portugal , Russia, Saudi Arabia , Singapore , South Africa , Spain , Sweden , Switzerland , Turkey , United Kingdom , United States

No reprieve

Pakistan has been retained on the 'grey list' of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for four more months



- Pakistan was given a September 2019 deadline to shut down access to funding of UN Security Council-designated terror groups and prosecute their leadership

- In November 2019, after Pakistan was judged to have complied with only four points, the FATF extended the

deadline to February

- Pakistan is among 12 countries on the 'grey list' or 'other monitored jurisdictions' that are being reviewed for actions to stop terror financing and money laundering

- A 'black list' refers to countries for whom there has been a "call to action" or strict banking and international finance sanctions

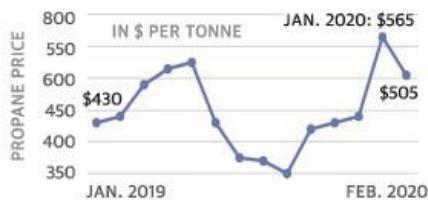
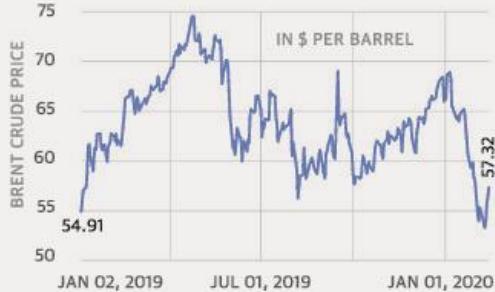
TOPIC 6. LPG prices

1. On February 12, LPG prices, which are revised on a monthly basis, went up again. The rate for unsubsidized, 14.2 kg cylinders has risen by a steep ₹144.50 in Delhi, at ₹858.50.
2. In January 2020, a non-subsidized LPG cylinder cost ₹714 in Delhi. In three other metros too, LPG prices jumped — Kolkata: ₹896 (increase by ₹149); Mumbai: ₹829.50 (increase by ₹145); and Chennai: ₹881 (increase by ₹147).
3. The recent price hike has been the sharpest since January 2014.
4. **What influences LPG prices in India?**
 - a. Domestic prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) are based on a formula — import parity price (IPP), which is based on international LPG prices. Saudi Aramco's LPG price acts as benchmark for IPP and includes the free-on-board price, ocean freight, customs duties, port dues and the like.
 - b. This dollar-denominated figure is converted into rupees before local costs — such as local freight, bottling charges, marketing costs, margins for oil marketing firms and dealer commissions and the Goods and Services Tax — are added. This helps government arrive at retail selling price for LPG.
 - c. The government resets the LPG price every month, the decision being influenced by international prices and how the rupee has behaved against the dollar in the immediately preceding weeks.
5. **How have international prices behaved recently?**
 - a. For December, Brent crude price had been on an uptrend, and had breached \$68 level late that month.
 - b. It peaked at \$68.91 in early January, but with coronavirus (COVID-19) disease hogging headlines in recent weeks, fears of a global slowdown have pushed oil prices down through January, save for a few spikes.
 - c. Saudi Aramco had raised its propane prices to \$565 per metric tonne in Jan, up sharply from \$440 a metric tonne set for Dec. Aramco propane prices offer a benchmark for pricing West Asia LPG sales to Asian markets.
 - d. The dollar-rupee dance has since been within range of ₹71-₹72 to dollar, having briefly breached ₹72 mark in early January.
6. **Who will the price rise affect?**
 - a. The price increase will affect retail consumers who have given up the subsidy.
 - b. The government has said that for those who avail subsidy, increase would be mostly absorbed by rise in subsidy. Centre said price of an unsubsidized cylinder would increase from ₹714 to ₹858.50 in Delhi, for example, and that subsidy offered would go up from ₹153.86 to ₹291.48. Of 27.76 crore retail consumers, 26.12 crore consumers avail LPG subsidy. Likewise, for Ujjwala consumers subsidy would go up from ₹174.86 to ₹312.48 per cylinder.
7. **Does this help the government move to an open pricing regime?**
 - a. Prior to latest round of price increase, government had raised LPG cylinder prices by ₹62, starting from August 2019. Compare this with increase of ₹82 that had taken place over five years to mid-2019, indicating a penchant for increasingly lesser subsidy. In latest round, though, Centre has sought to absorb much of increase for those availing subsidies.
 - b. It looks like most recent increase has been beyond its control and it is hence raising subsidy levels to protect consumers, given that economy is reeling from lack of consumer spending.
8. **What is the outlook?**
 - a. With international crude prices on the downtrend, it is plausible the LPG prices too would see a slump. Aramco has lowered its propane price for February to \$505 per metric tonne. Assuming we receive no surprises from the rupee-dollar tango, a softening of LPG prices in the domestic context may be expected.
9. **What are the implications for the broader economy?**
 - a. At a time when consumer demand, in general, for goods and services in the country has slumped, more cash in the hands of the retail consumer may have helped spur demand. It is ironic that the government has had to raise LPG prices now.
 - b. This sucks away even more disposable income from those consumers who pay market rates for LPG. As a result, household budgets are bound to go up, especially for those not availing subsidy. The increase in LPG price could spur headline inflation even further.
 - c. As it is, consumer price index inflation has seen a rise over past few months. For January, it had accelerated to 7.59%, compared with 7.35% in December 2019. The January inflation metric was highest since May 2014, when figure was at 8.33%.

High on gas

LPG prices across metros saw the steepest monthly hike in six years on February 12. This can be attributed to a price hike by Saudi Aramco, based on which LPG pricing is done in India

1. UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM | Brent crude price steadily increased for most of December and continued its uptrend in early January. It was on a free fall for the rest of the month and early February. In this period it peaked at \$68.91 a barrel on January 6



2. SOARING PRICES | Crude oil prices tend to affect Saudi Aramco's propane price. Owing to a rise in crude price through December, Saudi Aramco's propane price was \$565 per tonne in January, the highest in at least a year

3. INDIA AFFECTED | A high propane price in January set LPG prices across the country soaring. Chart shows the price of an LPG cylinder in Delhi since Jan. 2014 and the % change in prices over the previous month



SOURCE: INDIAN OIL, REUTERS

Mixed Food



Govt wants to blend methanol with cooking gas

Twin benefit

Niti Aayog proposes blending **20% methanol** in LPG cylinders



It will bring down cost by **₹100** per cylinder

Likely to cut down LPG subsidy by **30%**

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LPG subsidy for FY19 stands at **₹20,000 crore**

Government has allocated **coal mines** for production of methane



TOPIC 7. 'DEVELOPED' TAG

- On February 10, U.S. removed more than a dozen countries, including India, from its list of countries that are classified as "developing" for trade purposes.
- These countries will now be classified instead as "developed" economies, thus stripping them of various trade benefits.
- The move, which comes just ahead of U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to India later this month, has led to doubts over the chances of a trade deal being signed between India and the United States.
- What is the "developing country" status?**
 - The office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) maintains a list of countries that it classifies as "developing", "developed", and "least-developed".
 - Countries that are classified as "developing" are allowed to export certain goods to the U.S. without being hit by punitive tariffs that are usually imposed on goods from "developed" countries. The "developing country" status owes its origin to the U.S. Trade Act of 1974, which authorized the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to help poor countries develop faster.
 - These benefits were extended further under the World Trade Organization wherein rich countries agreed to grant trade benefits to countries that classified themselves as poor. It is worth noting that about two-thirds of countries that are members of the WTO classify themselves as "developing" countries and avail benefits.
- Is such a classification justified?**
 - Any classification of whether a country is "developing" or not is bound to be arbitrary. While the economic progress that India and China have achieved over the last few decades is seen by some as reason enough to get rid of their special status, others point to the various development indicators in which India and China

still lag behind the rich world. Further, opinion on whether such a classification is required in the first place is divided.

6. Why is India being stripped of this status?

- The U.S. administration under President Trump has repeatedly accused fast-growing countries such as India and China of wrongly claiming trade benefits that are reserved only for the truly developing countries.
- Therefore, Mr. Trump has sought to renegotiate trade deals with countries like China, essentially trying to make these deals more "fair" to the interests of the U.S. India has traditionally been one of the largest beneficiaries under the GSP, with over 2,000 goods having been exempted from import tariffs, until the Trump administration stripped it of the special benefit last year.
- With the current change in India's status under the USTR's classification, the task of reclaiming the lost GSP benefits now becomes even harder. In support of its actions, the Trump administration has argued that countries like India and China have witnessed significant growth in the last few decades.
- This, it believes, is enough reason to scale back the various trade benefits. It has further cited the share of global trade enjoyed by India and China and their membership in the G20 club to argue that they enjoy significant economic power. Moreover, many developed countries also classify themselves as "developing" in order to escape tariffs.

7. How will the U.S. decision affect global trade?

- Any move to end duty-free access for foreign goods into the U.S., which becomes more likely after the change in trade status, will increase the overall tax burden on goods crossing international borders.
- This will add further pressure on the global economy, which has already witnessed a slowing of growth this year. The growth effects of a tariff war could rise further if countries that are stripped of their "developing" economy status decide to retaliate by imposing tariffs on goods that they import from the U.S.
- Recently, India offered to scale back tariffs on American dairy and other products that are imported into India. This came after the U.S. complained about the restricted access that American companies have to developing countries like India.
- If such trade tactics manage to bring down trade barriers on both sides, it can benefit the global economy. But, with both the U.S. and its various warring trading partners looking to protect their domestic producers rather than consumers who benefit from lower tariffs, a general fall in tariffs across the board seems unlikely.

Talking business

- India was in the 'developing country' list till February 10, eligible for relaxed norms
- Country was taken off the list, as were Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam
- New lists include 36 developing, 44 least developed nations
- In 1998, U.S. had come up with lists of nations classified as per level of development
- Lists helped determine if they were subject to U.S.' CVDs (countervailing duties)

- A CVD probe was to be terminated if offending subsidy was too small
- 1998 rule is now 'obsolete' as per USTR notice



WHAT IS GSP?

Non-reciprocal, non-discriminatory benefits by developed countries to developing ones

Under GSP, exports allowed at zero or low duties

India gained duty concessions of \$190 million in 2017 from the US under GSP

WHY US WITHDREW GSP



- Trade imbalance with India
- Washington has cited lack of reciprocity
- No access to Indian market for US dairy, medical device industry
- Market access sought for US dairy, medical device industry
- Tariff reduction on information and communications technology products
- Easier telecom testing, conformity requirements for ICT products
- Robust intellectual property rights regime sought
- Issues with proposed e-commerce policy, data localisation norms

TOPIC 8. JUDICIARY

1. On February 12, Supreme Court judge Justice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar recused himself from hearing a petition filed by Sara Abdullah Pilot, sister of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, against the government's move to charge him under the Public Safety Act.

2. The case was finally heard by another bench.

3. Recusal usually takes place when a judge has a **conflict of interest or has a prior association with parties in case.**

4. What are the rules on recusals?

a. There are no written rules on the recusal of judges from hearing cases listed before them in constitutional courts. **It is left to the discretion of a judge.**

b. **The reasons for recusal are not disclosed in an order of the court.** Some judges orally convey to the lawyers involved in the case their reasons for recusal, many do not. Some explain the reasons in their order. The decision rests on the conscience of the judge.

c. At times, parties involved raise apprehensions about a possible conflict of interest. For example, if the case pertains to a company in which the judge holds stakes, the apprehension will seem reasonable. Similarly, if the judge has, in the past, appeared for one of the parties involved in a case, the call for recusal may seem right.

d. A recusal inevitably leads to delay. The case goes back to Chief Justice, who has to constitute a fresh Bench.

5. Should the reasons be put on record?

a. In his separate opinion in National Judicial Appointments Commission judgment in 2015, Justice (now retired) Kurian Joseph, who was a member of Constitution Bench, highlighted need for judges to give reasons for recusal as a measure to build transparency.

b. "It is the constitutional duty, as reflected in one's oath, to be transparent and accountable, and hence, a judge is required to indicate reasons for his recusal from a particular case," Justice Kurian wrote. One of his companion judges on the Constitution Bench, Justice (retired) Madan B. Lokur, agreed that specific rules require to be framed on recusal.

c. The two judges were referring to senior advocate Fali Nariman's plea to Justice J.S. Khehar, who was then in line to be the next Chief Justice, to recuse himself. But Justice Khehar refused to recuse himself though he admitted that Mr. Nariman's plea left him in an "awkward predicament". Justice Khehar reasoned that he did not recuse himself for fear of leaving an impression that he was "scared".

6. What happened in the Judge Loya and Assam detention centers cases?

a. In 2018, petitioners in Judge Loya case sought recusal of Supreme Court judges, Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud, from Bench as they both hailed from Bombay High Court. The case banked on written statements of two judges from that High Court, both saying that Judge Loya's death was from natural causes.

b. The court refused the request and called it a "wanton attack". Recusal, court observed, would mean abdication of duty. Maintaining institutional civilities are distinct from "fiercely independent role of judge as adjudicator", court explained.

c. In May 2019, in middle of a hearing of a PIL filed by activist Harsh Mander about plight of inmates in Assam's detention centers, then-Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi was asked to recuse himself.

d. In a lengthy order, Justice Gogoi said a litigant cannot seek recusal of judge. "Judicial functions, sometimes, involve performance of unpleasant and difficult tasks, which require asking questions and soliciting answers to arrive at a just and fair decision.

e. If assertions of bias as stated are to be accepted, it would become impossible for a judge to seek clarifications and answers," court observed.

7. Why did Justice Mishra argue against recusal?

a. Refusing to recuse himself from the Constitution Bench hearing a question of law on the Indore Development Authority v. Manohar Lal (the issues involved in the case related to a reading of Section 24(2) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013), Justice Arun Mishra said acquiescing to the wishes of parties to recuse himself would sound the death-knell for judicial independence.

b. The petitioners had objected to Justice Mishra leading the Constitution Bench which was hearing a question of law challenging his own earlier judgment in the case. But Justice Mishra said it would be a "grave blunder" on his part to bow out.

TOPIC 9. URBAN HEAT ISLANDS IN INDIA

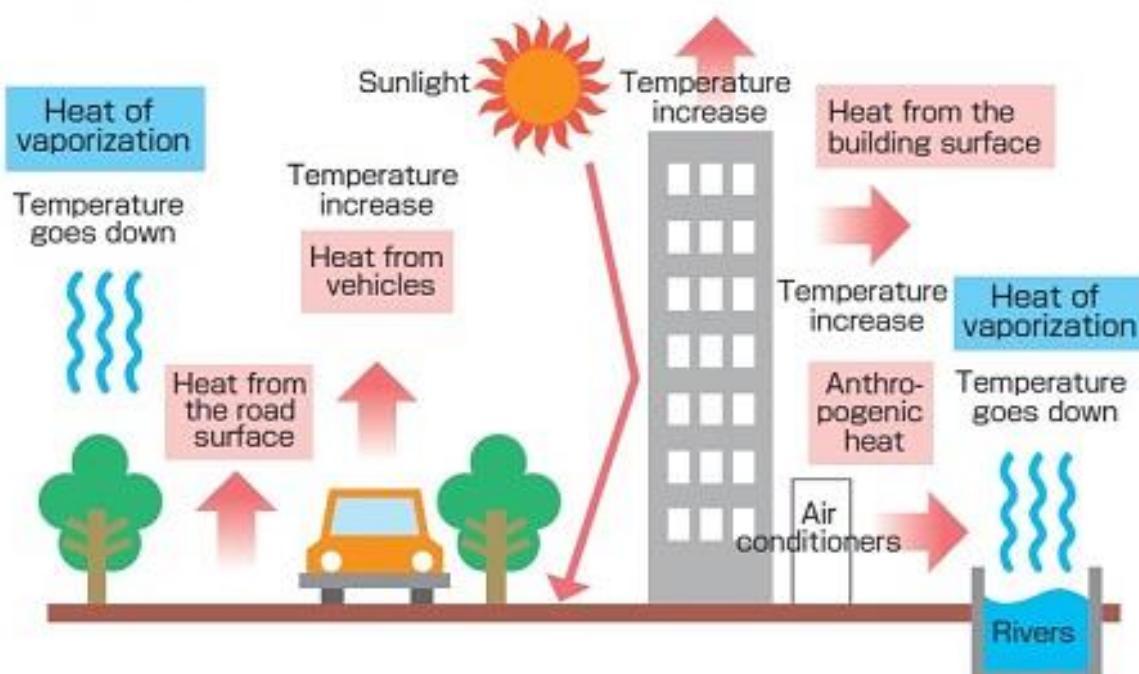
1. Why are our cities warmer than their suburbs and rural areas?
 - a. "Anthropogenic forcing exacerbating the urban heat islands in India" noted that relatively warmer temperature in urban areas, compared to suburbs, may contain potential health hazards due to heat waves apart from pollution.
 - b. "*Our research is a detailed and careful analysis of urban heat islands in India. We study difference between urban and surrounding rural land surface temperatures, across all seasons in 44 major cities from 2001 to 2017.*"
 - c. "*For the first time, we have found evidence of mean daytime temperature of surface urban heat island (UHI Intensity) going up to 2 degrees C for most cities, as analyzed from satellite temperature measurements in monsoon and post monsoon periods.*"
 - d. Other researchers from elsewhere have also noticed similar rise in daytime temperatures in **Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai**.
2. Understanding urban heat island effect:
 - a. We know of urban water lakes (as in Bhopal, Hyderabad, Bengaluru or Srinagar) which add pleasure and coolness, but an urban heat island?
 - b. **An urban heat island (abbreviated as UHI) is where the temperature in a densely populated city is as much as 2 degrees higher than suburban or rural areas.**
3. Why this happens?
 - a. This happens because of materials used for pavements, roads and roofs, such as concrete, asphalt (tar) and bricks, which are opaque, do not transmit light, but have higher heat capacity and thermal conductivity than rural areas, which have more open space, trees and grass.
 - b. Trees and plants are characterized by their '**evapotranspiration**'— a combination of words wherein evaporation involves movement of water to surrounding air, and transpiration refers to the movement of water within a plant and the subsequent loss of water through the stomata (pores found on the leaf surface) in its leaves.
 - c. Grass, plants and trees in the suburbs and rural areas do this. The lack of such evapotranspiration in city leads to city experiencing higher temperature than its surroundings.
 - d. **UHIs also decrease air quality in cities, thanks to pollution generated by industrial and automobile exhaust, higher extent of particulate matter and greater amounts of dust than in rural areas.**
 - e. Due to this higher temperature in urban areas, UHI increases colonization of species that like warm temperatures, such as lizards and geckos. Insects such as ants are more abundant here than in rural areas; these are referred to as **ectotherms**.
 - f. In addition, cities tend to experience heat waves which affect human and animal health, leading to heat cramps, sleep deprivation and increased mortality rates.
 - g. UHIs also impact nearby water bodies, as warmer water (thanks to pavements, rooftops and so on) is transferred from city to drains in sewers, and released into nearby lakes and creeks, thus impairing their water quality.
 - h. It is painful to realize that Bengaluru, once known for its **salubrious climate**, now has UHIs, even in places like Koramandala and Jayanagar. The rapid expansion of buildings, industrial parks and associated high-rise apartments in suburbs, such as Electronic City and Whitefield, has made the city insalubrious. Some of its praiseworthy lakes are dirty and diseased.
 - i. Likewise, in Hyderabad in 1977, there were no need air conditioning or even ceiling fans at night. Now, we have UHIs, again due to reckless expansion of industrial parks, factories and associated buildings in what was once a vast suburb, which has now become the third city called Cyberabad.
 - j. These have not only led to formation of UHI but also the associated pollution due to a drastic reduction in the Air Quality Index (AQI), thanks to the exhausts from industries and automobiles.
 - k. The 'safe' AQI is thought to be between 61-90 units (when particles from the air enter the human and animal bodies causing discomfort and illness), but in places like Delhi it has gone to very poor—

to-dangerous levels of about 323. Fortunately, it is still on the safe side in Hyderabad and Bengaluru, but it is time to take steps to keep it low.

4. Control of UHIs and mitigation:

- a. Industrialization and economic development are vital to country, but control of UHIs and their fallouts are equally vital.
- b. Towards this, several methods are being, and can be, tried.
 - i. One of them is to use greener rooftops, using light-colored concrete (using limestone aggregates along with asphalt (or tar) making the road surface greyish or even pinkish (as some places in the US have done); these are 50% better than black, since they absorb less heat and reflect more sunlight. Likewise, we should paint rooftops green, and install solar panels there amidst a green background.
 - ii. The other is to plant as many trees and plants as possible. It is interesting to realize how beneficial trees are to us.
- c. **benefits from trees and plants.**
 - i. they combat climate change;
 - ii. clean the surrounding air by absorbing pollutant gases (N_xO_y , O_3 , NH_3 , SO_2 , and others) and trapping particulates on their leaves and bark;
 - iii. cool the city and the streets; conserve energy (cutting air-conditioning costs by 50%);
 - iv. save water and help prevent water pollution;
 - v. help prevent soil erosion;
 - vi. protect people and children from UV light;
 - vii. offer economic opportunities;
 - viii. bring diverse group of people together;
 - ix. encourage civic pride by giving neighborhoods a new identity;
 - x. mask concrete walls, thus muffling sounds from streets and highways, and eye-soothing canopy of green; and
 - xi. more a business district has trees, more business follows.
- d. So, plant as many trees and plants as you can around and between your buildings, schools, houses and apartment complexes.
- e. But, 'token' planting will not do, nurturing them year after year is vital!

●How the Heat Island Phenomenon occurs



TOPIC 10. CRIMINAL POLITICIAN

1. Supreme Court ordered political parties to publish entire criminal history of their candidates for Assembly and Lok Sabha elections along with reasons that goaded them to field suspected criminals over decent people.
 - a. The information should be published in a local and a national newspaper as well as parties' social media handles.
 - b. It should mandatorily be published either within 48 hours of selection of candidates or less than two weeks before first date for filing of nominations, whichever is earlier.
 - c. ordered political parties to submit compliance reports with Election Commission of India within 72 hours or risk contempt of court action.
 - d. The judgment is applicable to parties both at Central and State levels.
 - e. Signified court's alarm at unimpeded rise of criminals, often facing heinous charges like rape and murder, encroaching into country's political and electoral realms.
2. **Detailed information:**
 - a. The published information on criminal antecedents of a candidate should be detailed and include nature of offences, charges framed against him, court concerned and case number.
 - b. A political party should explain to public through its published material how "**qualifications or achievements or merit**" of a candidate, charged with a crime, impressed it enough to cast aside smear of his criminal background.

Cause for concern

The Supreme Court on Thursday flagged the alarming increase in incidence of criminals in politics

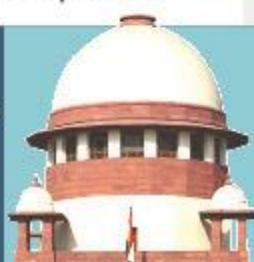
MPs with pending criminal cases:

2004	24%
2009	30%
2014	34%
2019	43%

■ The 2018 Constitution Bench judgment that formed the basis for Thursday's verdict said: Rapid criminalisation of politics cannot be arrested by merely disqualifying tainted legislators but should begin by "cleansing" political parties

 No political party offers an explanation as to why candidates with pending criminal cases are selected as candidates

JUSTICE NARIMAN, on February 13, 2020



NOT OUR DOMAIN

Parties told to widely publicise in the media full details of the criminal charges against the candidates they would be fielding in elections

When we say wide publicity, we mean that the same shall be done at least thrice after filing of the nomination papers: SC

The five-judge Constitution bench said the law on criminals entering politics should also address fake cases being instituted against political opponents

We are sure, the law making wing of the democracy will take it upon itself to cure the malignancy. We say so as such a malignancy is not incurable: SC



TOPIC 11. INSIGHT MISSION

1. It's now more than a year since NASA's InSight lander mission touched down on Mars on November 26, 2018. **What lessons has mission provided in its first year on Red Planet?** NASA published papers to reveal "a planet alive with quakes, dust devils and strange magnetic pulses".
2. **What is InSight**
 - a. InSight is first mission dedicated to **looking deep beneath Martian surface**. Among its science tools are a seismometer for detecting quakes, sensors for gauging wind and air pressure, a magnetometer, and a heat flow probe designed to take planet's temperature.
 - b. The InSight mission is part of **NASA's Discovery Program**.
 - c. It is being supported by a number of European partners, which include France's Centre National d'Études Spatiales (CNES), German Aerospace Center (DLR) and United Kingdom Space Agency (UKSA).
 - d. **Mars trembles more often than expected, but also more mildly.** This emerged from readings of ultra-sensitive seismometer, called Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure (SEIS). The instrument enables scientists to "hear" multiple trembling events from hundreds to thousands of miles away.
 - e. **Mars doesn't have tectonic plates like Earth**, but it does have volcanically active regions that can cause rumbles. SEIS has found more than 450 seismic signals to date, majority of which are believed to be quakes (as opposed to data noise created by environmental factors, like wind). The largest quake was just about magnitude 4.0 in size.
 - f. Seismic waves are affected by materials they move through. As such, they help scientists study composition of the planet's inner structure. Mars can help the team better understand how all rocky planets — including Earth — first formed.
 - g. **Billions of years ago, Mars had a magnetic field. Although it is no longer present**, it left behind what NASA describes as "ghosts" — magnetized rocks that are now between 61 m to several km below ground. InSight is equipped with a magnetometer, which has detected magnetic signals.
 - h. At a Martian site called Homestead hollow, magnetic signals are 10 times stronger than what was predicted earlier (based on data from orbiting spacecraft). Because InSight's measurements are more local, they are more precise.
 - i. At InSight's location, most surface rocks are too young to have been magnetized by the former magnetic field. "This magnetism must be coming from ancient rocks underground,"
 - j. In addition, scientists on Earth are intrigued by how these **Martian signals change over time**. The measurements vary by day and night; they also tend to pulse around midnight. Theories are still being formed as to what causes such changes.
 - k. InSight measures wind speed, direction and air pressure nearly continuously. Weather sensors have detected thousands of passing whirlwinds, which are called dust devils when they pick up grit and become visible. The site has more whirlwinds than any other place where a landing has been made on Mars while carrying weather sensors.
 - l. Despite all that activity in the wind and frequent imaging, InSight's cameras have yet to see dust devils. But SEIS can feel these whirlwinds pulling on the surface. "Whirlwinds are perfect for subsurface seismic exploration," said Philippe Lognonné of Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris (IPGP), principal investigator of SEIS.
 - m. InSight has two radios. One is for regularly sending and receiving data. The other radio, which is more powerful, is designed to measure the "wobble" of Mars as it spins.
 - n. This X-band radio, also known as the Rotation and Interior Structure Experiment (RISE), can eventually reveal whether the planet's core is solid or liquid. A solid core would cause Mars to wobble less than a liquid one would.
 - o. This first year of data is just a start, When it is two years on Earth, Mars will have completed one year. A full Martian year will give scientists a much better idea of size and speed of planet's wobble.

TOPIC 12. MEASURE POVERTY IN INDIA

1. Poverty can be measured in terms of **number of people living below this poverty line** (with incidence of poverty expressed as head count ratio).
2. The “depth” of poverty indicates **how far the poor are below poverty line**.
3. Speaking in Ahmedabad, President Donald Trump praised India for having lifted “**over 270 million people out of poverty**” in “**a single decade**” and said that “**12 Indian citizens are lifted out of extreme poverty every single minute of every single day**”.
4. **What is poverty, and how is it measured?**
 - a. Poverty can be defined as a condition in which an individual or household lacks financial resources to afford a basic minimum standard of living.
 - b. Economists and policymakers estimate “absolute” poverty as shortfall in consumption expenditure from a threshold called “poverty line”.
 - c. The official poverty line is expenditure incurred to obtain the goods in a “poverty line basket” (PLB).
 - d. Poverty can be measured in terms of number of people living below this line (with incidence of poverty expressed as head count ratio).
 - e. The “depth” of poverty indicates how far the poor are below the poverty line.
 - f. Six official committees have so far estimated number of people living in poverty in India
 - i. working group of 1962;
 - ii. V N Dandekar and N Rath in 1971;
 - iii. Y K Alagh in 1979;
 - iv. D T Lakdawala in 1993;
 - v. Suresh Tendulkar in 2009; and
 - vi. C Rangarajan in 2014.
 - g. The government did not take a call on report of Rangarajan Committee; therefore, poverty is measured using Tendulkar poverty line. As per this, **21.9% of people in India live below poverty line**.
5. **What does basket of goods include?**
 - a. The PLB comprises goods and services considered essential to a basic minimum standard of living — food, clothing, rent, conveyance, and entertainment.
 - b. The price of the food component can be estimated using calorie norms or nutrition targets.
 - c. Until 1990s, calorie norms method was used — it was based on minimum number of calories recommended by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for a household of five members.
 - d. However, this method does not consider different food groups that are essential for health — this is why Tendulkar Committee targeted nutritional outcomes.
 - e. The Lakdawala Committee assumed that health and education is provided by state — therefore, expenditure on these items was excluded from consumption basket it proposed. Since expenditure on health and education rose significantly in 1990s, Tendulkar Committee included them in basket.
 - f. As a result of revisions to basket and other changes in method of estimation, percentage of people living below poverty line in 1993-94 rose from 35.97% to 45.3%.
6. **Why are poverty numbers important?**
 - a. The PLB has been subject of much debate. The 1962 group did not consider age and gender-specific calorie requirements.
 - b. Expenditure on health and education were not considered until Tendulkar Committee — which was criticized for setting poverty line at just Rs 32 per capita per day in urban India (at Rs 27 in rural India).
 - c. And Rangarajan Commission was criticized for selecting food component arbitrarily — **emphasis on food as a source of nutrition overlooks contribution of sanitation, healthcare, access to clean water, and prevalence of pollutants**.

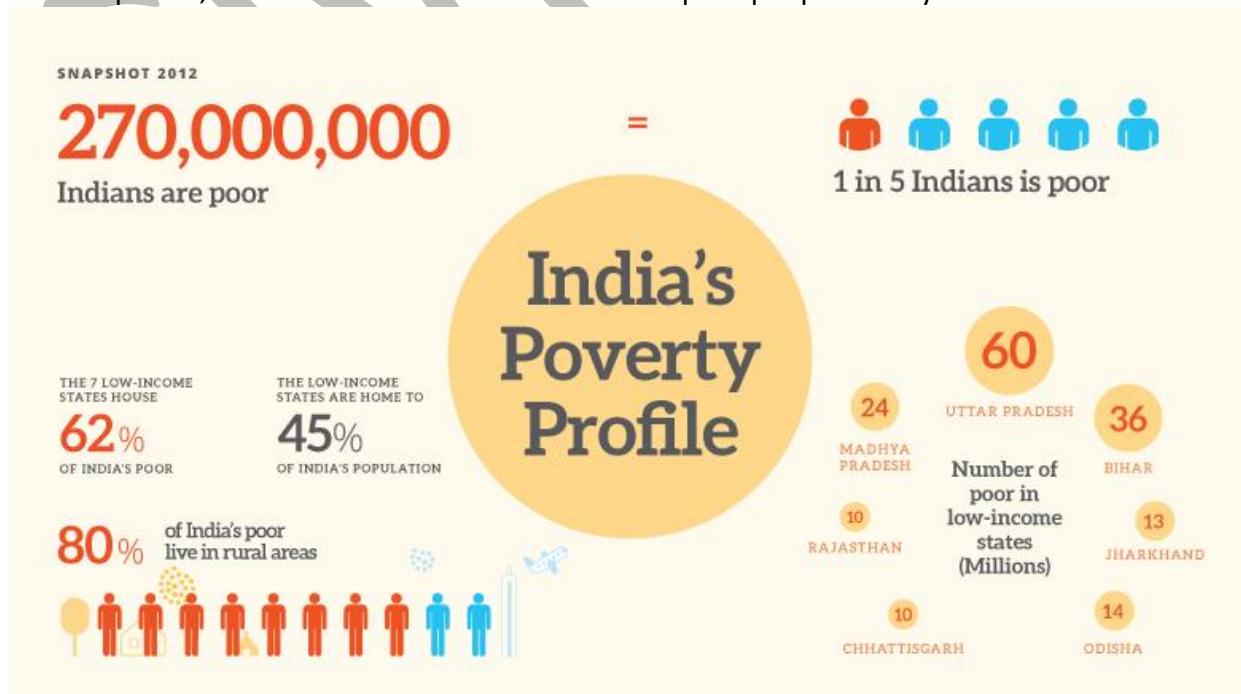
- d. Poverty numbers matter because central schemes like Antyodaya Anna Yojana (which provides subsidized food grains to households living below poverty line) and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (health insurance for BPL households) use definition of poverty given by NITI Aayog or the erstwhile Planning Commission.
- e. The Centre allocates funds for these schemes to states based on the numbers of their poor.
- f. Errors of exclusion can deprive eligible households of benefits.

7. In what other ways can poverty be estimated?

- a. In 2011, Oxford University researchers Sabina Alkire and James Foster devised **multidimensional poverty index (MPI)** to capture poverty using 10 indicators: **nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, ownership of assets, and access to proper house, electricity, drinking water, sanitation, and clean cooking fuel**.
- b. Poverty is measured in terms of deprivation in at least a third of these indicators. In 2015-16, 369.546 million (nearly 37 crore) Indians were estimated to meet deprivation cut-off for three or more of 10 indicators.
- c. While overall headcount multidimensional poverty ratio in 2015-16 was 27.9%, number was 36.8% for rural and 9.2% for urban India. There were wide variations across states — poverty was highest for Bihar (52.5%), followed by Jharkhand (46.5%), Madhya Pradesh (41.1%), and Uttar Pradesh (40.8%). It was lowest for Kerala (1.1%), Delhi (4.2%), Punjab (6.1%), Tamil Nadu (7.3%) and Himachal Pradesh (8.1%).
- d. The MPI is a more comprehensive measure of poverty because it includes components that capture standard of living more effectively. However, uses “outcomes” rather than expenditure — presence of an undernourished person in household will result in it being classified as “poor”, regardless of expenditure on nutritious food.

8. What is the current “level” of poverty in India?

- a. The National Statistical Office (NSO) Report on Household Consumer Expenditure for 2017-18 was junked in 2019 — so there are no data to update India’s poverty figures. Even MPI report published by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative used data from fourth round of National Family Health Survey, figures for which are available only until 2015-16.
- b. Social scientist S Subramanian used data from a leaked version of consumer expenditure data to conclude that incidence of poverty in India increased from 31.15% to 35.1% between 2011-12 and 2017-18. The absolute number of poor people also increased from 270 million to 322.22 million over same period, which translates to 52 million more poor people in six years.

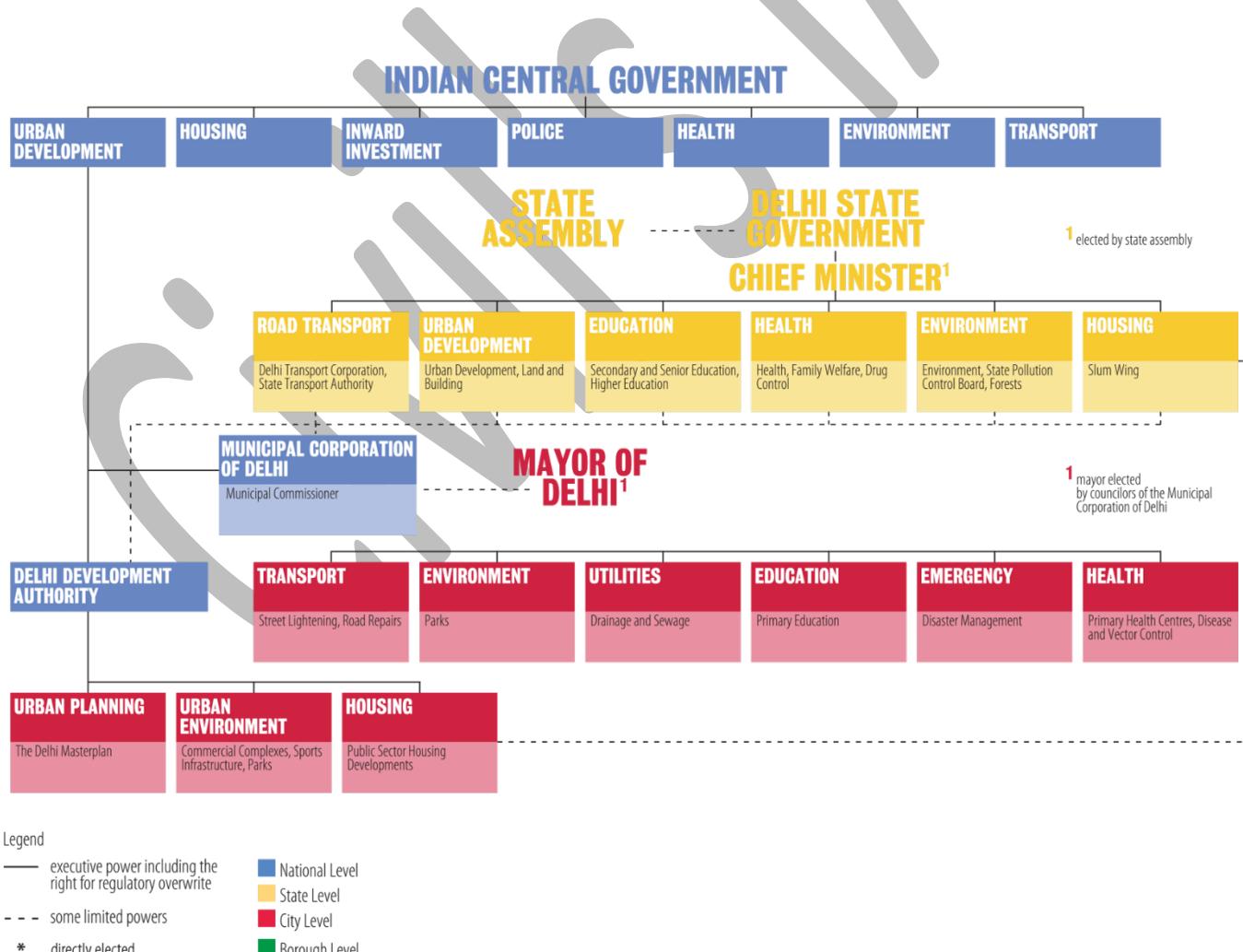


TOPIC 13. DELHI VIOLENCE

1. In ongoing Delhi violence, what action can state government take in a UT where police are under Centre?
2. Under what circumstances can Delhi call for central forces? And if called, what is the state's role?
3. Amid violence that has rocked Delhi, a Union Territory, a key question being raised is whether or not government of National Capital Territory of Delhi can take any action to bring law and order under control. The answer is not a straightforward one, with many factors coming into play.
- 4. Can any official of Delhi government request Union government to deploy armed forces to maintain law and order?**
 - a. The NCT of Delhi, under **Article 239 AA**, has been given a special status, which gives powers of law-making and administration to an elected legislature and council of ministers. The law, however, puts two subjects — public order and police — directly under Union government.
 - b. Even here, there are exceptions. Two sections of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) —129 & 130 — give Executive Magistrate certain powers relating to “unlawful assembly”. If a group is found in unlawful assembly under Section 129 CrPC, Executive Magistrate can issue orders to these persons to disperse. If this fails, magistrate can use civil force — which is police.
 - c. If these efforts too fail, Executive Magistrate, under Section 130 CrPC, can call an officer of armed forces of Union to disperse assembly. This section states that it can be invoked for “public security”.
 - d. Therefore, under these two limited powers, Executive Magistrate, who reports to Chief Minister, can issue orders relating to public security.
- 5. How does Section 130 CrPC operate?**
 - a. It has three sub-sections. The first sub-section states that if the civil force is not being able to disperse an unlawful assembly —“and if it is necessary for the public security that it should be dispersed” — then the Executive Magistrate of “the highest rank who is present may cause it to be dispersed by the armed forces”.
 - b. The officer of a Union armed force must comply with a requisition made to him by the Executive Magistrate. However, Section 130 CrPC empowers the officer to decide, on his own, the manner in which the unlawful assembly has to be dispersed by forces under his command.
 - c. The second sub-section under Section 130 reads: “Such Magistrate may require any officer in command of any group of persons belonging to the armed forces to disperse the assembly with the help of the armed forces under his command, and to arrest and confine such persons forming part of it as the Magistrate may direct, or as it may be necessary to arrest and confine in order to disperse the assembly or to have them punished according to law”.
 - d. The third sub-section states that the armed forces shall only use a “little force”. It states: “Every such officer of the armed forces shall obey such requisition in such manner as he thinks fit, but in so doing he shall use as little force, and do as little injury to person and property, as may be consistent with dispersing the assembly and arresting and detaining such persons”.
- 6. Does a full-fledged state have more powers to call the armed forces?**
 - a. While public order and police are under the state list, the state government may request the Union government to make available armed forces to help restore public order. Even in circumstances where public disorder is not so serious as to fall in the category of an “internal disturbance” as defined in Article 355 of the Constitution, the Union Government may accede to the request.
 - b. However, it is important to note that except for the limited purpose of dispersing an “unlawful assembly” and arresting its members — for which Section 130 CrPC empowers the Executive Magistrate to requisition the aid of the Army — neither the state government nor any authority under it has been conferred by the Constitution any legal right to call the armed forces while dealing with a public disorder or “internal disturbance”.
 - c. Also, the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution — which deals with the subject of public order in the state list — states that use of the armed forces in the maintenance of public order is outside the purview of the states.

7. When was the Army called in during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi?

- P G Gavai, who was Delhi's Lt Governor when the anti-Sikh riots broke out in 1984 following Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination, requested the government to deploy the Army. The Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission of Inquiry has found that there was a delay on the part of the Delhi administration (Lt Governor and Commissioner of Police) in calling the Army, though about 5,000 Army men were available by midnight of October 31, the day of the assassination. The Nanavati Commission too had agreed with the findings of the Justice Mishra Commission on the delay in calling the Army.
- Tarlochan Singh, who was press secretary to the President of India and deposed before the Nanavati Commission, submitted that the President had contacted the Lt Governor on the phone and had told him "to take all possible measures to prevent the riots" ; and that the President had also told him that "if the situation was so bad Army assistance should be called".
- Among those who deposed was I K Gujral (later Prime Minister of India), who said that on the morning of November 1, 1984, he had contacted Lt Governor Gavai and told him to call the Army and that the Lt Governor had replied that "if the Army is called, there would be panic".
- Major General J S Jamwal, who was the General Officer Commanding of Delhi Area, deposed that on November 1, 1984 at about 11 am, he received a message from the Chief of Army Staff that he should be ready if any request is received for help from civil authorities, after which he contacted Lt Governor Gavai and told him that if any help is required from the Army, he should be informed. He deposed that the Army was deployed late in the evening of November 2 and it really became effective from November 3 in some areas.



TOPIC 14. CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

- 1. What are existing commands in India, and how will jointness help?**
 - a. Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat said his office is working on a tentative timeline for establishment of joint commands among three defence services — Army, Navy and Air Force — beginning with an Air Defence Command. With creation of CDS post on December 31, government has set the ball rolling for bringing jointness and integration among services.
- 2. What are joint commands?**
 - a. Simply put, it is a unified command in which resources of all services are unified under a single commander looking at a geographical theatre. It means that a single military commander, as per requirements, will have resources of Army, Navy and Air Force to manage a security threat.
 - b. The commander of a joint command will have freedom to train and equip his command as per objective and will have logistics of all services at his beckoning. The three services will retain their independent identities as well.
 - c. There are two tri-services commands at moment. The joint command at moment, Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), is a theatre command, which is headed by chiefs of three services in rotation.
 - d. It was created in 2001 after a Group of Ministers had given a report on national security following Kargil War. The Strategic Forces Command was established in 2006 and is a functional tri-services command.
- 3. What is the structure right now?**
 - a. There are **17 commands**, divided among the three services. The Army and the Air Force have seven commands each, while the Navy has three commands.
 - i. The commands under **Army** are Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, Central, Southwestern and Army Training Command.
 - ii. The **Air Force** has Eastern, Western, Southern, Southwestern, Central, Maintenance and Training commands, and
 - iii. **Navy** is divided into Western, Eastern and Southern commands.
 - b. These commands report to their respective services and are headed by three-star officers. Though these commands are in same regions, but they are no located together.
- 4. How do joint commands help?**
 - a. One of main advantages is that leader of a unified command has **control over more varied resources, compared to heads of commands under services now**.
 - b. For instance, head of one of proposed commands, Air Defence Command, will have under him naval and Army resources, too, which can be used as per threat perception. And officer commanding Pakistan or China border will have access to Air Force's fighter jets and can use them if needed.
 - c. Rawat clarified, however, that not all naval resources will be given to the Air Defence Command, nor will all resources of the Air Force come under another proposed command, Peninsula Command, for the coasts. The Peninsula Command would give the Navy Chief freedom to look at the larger perspective in the entire Indian Ocean Region in which China's presence is steadily increasing.
 - d. The other key advantage is that through such integration and jointness the three forces will be able **to avoid duplication of resources**. The resources available under each service will be available to other services too. The services will get to know one another better, strengthening cohesion in the defence establishment.
- 5. When will the new commands be ready?**
 - a. CDS Rawat has said a study for a proposed Air Defence Command has already been initiated and a report on the details of the command are expected by end of March. He said the Air Defence Command should start becoming operational by the end of this year, and the Peninsula Command by the end of 2021, followed by theatre commands — joint commands looking at the land boundaries — with the first of these to begin rolling out by the end of 2022.
 - b. Army chief General M M Naravane is not as optimistic about the timeline for the theatre commands, and said on Thursday that the idea is still at a "very preliminary" stage, and added that at the moment it is "just very loud thinking". He said the rollout of the theatre commands will take "much longer".
- 6. How many such commands are expected to roll out?**
 - a. While the number of commands India needs is still being studied, the CDS has envisaged that there could be between six to nine commands. It is not certain how many land-based theatres commands on the borders will come up.

- b. The CDS said it will be studied, and the study group will be given the options for creating two to five theatre commands. One possibility is to have single commands looking at the China and Pakistan borders respectively, as they are the two major threats. The other option is to have a separate command for the border in the Jammu and Kashmir region, and another command looking at the rest of the western border. There could be independent commands looking at the border with China which is divided by Nepal.
- c. There will be two functional commands as well. A proposed Logistics Command will bring the logistics of all the service under one person, and the CDS is also looking at a Training and Doctrine Command, so that all services work under a common doctrine and have some basic common training.
- d. A committee headed by **Lieutenant General D B Shekhar** had earlier recommended three new commands: Northern, for China; Western, for the Pakistan border' and Southern, for maritime security.

7. Do militaries of other countries have such commands?

- a. Several major militaries are divided into integrated theatre commands. China's People's Liberation Army has five theatre commands: Eastern, Western, Northern, Southern and Central. Its Western Theatre Command is responsible for India.
- b. The US Armed Forces has 11 unified commands, of which seven are geographic and four functional commands. Its geographic commands are Africa, Central, European, Indo-Pacific, Northern, Southern and Space. Cyber, Special Operations, Transportation and Strategic are its functional commands.
- c. Rawat has said India will not follow any country and find its own structure for the unified commands.



(Left to Right) General Bipin Rawat, Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa and Admiral Karambir Singh

FOR BETTER SYNERGY

1. WHY INDIA NEEDS A GENERAL NO. 12

- To provide single-point military advise to government
- Better manage country's strategic resources & nuclear arsenal

- Bring synergy among Army, Navy & IAF by resolving inter-service doctrinal, planning, procurement & operational problems
- Streamline long-term defence planning & procurement process
- Truly integrate Service HQs with defence ministry & reduce civil-military divide

3. THE GLOBAL SCENE

- Lt-Gen Shekhar Committee in 2016 also suggested new 4-star general apart from 3 chiefs, as 'chief coordinator'
- Over 70 countries (the US, UK, France, Germany etc) have CDS-like post for integration in military planning & operations
- US: chairman of joint chiefs of staff is highest-ranking military officer & principal military advisor to President. But chiefs of the unified combatant commands, who handle different parts of the globe, also report directly to political leadership
- China re-organized its 2.3-million People's Liberation Army into five theatre commands in 2016

2. THE HISTORY

- CDS post strongly recommended by GoM report after the 1999 Kargil conflict, which saw squabbling between Army & IAF
- GoM report stressed the existing chiefs of staff committee (CoSC) had 'revealed serious weaknesses' in its ability to furnish single-point advise

4. WHY INDIA NEEDS THEATRE COMMANDS NEXT?

- Many tri-Service organizations subsequently came up but CDS kept in cold storage
- Naresh Chandra Taskforce in 2012 also wanted Permanent Chairman of CoSC (a diluted version of CDS)
- Joint commands costeffective, save resources & prepare forces for integrated land-air-sea operations
- India has 17 single- Service Commands (Army 7, IAF 7 & Navy 3)
- But only 2 joint commands for Andaman & Nicobar Command (Theatre) & Strategic Forces Command (handles nuclear weapons)

TOPIC 15. CMS COP13

1. The Asian elephant is among three animals proposed by India for key listing under UN convention.
 2. A committee adopted India's proposals for including three species — **great Indian bustard, Asian elephant and Bengal florican** — for additional protection under **UN Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**.
 3. This happened at **13th Conference of Parties to CMS (CMS COP13)**, which is under way in Gandhinagar, with "**Migratory species connect the planet and together we welcome them home**" as its theme.
 4. **What does the Convention seek to do?**
 - a. CMS is a treaty agreed by **129 countries plus European Union**, and functions under **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
 - b. The pact was signed in 1979 in Germany and is known as the **Bonn Convention**.
 - c. "**CMS brings together States through which migratory animals pass, Range States and lays legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range**,".
 - d. "**CMS Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them**".
 - e. **LISTING**
 - i. **Appendix-I** lists species threatened with extinction, [If listed on Appendix-I, it would facilitate trans-boundary conservation efforts of these species.]
 - ii. **Appendix-II** lists those in need of global cooperation for favorable conservation status.
 - f. At 2020 summit, **Urial**, a wild sheep from Central Asia, is being proposed for inclusion under Appendix II.
 - g. Separately, **Gobi Bear and Persian Leopard** are being considered for inclusion under **Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)**, a 14-country regional initiative that currently covers 15 species.
 - h. **OBJECTIVE:**
 - i. **It works for protection and conservation of species that migrate across frontiers and are facing threats of extinction or require urgent attention.**
 - ii. CMS aims to bring together different countries that are part of range of a given species and facilitate coherent conservation and protection regimes in a group of countries.
 - iii. global platform for conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.
 - iv. It is only global convention specializing in **conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes**.
 - i. The conference is being held in India for first time.
 - j. Delegates from at least 78 countries are attending.
5. **India and CMS**
 - a. India has been a party to CMS since 1983.
 - b. According to Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, "**India is a temporary home to several migratory animals and birds. The important among these include Amur Falcons, Bar-headed Geese, Black-necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs, Humpbacked Whales, etc.**"
 - c. The Indian sub-continent is also part of **major bird flyway network**
 - i. Central Asian Flyway (CAF) that covers areas between Arctic and Indian Oceans and covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory water-bird species, including 29 globally threatened species.
 - ii. India has also launched National Action Plan for conservation of migratory species under Central Asian Flyway.
 - d. As per a February 2019 press release by Ministry, India had non-legally binding MoUs with CMS on conservation and management of **Siberian Cranes (1998), Marine Turtles (2007), Dugongs (2008) and Raptors (2016)**.
 - e. "**Outcomes expected at CMS COP13 include negotiated decisions, political commitments and new initiatives, including proposals to add 10 new species for protection under CMS. These include Asian Elephant, Jaguar, Great Indian Bustard, and Smooth Hammerhead Shark. Parties will also discuss adoption of dedicated concerted actions for 12 different species, including Giraffe, Ganges River Dolphin, Common Guitarfish and Antipodean Albatross**,".
6. **Why do migratory species need special attention for conservation?**
 - a. With a change in season, many mammals and birds move from one country to another in search of **food** and **shelter** and for **breeding**.

- b. Asian elephants, also known as Indian elephants, migrate from **India to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar etc.**
- c. However, wildlife laws and protection regimes for these species can be different in each country, making them vulnerable to taking, hunting, poisoning etc.
- d. Many migratory species are threatened with extinction due to habitat degradation, barriers in their migration routes, and other pressures.
- e. Therefore, these species need special attention by all countries that are part of their range.

7. What were India's proposals that were accepted?

- a. India has proposed inclusion of three species on **Appendix-I** of Convention.
- b. The proposals cleared first hurdle when they were adopted unanimously by conference's committee of the whole. However, Pakistan, which is other range country of great Indian bustard, did not take part in discussion on proposals.

8. What are grounds on which India has proposed listing?

- a. **Asian elephant:** India said Asian elephant, an endangered species, once used to range from west Asia to north of Yagtze river in China but currently, range has shrunk to 13 Asian countries, and their population in India to 29,964 in 2017. India said elephants' inclusion on Appendix-I would ensure better coordination among range countries, facilitate migration, increase effective habitat area, and reduce killings.
- b. **Great Indian bustard:** Its range stretching across India and Pakistan, it is a critically endangered species with a population of just around 150 individuals and its present habitat having shrunk to 10% of its historical range. India said there is *prima facie* evidence that birds fly across India-Pakistan border and hence need for bilateral cooperation for recovery of species.
- c. **Bengal florican:** This too is a critically endangered species of bird that belongs to bustard family. In its proposal, India said present population of South Asian subspecies has shrunk to around 1,000 individuals and its present habitat been restricted to Terai and Dooars grassland regions of Indo-Gangetic and Brahmaputra floodplains.

9. How does listing on a CMS Appendix help a species?

- a. Listing generally leads to concerted actions in different national jurisdictions in which a species range. Actions may include cooperation among range countries, harmonization in policies etc. through regional agreements. CMS has working groups specializing in various fauna families, and a Scientific Council that advises research-based solutions for conservation.
- b. Many countries started shifting towards renewable energy by building infrastructure like wind turbines, power transmission lines, solar parks, these pose risks to wildlife. CMS set up in 2014 an Energy Task Force; it advises contracting parties on how to keep their energy projects wildlife friendly.
- c. Despite the listing and consequent efforts, 73% of 175 migratory species on Appendix-I and 48% of the 518 on Appendix-II have an overall decreasing population trend.

DO YOU KNOW?





CMS
COP 13
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE CONVENTION OF
MIGRATORY SPECIES

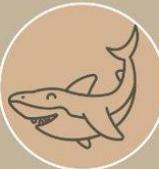
15-22 FEBRUARY
2020
GANDHINAGAR
INDIA



The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) also known as "Bonn Convention", aims to conserve



Terrestrial Species



Marine Species



Avian Species

Source: Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

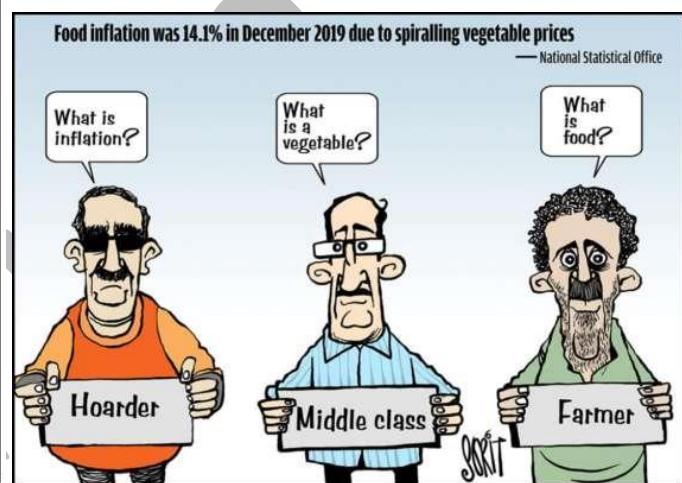
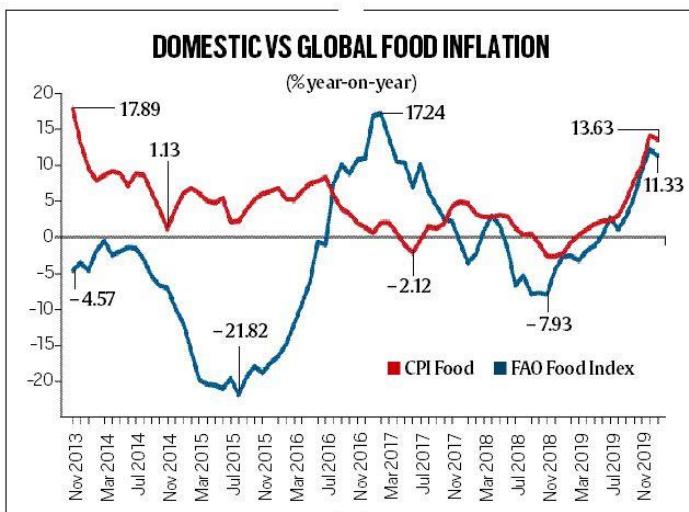
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TOPIC 16. FOOD INFLATION

1. After a period of divergence, domestic and global food prices are rising in tandem. **Coronavirus, global crude prices, and an expected bumper rabi harvest** could determine scenario in coming months.
2. Is food inflation in India influenced by global price movements? On face of it, that seems to be the case.
3. **The return of food inflation**
 - a. United Nations Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO's) **food price index** - which is a measure of change in international prices of a basket of major food commodities with reference to a base period (2002-04 = 100) touched 182.5 points in January 2020, highest since 185.8 level of December 2014.
 - b. Also, year-on-year inflation rate based on this index has risen steadily from 1.13% in August 2019 to 2.86% in September, 5.58% in October, 9.33% in November, 12.22% in December, and now, 11.33% for January 2020.
 - c. This sharp surge in global food prices is reflected in trends in India as well. Annual consumer food price index (CFPI) inflation stood at just 2.99% in August 2019, before climbing to 5.11%, 7.89%, 10.01%, 14.19% and 13.63% in the succeeding five months.
 - d. The year-on-year inflation in wholesale price index for "food articles" began rising somewhat earlier — reaching 7.8% in August 2019 from 2.41% in January last year. Subsequently, it increased to 9.8% in October, 11.08% in November, 13.24% in December, and 11.51% in January 2020.
 - e. Retail and wholesale food inflation rates for December 2019 were highest since November 2013 and December 2013 respectively. Simply put, since October or so, food inflation has made a comeback, both in India and globally.
4. **Local and 'foreign' factors**
 - a. While recent rise in domestic food prices has been blamed largely on "local" factors — poor rainfall during the first half (June-July) of the monsoon season and too much of it thereafter till about mid-November, leading to both reduced/delayed kharif sowings and damage to standing crop at maturity/harvesting stage — some of it is also "imported".
 - b. According to Department of Consumer Affairs, retail prices of packed palm and soya bean oil in Delhi rose from Rs 79 and Rs 100 per kg on January 31, 2019 to Rs 108 and Rs 122 respectively on January 31, 2020. This increase of 22%-37% was almost matched by 34.37% rise in FAO's global vegetable oil price index between January 2019 and January 2020. Since India imports two-thirds of its edible oil requirement, higher international prices would have been automatically transmitted to domestic market.
 - c. On other hand, increase in retail prices of onion in Delhi from Rs 22 per kg on January 31, 2019 to Rs 50 on January 31, 2020, was purely due to failure of domestic kharif crop. While global prices can be transmitted to domestic market too through exports — traders would sell abroad if realizations are better relative to the local market — the government has foreclosed that possibility by banning/restricting onion shipments since September 2019.
 - d. The FAO index peaked at 240.1 in February 2011 but remained at 200-plus levels until July 2014. Global prices crashed after that, and stayed low up to early 2016, with the FAO index dipping to 149.3 in February 2016. Domestic food inflation, too, eased from 17.89% in November 2013 to fall below 7% by early 2016, as lower global commodity prices reduced the demand for Indian farm exports, even as they made imports cheaper.
 - e. However, the actual fall in domestic inflation — to the sub-5% range — took place after September 2016. And that, in turn, had more to do with domestic factors, especially demonetization, than global prices — between August 2016 and October 2017, the FAO index inflation, in fact, exceeded the corresponding CFPI rate.
5. **What can happen now?**
 - a. Now, when both international and domestic food prices are showing signs of renewed hardening, the question is: How sustainable is this trend? There are at least three bearish factors currently at play.
 - b. The first is, of course, the novel coronavirus epidemic that has reduced Chinese buying of everything from palm oil and soya bean to milk powder and meat. Palm oil prices in Malaysia have plunged from 2,922 ringgit (\$719) to 2,725 ringgits (\$658) over the last one month.
 - c. The second is crude oil. Brent crude prices had touched \$70 per barrel after the January 3 United States airstrike that killed Iran's top military commander, but have dropped since, closing at \$57.67/barrel on Tuesday.
 - d. The third is the prospect of a bumper rabi (winter-spring) crop in India. The kharif harvest turned out to be not so good because of excess and unseasonal rain. That same rain, though, has helped boost rabi acreage by 9.5% compared to last year. The arrival of this crop in the mandis from March should cool down prices,

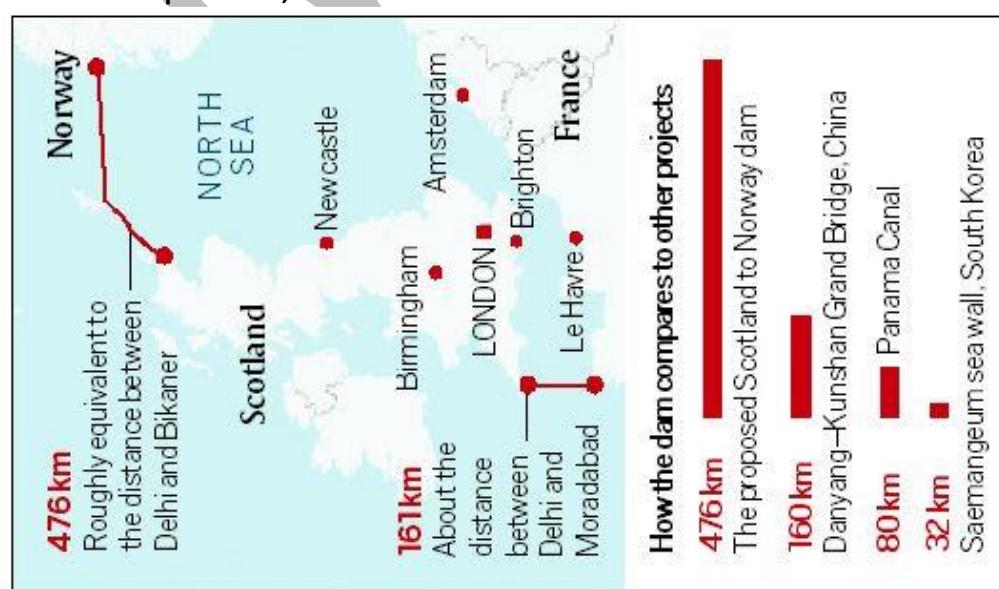
especially of vegetables and pulses, which showed the highest year-on-year retail inflation of 50.19% and 16.71% in January.

- e. Against these bearish factors are the relatively "bullish" factors.
- f. Global palm oil ending stocks this year are projected to be the lowest since 2009-10, while sugar is also expected to move significantly into deficit. Supply tightness is being seen both globally and in India, even in milk. Like Malaysian palm oil prices, which rose from an average of 2,037 ringgit to 3,014 ringgit between January 2019 and January 2020, skimmed milk powder rates at New Zealand's global dairy trade auctions had also moved up from \$2,201 to \$3,036 per tonne during this period — before the novel coronavirus struck.
- g. It would be interesting to see what happens once the virus has run its course. If Brent crude too, were to rally again — making it attractive for sugarcane and corn to be diverted for ethanol production and also palm oil towards bio-diesel — there could be uncertainty ahead.



TOPIC 17. DAMS

1. Scientists have proposed construction of two dams of a combined length of 637 km
 - a. Between northern Scotland and western Norway:
 - b. Between France and southwestern England.
2. The scientists have proposed construction of two dams of a combined length of 637 km.
3. BENEFITS:
 - a. To protect 25 million people and important economic regions of 15 Northern European countries from rising seas as a result of climate change
 - b. The concept of constructing NEED showcases extent of protection efforts that are required if mitigation efforts fail to limit sea level rise.
4. **THE PROPOSAL:** The scientists have proposed construction of two dams of a combined length of 637 km
 - a. first between northern Scotland and western Norway, measuring 476 km and with an average depth of 121 m and maximum depth of 321 m;
 - b. second between France and southwestern England, of length 161 km, and average depth of 85 m and maximum depth of 102 m.
5. separating North and Baltic Seas from Atlantic Ocean may be “most viable option” to protect Northern Europe against unstoppable sea level rise (SLR).
6. They have also identified other regions in world where such mega-enclosures could potentially be considered, including **Persian Gulf, Mediterranean Sea, Baltic Sea, Irish Sea, and Red Sea**.
7. **THE RATIONALE:** While NEED may appear to be “overwhelming” and “unrealistic”, it could be “potentially favorable” financially and in scale when compared with alternative solutions to fight SLR, the paper argues. The researchers classify solutions to SLR into three categories of taking **no action, protection, and managed retreat** — and submit that NEED is in the second category.
8. While managed retreat, which includes options such as managed migrations, may be less expensive than protection (NEED), it involves intangible costs such as **national and international political instability, psychological difficulties, and loss of culture and heritage for migrants**.
9. NEED will have least direct impact on people’s daily lives, can be built at a “reasonable cost”, and has largest potential to be implemented with required urgency to be effective.
10. **THE VIABILITY:** Using costs of building the 33.9-km Saemangeum Seawall in South Korea and Maasvlakte 2 extension of Rotterdam harbor in Netherlands as examples, researchers have estimated total costs associated with NEED at between €250 billion and €550 billion.
11. If construction is spread over a 20-year period, this will work out to an annual expense of around **0.07%-0.16% of GDP of 15 Northern European countries** that will be involved. Construction costs would be higher for UK, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany and Belgium amounting to roughly 0.15%-0.32% of their GDP annually for 20 years because of their **vulnerability, awareness of SLR, or both**.
12. The construction will “heavily impact” marine and terrestrial ecosystems inside and outside the enclosure, will have social and cultural implications, and affect tourism and fisheries.



TOPIC 18. RBI ACCOUNTING YEAR

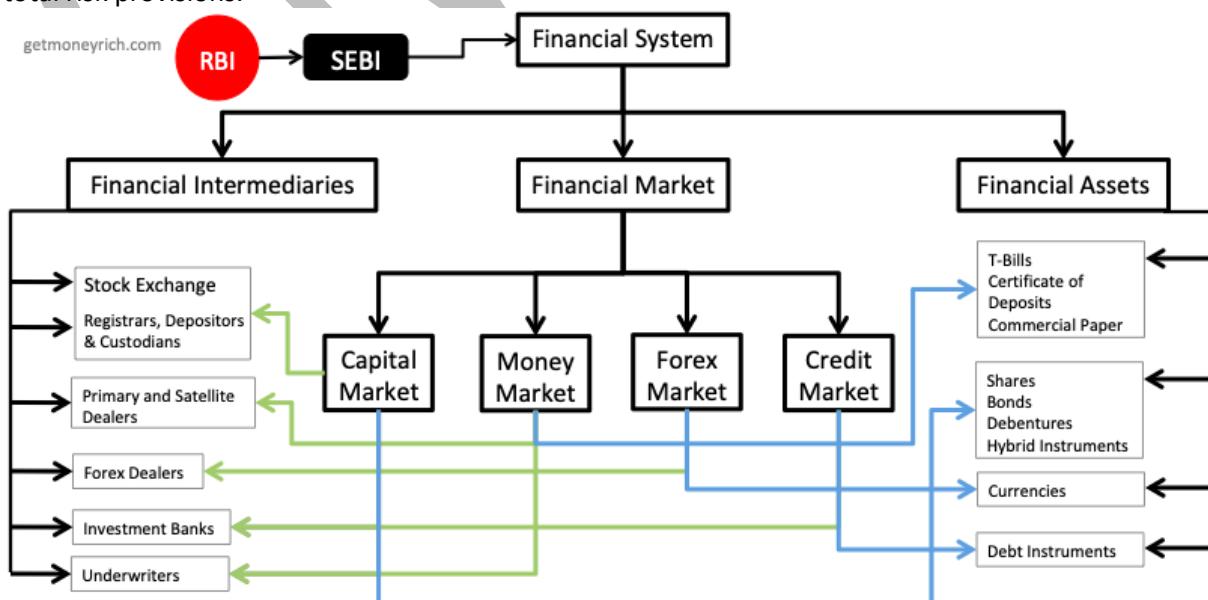
1. The RBI's balance sheet plays a critical role in functioning of country's economy largely reflecting activities carried out in pursuance of its currency issue function, as well as monetary policy and reserve management objectives.
 2. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is aligning its **July-June accounting year** with government's **April-March fiscal year** in order to ensure more effective management of country's finances.
 3. **How did RBI's July - June accounting year come to be?**
 - a. When it commenced operations on April 1, 1935, with Sir Osborne Smith as its 1st Governor, RBI followed a January-December accounting year. On March 11, 1940, however, bank changed its accounting year to July-June. Now, after nearly eight decades, RBI is making another switch: next accounting year will be a nine-month period from July 2020 to March 31, 2021 and thereafter, all financial years will start from April, as it happens with central and state governments.
 4. **Why are RBI's accounts important?**
 - a. RBI's balance sheet plays a critical role in functioning of country's economy reflecting activities carried out in pursuance of its currency issue function, as well as monetary policy and reserve management objectives.
 - b. The RBI Act says central bank "*shall undertake to accept monies for account of Central Government and to make payments up to amount standing to credit of, and to carry out (its exchange), remittance and other banking operations, including management of public debt*".
 - c. The RBI is country's *monetary authority, regulator, and supervisor of financial system, manager of foreign exchange, issuer of currency, regulator and supervisor of payment and settlement systems, banker to central and state governments and banker to banks*.
 5. **But why is system being changed?**
 - a. Bimal Jalan Committee on Economic Capital Framework (ECF) of RBI had proposed a more transparent

- presentation of RBI's annual accounts, and a change in its accounting year to April-March from financial year 2020-21. It said ***RBI would be able to provide better estimates of projected surplus transfers to government for financial year for budgeting purposes.***

 - b. It is also expected to result in ***better management of transfer of dividend or surplus to government.***
 - c. Moreover as governments, companies and other institutions follow April-March year, it will help with effective management of accounting.

- 6. What will be impact of the change?**

 - a. Change in fiscal year could reduce need for interim dividend being paid by RBI and such payments may then be restricted to extraordinary circumstances. It will obviate any timing considerations that may enter selection of open market operations or Market Stabilization Scheme as monetary policy tools. It will also bring greater cohesiveness in monetary policy projections and reports published by RBI, which mostly use fiscal year as base.
 - b. Last fiscal RBI paid Rs 28,000 cr as interim dividend; in 2017-18, government received Rs 10,000 cr. In RBI's balance sheet, while capital and reserve fund are explicitly shown, other sources of financial resilience are grouped under '**Other Liabilities and Provisions**' and enumerated via Schedules, making it difficult to arrive at total risk provisions.



TOPIC 19. PERMANENT COMMISSION TO WOMEN

1. Supreme Court brought women officers in 10 streams of Army on a par with their male counterparts in all respects, setting aside longstanding objections of government.
2. The case was first filed in Delhi High Court by women officers in 2003 and had received a favorable order in 2010. But order was never implemented and was challenged in Supreme Court by government.
3. **Women in Army: Background of the case**
 - a. The induction of women officers in the Army started in 1992.
 - b. They were commissioned for a period of five years in certain chosen streams such as Army Education Corps, Corps of Signals, Intelligence Corps, and Corps of Engineers.
 - c. Recruits under Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) had a shorter pre-commission training period than their male counterparts who were commissioned under Short Service Commission (SSC) scheme.
 - d. In 2006, WSES scheme was replaced with SSC scheme, which was extended to women officers. They were commissioned for a period of 10 years, extendable up to 14 years. Serving WSES officers were given option to move to new SSC scheme, or to continue under erstwhile WSES. They were to be however, restricted to roles in streams specified earlier — which excluded combat arms such as infantry and armored corps.
4. **Two key arguments shot down**
 - a. Supreme Court rejected arguments against greater role for women officers, saying these violated equalities under law. They were being kept out of command posts on reasoning that largely rural rank and file will have problems with women as commanding officers. The biological argument was also rejected as disturbing.
 - b. While male SSC officers could opt for permanent commission at end of 10 years of service, this option was not available to women officers. They were, thus, kept out of any command appointment, and could not qualify for government pension, which starts only after 20 years of service as an officer. The first batch of women officers under new scheme entered Army in 2008.
5. **The battle in the courts**
 - a. In 2003, a PIL was filed before Delhi High Court for grant of permanent commission (PC) to women SSC officers in Army. Another writ petition was filed by Major Leena Gurav on October 16, 2006, primarily to challenge terms and conditions of service imposed by circulars earlier that year, and to seek PC for women officers.
 - b. In September 2008, the Defence Ministry passed an order saying PC would be granted prospectively to SSC women officers in Judge Advocate General (JAG) department and Army Education Corps (AEC). This circular was challenged before Delhi High Court by Major Sandhya Yadav and others on ground that it granted PC only prospectively, and only in certain specified streams.
 - c. The High Court heard 2003, 2006 and 2008 challenges together and passed its judgment in 2010. Women officers of Air Force and Army on SSC who had sought permanent commission but were not granted that status, would be entitled to PC at par with male SSC officers, it ruled. However, this benefit was only available to women officers in service who had instituted proceedings before High Court and had retired during pendency of writ petitions. Women officers who had not attained age of superannuation for permanently commissioned officers would be reinstated with all consequential benefits.
 - d. The government challenged order in Supreme Court, and even though High Court judgment was not stayed, Defence Ministry did not implement those directions. While proceedings were on, government passed an order in February 2019 for grant of PC to SSC women officers in eight streams of Army, in addition to JAG and AEC, which had been opened up in 2008. But they would not be offered any command appointments and would serve only in staff posts.
 - e. During hearing, government came up with a proposal whereby women officers of up to 14 years of service would be granted permanent commission in line with letter of February 2019. Women officers with more than 14 years of service would be permitted to serve for up to 20 years without being considered for PC, but would retire with pension, and those with more than 20 years of service would be released with pensionary benefits immediately.
6. **Order and its implications**
 - a. The government put forth other arguments before Supreme Court to justify proposal on grounds of permanent commission, grants of pensionary benefits, limitations of judicial review on policy issues, occupational hazards, reasons for discrimination against women, SSC as a support cadre, and rationalization on physiological limitations for employment in staff appointments.

- b. SC has rejected these arguments, saying they are "***based on sex stereotypes premised on assumptions about socially ascribed roles of gender which discriminate against women***". It has also said that it only shows need "***to emphasize need for change in mindsets to bring about true equality in Army***".
- c. **SC ORDER:**
 - i. done away with all discrimination on basis of years of service for grant of PC in 10 streams of combat support arms and services, bringing them on a par with male officers.
 - ii. It has also removed the restriction of women officers only being allowed to serve in staff appointments, which is the most significant and far-reaching aspect of the judgment.
- d. **IMPACT:**
 - i. It means that women officers will be eligible to tenant all command appointments, at par with male officers, which would open avenues for further promotions to higher ranks for them: if women officers had served only in staff, they would not have gone beyond rank of Colonel.
 - ii. It also means that in junior ranks and career courses, women officers would be attending same training courses and tenanting critical appointments, which are necessary for higher promotions.
- e. The implications of judgment will have to be borne by human resources management department of Army, which will need to change policy in order to comply.
- f. But bigger shift will have to take place in culture, norms, and values of rank and file of Army, which will be responsibility of senior military and political leadership. After Supreme Court's progressive decision, they have no choice but to bite proverbial bullet.

Women in command

It's an order

Here are some of the salient features of the order:

■ Accepts government policy to grant PC to short service commission (SSC) women officers in 10 streams of the Combat Support Arms and Services wings

■ SSC women officers are eligible for command assignments and not just staff appointments

■ SSC women officers granted PC will be entitled to all consequential benefits, including promotion and financial gains



1992: Centre notifies women eligible for appointment as officers for five years in the Army Postal Service, Judge Advocate General Department, Army Education Corps, Signal Corps, Intelligence Corps, Corps of Engineers, Corps of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering and Regiment of Artillery, among other Corps

Dec. 1996: Ministry of Defence deletes the five-year clause for enrollment

Nov. 2005: The initial process of induction of women officers under the WSES was replaced by SSCs with an

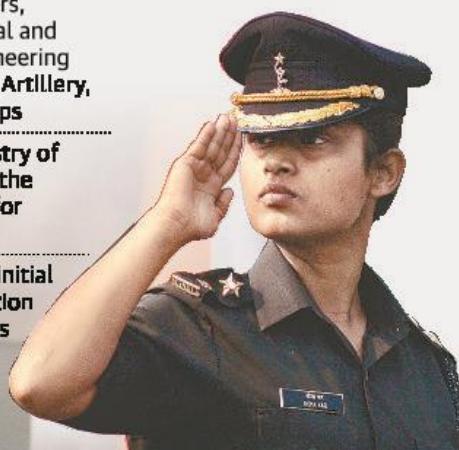
outer period of 14 years. The first batch of women officers under the new scheme entered the Army in 2008

2003 and 2006: Writ petitions filed in the Delhi High Court by advocate

Babita Puniya and several SSC women Army officers for permanent commission and equality of opportunity in the Army

March 2010: Delhi HC holds that women SSC officers of the Air Force and Army who had opted for PC, but not granted that status would be entitled to PC at par with male SSC officers with all consequential benefits. Contempt proceedings were then initiated by the women officers against the Union of India for non-compliance with the HC judgment. Contempt was later stayed

September 2, 2011: The case reaches the Supreme Court in appeal

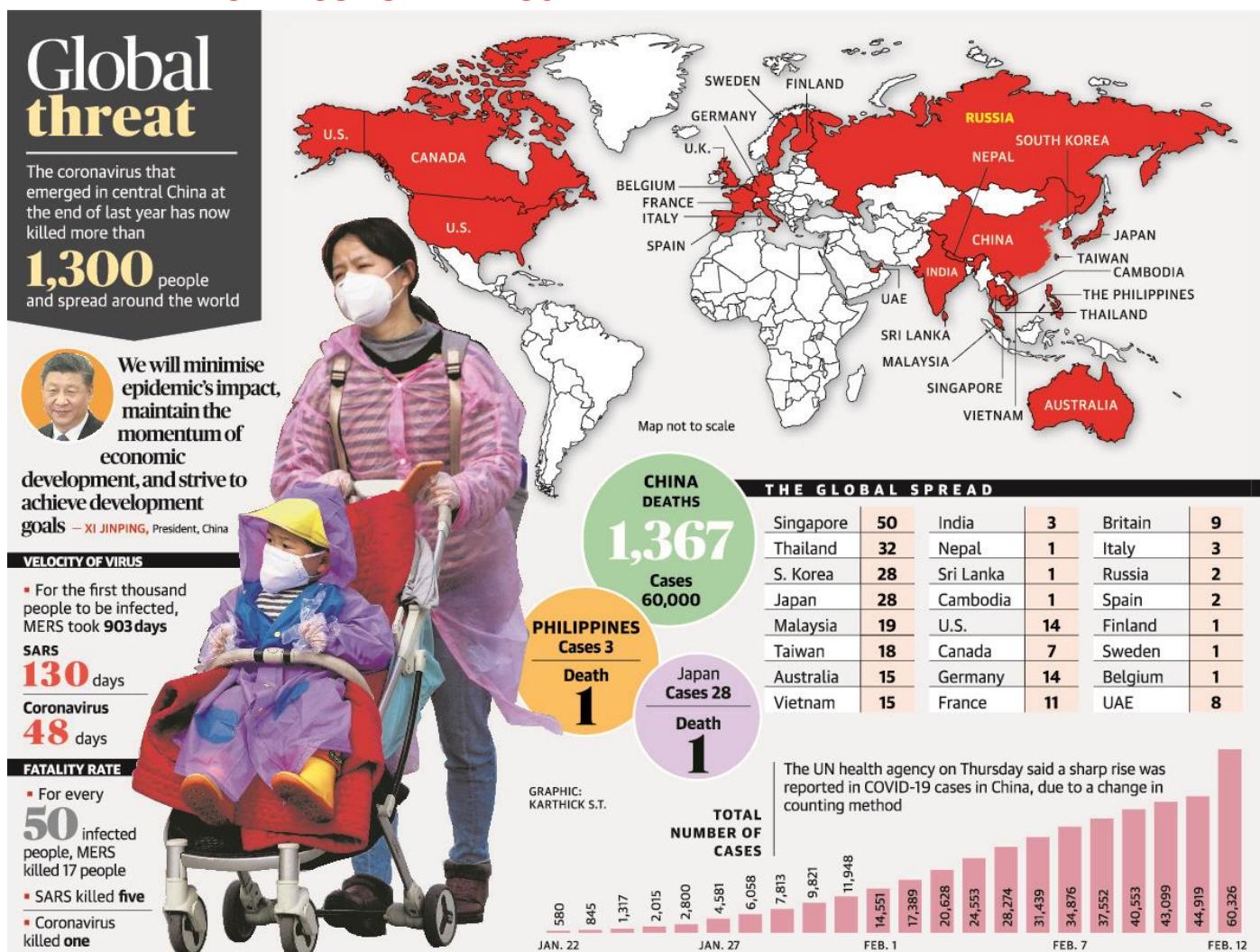


TOPIC 20. ANTARCTIC

1. At noon on January 11, South African oceanographic research vessel SA Agulhas set off from Port Louise in Mauritius, on a two-month Indian Scientific Expedition to Southern Ocean 2020.
2. At noon on January 11, South African oceanographic research vessel SA Agulhas set off from Port Louise in Mauritius, on a two-month Indian Scientific Expedition to Southern Ocean 2020. As of Friday, vessel was at Prydz Bay, in coastal waters of "Bharati", India's third station in Antarctica.
3. On board vessel are 34 scientific staff from India, apart from technical hands, seamen and a chef who are all from South Africa. This is 11th expedition of an Indian mission to Southern Ocean, or Antarctic Ocean. The first mission took place between January and March 2004.
4. The 18-institution team, led by Dr Anoop Mahajan from Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, are collecting air and water samples from around 60 stations along cruise track. These will give valuable information on state of ocean and atmosphere in this remote environment and will help to understand its impacts on climate, according to a statement from National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCOPR) in Goa, which works under Ministry of Earth Sciences.
5. **OBJECTIVE:**
 - a. **to quantify changes that are occurring and impact of these changes on large-scale weather phenomenon, like Indian monsoon, through tele-connection.**
 - b. **"Our study mainly aims to understand influence of Southern Ocean across eco-system and atmospheric changes and how it affects tropical climate and weather conditions,".**
 - c. **"We know that carbon dioxide is getting emitted into atmosphere, and through atmospheric circulation goes to Antarctic and polar regions. Since temperature is very low there, these gases are getting absorbed and converted into dissolved inorganic carbon or organic carbon, and through water masses and circulation it is coming back to tropical regions. Since it is warmer in these areas, it re-enters atmosphere,".**
 - d. **"How much carbon dioxide is going to those regions, and how much is coming back."**
 - e. **"All oceans around the world are connected through the Southern Ocean, which acts as a transport agent for things like heat across all these oceans. The conveyor belt that circulates heat around the world is connected through the Southern Ocean and can have a large impact on how climate is going to change due to anthropogenic forces,".**
 - f. **"This is the first time we have constant Internet on the ship through satellite communication. This not only allows us to keep in touch with family but share the details of our research by posting updates every day, so people are aware of where their taxpayer money is going,".**
 - g. **"We have 4-5 core priorities this time and we are broadening our understanding of how climate system works through oceans. In last few years, we have data to show that the Southern Ocean is not an isolated environment but what happens there can affect the other end of the world,".**
6. Study hydrodynamics and biogeochemistry of Indian Ocean sector of Southern Ocean; involves sampling sea water at different depths. This will help understand formation of Antarctic bottom water.
 - a. Observations of trace gases in atmosphere, such as halogens and dimethyl Sulphur from ocean to atmosphere. Will help improve parameterizations that are used in global models.
 - b. Study of organisms called **coccolithophores** that have existed in oceans for several million years; their concentrations in sediments will create a picture of past climate.
 - c. Investigate atmospheric aerosols and their optical and radiative properties. Continuous measurements will quantify impact on Earth's climate.
 - d. Study the Southern Ocean's impact on Indian monsoons. Look for signs in sediment core taken from the bottom of the ocean.
 - e. Dynamics of the food web in the Southern Ocean; important for safeguarding catch and planning sustainable fishing.
7. **Progress so far**
 - a. This week, mission has extracted one of largest sediment cores from Southern Ocean measuring 3.4 meters. "The sediment core can help us understand past climate, and aid in understanding how climate is going to change in future,"
 - b. Over years, as changes have occurred in climate and ocean, it can be observed from sediments that have settled over thousands of years. "We have a sediment core of 3-3.5 meters,", whose estimate is that sediment collected on board can stretch back to 30,000 to a million years.

FACTS for ANSWER WRITING

FACT 1. CORONA VIRUS



FACT 2. SOLAR ENERGY

'Solar capacity addition down 12% to 7,346 MW in 2019'

India's solar energy capacity addition dipped 12 per cent to 7,346 MW in calendar year 2019 from 8,338 MW in 2018, as per a report by Mercom India Research



Share of solar projects with total installations in 2019:



85%: Large-scale solar projects, with 6,242 MW capacity, falling 7 per cent y-o-y

17%:
EXPECTED YEAR-ON-YEAR
RISE IN SOLAR
INSTALLATIONS IN THE
COUNTRY TO ABOUT 8,500
MW BY END OF 2020

65-70 GW:
ESTIMATED RANGE OF
SOLAR INSTALLATIONS
BY 2022, BASED ON
CURRENT MARKET
CONDITIONS

Top three states that accounted for almost 70 % of solar installations in 2019:

- Karnataka
- Rajasthan
- Tamil Nadu

1,897 MW: Capacity added by Indian solar market in October–December 2019 period; 12.8 per cent fall as compared with 2,177 MW installed in preceding quarter. Share of various projects at:

- 1,593 MW: Large-scale projects
- 304 MW: Rooftop projects

35.7 GW: Cumulative solar installations at end of 2019, with shares of projects being:

- 87.6 %: Large-scale projects, i.e. 31.3 GW
- 12.4 %: Rooftop projects, i.e. 4.4 GW

Reasons for fall in large-scale solar additions in 2019: Elections, a slowing economy, liquidity issues, tariff caps, lack of financing, curtailment, and payment delays



15%: Rooftop solar projects, with 1,104 MW; falling 33 per cent y-o-y

Source:
Mercom India
Research/PTI

'India Inc's average salary hike to be 9.1% in 2020'

Companies in India are projected to dole out an average salary hike of 9.1 per cent this year, as they look for key talent and niche skills, as per a report by HR consultancy Aon



Lowest in a decade
The quantum is lower than 9.3 per cent increase seen in 2019 and also the lowest in a decade

39%
COMPANIES OF THE ONES SURVEYED ARE EXPECTED TO GIVE AS MUCH AS 10 PER CENT INCREASE IN PAY

6.6%
FOR INDIA, THE PREVIOUS LOWEST QUANTUM OF HIKE WAS 6.6 PER CENT IN 2009

OUTLOOK

■ Despite economic challenges in 2019, organisations in India are taking a positive view. Pay increases in India continue to be the highest in the region

TOP PAYING SECTORS

■ In the manufacturing segment, pharmaceuticals is expected to give the highest salary hike followed by FMCG and chemicals

■ E-commerce and professional services businesses are expected to give double-digit salary increase this year in the services sector

SURVEY BACKGROUND

The results are based on responses from over 1,000 organisations spread across more than 20 industries

BUSINESS OUTLOOK

92 per cent of the firms surveyed expect their business improving or stabilising in 2020 while the rest 8 per cent felt there would be a decline in business

REASON

- High inflation rate
- War for key talent and niche skills

India is expected to dole out the highest salary hike in the Asia-Pacific region at 9.1 per cent, followed by China at 6.3 per cent this year

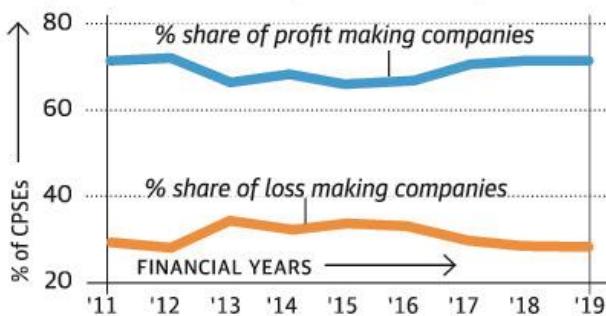
Source:
Aon/PTI

FACT 4. CPSE

A good year for central firms

Financial year 2019 was relatively a better period for Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in terms of profits. The share of firms which made profits increased in FY19 along with a sharp acceleration in the profit growth. However the downward spiral of consistent loss-makers such as BSNL and Air India continued. In the graphs, only profit/loss before exceptional or extraordinary items and taxes is considered. By **Srravya C** and **Vignesh R**

Profit-loss share of firms | Close to 71.5% of the CPSEs made profits in FY19. The share of such firms has improved in the recent years after dropping to over 66% in FY15. Graph shows the share of profit/loss-making CPSEs



Profit-loss growth rates | The year-on-year growth of overall profits by CPSEs accelerated to 14.61% in FY19, highest in the last six years. On the other hand, the growth of overall losses incurred decelerated to 0.24% in FY19, lower than the year before



Best and the worst | The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation was the best CPSE in terms of profit earned in FY19, whereas the BSNL was the worst in terms of losses incurred. Table shows top five profit-making and loss-making companies in FY19

Top 5	Profit (in ₹ Lakhs)	Bottom 5	Profit (in ₹ Lakhs)
ONGC	39,95,403	BSNL	-14,90,424
Indian Oil	25,12,692	Air India	-8,47,480
Power Grid Corporation	11,74,092	MTNL	-3,39,020
Coal India	10,56,242	Orissa Mineral Development	-63,914
Bharat Petroleum	10,43,962	Rashtriya Ispat Nigam	-53,229

Consistently poor

BSNL's losses have surged in FY19 to more than ₹140 billion, a record unmatched in its history. Its losses in previous years pale in comparison. Air India's quantum of loss surged in FY19 after posing moderate losses in the years before. Table shows profit/loss in ₹ billion

Year	BSNL	MTNL	Air India
FY 19	-149	-34	-85
FY 18	-87	-30	-53
FY 17	-48	-29	-41
FY 16	-38	-28	-38
FY 15	-88	-28	-59
FY 14	-71	-33	-73
FY 13	-80	-53	-64
FY 12	-88	-41	-87
FY 11	-66	-28	-73
FY 10	-17	-34	-32
FY 09	19	3	-55

Source: Public Enterprises Survey

FACT 5. CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Low confidence persists

Consumer confidence nosedived to a five-year low in January 2020, according to a routine RBI survey conducted in 5,389 households across 13 cities. The perception about the employment situation, price levels and household income remained weak in January. As the recent rise in prices was more pronounced in food items, consumers reported higher spending on essential items. By **The Hindu Data Team**

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

About 58% respondents felt that the employment situation had worsened in Jan. 2020, the highest such share since at least June 2014. Chart plots the % share of respondents who felt that the jobs situation had improved or worsened



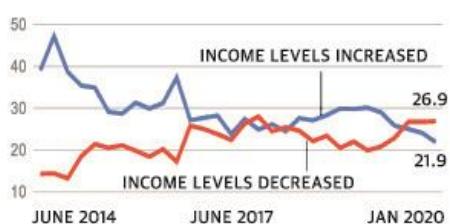
PRICE LEVELS

Since May 2019, the % of consumers who said that price levels have increased has steadily grown and reached a high in January 2020. In the recent round, over 90% of consumers said price levels have gone up



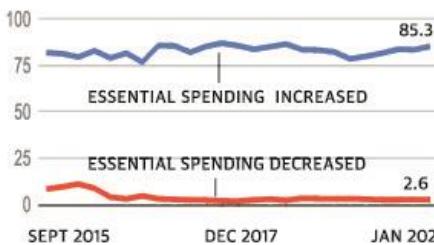
INCOME LEVELS

While most consumers felt that prices are up, many also felt that their income levels have come down. Since March 2019, more people feel that their income levels have decreased than those who feel that they have increased



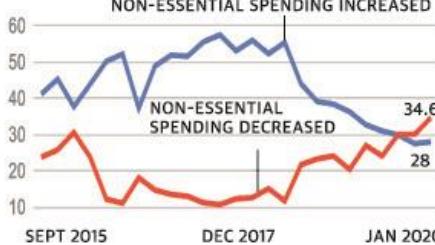
ESSENTIAL SPENDING

In January 2020, the share of those who felt that they were spending more on essential items increased. Since Sept. 2015, more than 75% of respondents have been saying that they are spending more on essential items



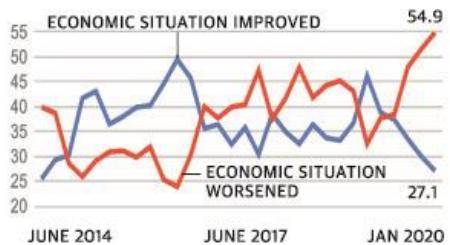
NON-ESSENTIAL SPENDING

As price levels are up and income levels are low, consumers are cutting back on non-essential items. The share of those who said that they are spending less on non-essential items increased in January 2020



ECONOMIC SITUATION

In January 2020, the perception about the general economic situation was at its lowest in 68 months. About 55% of the respondents perceived the situation to have weakened, the biggest such share since at least June 2014



FACT 6. INFLATION

Paying the price

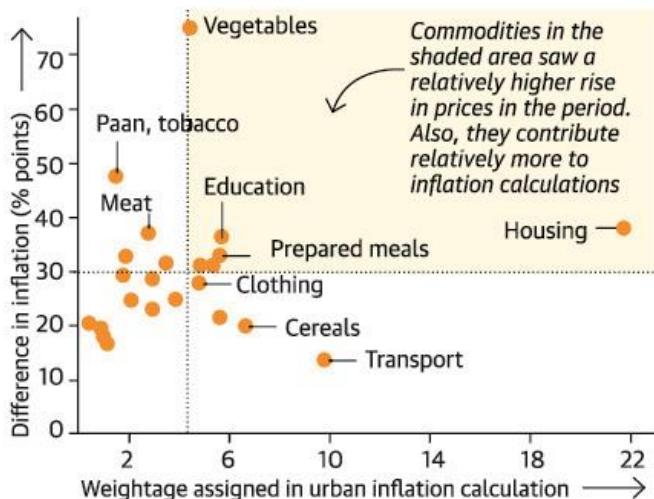
Retail inflation accelerated to a five-and-a-half-year high of 7.59% in January 2020. In January, urban inflation showed a marginal drop compared to the previous month, though it remained above 7%. Rural inflation continued to rise and reached a six-year high of 7.73%. Since 2014, rural prices have mostly gone up due to the increase in the cost of vegetables, healthcare and fuel. Urban prices have gone up mostly due to the increase in the cost of housing, education and vegetables. By **Sumanth Sen & Naresh S**

Rural price rise

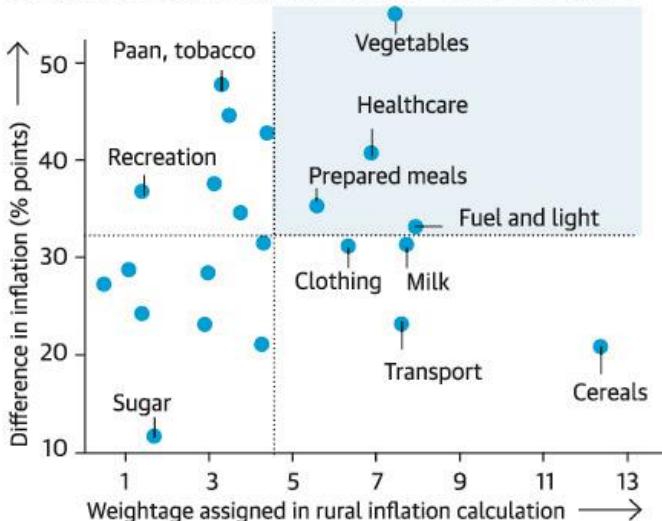
In January 2019, retail rural inflation decelerated to 1.22%, the lowest since May 2014. However in January 2020, it accelerated to 7.73%, the third highest since May 2014. The chart plots retail inflation



Urban inflation | The chart plots the difference in urban inflation between Jan. 2014 and Jan. 2020 (in % points) against their weights in the inflation calculation. Vegetable, housing and education costs saw a steep rise



Rural inflation | The chart plots the difference in rural inflation between Jan. 2014 and Jan. 2020 (in % points) against their weights in the inflation calculation. Healthcare, fuel, prepared meals and vegetable costs saw a steep rise



FACT 7. BIRDS

Bird watching

Long-term decrease | The table lists the top five species whose populations have declined the most in the last 25 years. For instance, for every 100 **White-rumped Vultures** spotted 25 years ago, only three could be spotted in 2020



Common name	Currently spotted
White-rumped Vulture	3 for every 100
Richard's Pipit	7
Indian Vulture	10
Large-billed Leaf Warbler	11
Pacific Golden Plover	12

Long-term increase | The table lists the five species whose populations have increased the most in the last 25 years. For instance, for every 100 **Rosy Starlings** that could be spotted 25 years ago, 271 could be spotted in 2020



Common Name	Currently spotted
Rosy Starling	271 for every 100
Rock Pigeon	244
Glossy Ibis	240
Plain Prinia	221
Ashy Prinia	205

Over three-fourths of the 146 bird species whose populations were tracked over the last five years declined in numbers, according to The State of India's Birds 2020 report. Interestingly, seven of the top 10 such species were labelled as being of "least concern" (not a focus of species conservation) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Over half of the 261 bird species whose populations were tracked over the last 25 years declined in numbers. By **The Hindu Data Team**

Short-term decrease | The table lists the five species whose populations have declined the most in the last five years. For instance, for every 100 **Singing Bushlarks** that could be spotted five years ago, only 76 could be spotted in 2020



Common Name	Current	IUCN status
Singing Bushlark	76	Least concern
Nilgiri Pipit	77	Vulnerable
White-tailed Robin	80	Least concern
Lesser Cuckoo	82	Least concern
Red-headed Vulture	82	Critically endangered

Short-term increase | The table lists the five species that have seen the maximum increase in their populations in the last five years. For instance, for every 100 **Rain Quails** that could be spotted five years ago, 133 could be spotted in 2020



Common Name	Currently spotted
Rain Quail	133 for every 100
Ferruginous Duck	133
Greater Crested Tern	124
Hume's Leaf Warbler	117
White-spotted Fantail	116

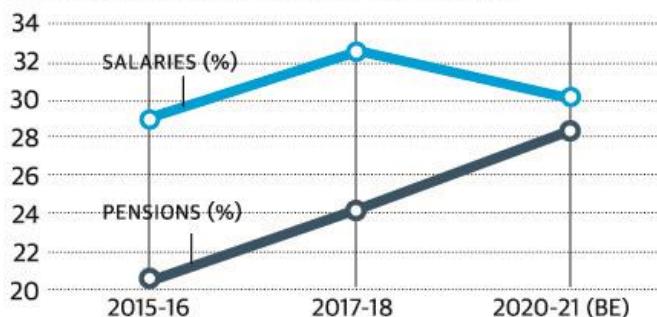
Pictures: Wikimedia commons

FACT 8. PENSIONS

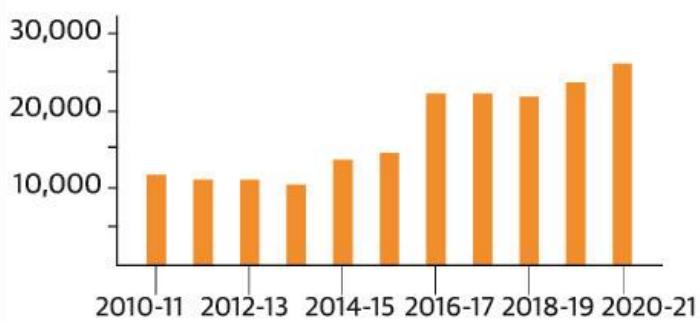
Marching to a different beat

The Indian Army is estimated to spend more on pensions than salaries in FY21. Pensions and salaries together form about 76% of the Army's budget. Such a high wage bill leaves little for the Army to spend on upgradation of equipments and weaponry. A slow-paced growth of the modernisation budget meant that only 8% of the Army's equipments were state-of-the-art as of 2018. By **The Hindu Data Team**

Wage bill | The share of pensions in the defence budget increased to 28.4% in FY21 from 20.5% in FY16. The share of salaries, the biggest component of defence expenditure, has see-sawed over the years. The graph traces the share of pensions and salaries in the defence budget



Slow pace | The expenditure on modernisation of the Army has grown at an annual average rate of 8% between 2010-11 and 2020-21. The graph shows the Army's modernisation expenditure in ₹ crore

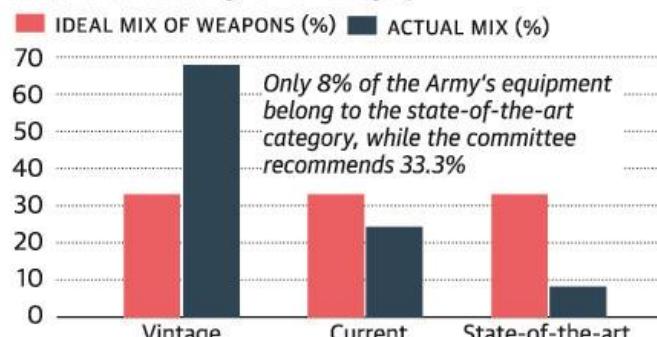


Source: PRS Legislative Research

Share of pension | The table lists the share of various components in the FY21 budget for all the three armed forces. For instance, 38.1% of the Army's FY21 budget was allocated for pensions. The significant wage bill meant that only about 9% was set aside for modernisation of the Army

Category	Army	Air Force	Navy
Pensions	38.1	15	12
Salaries	37.5	21	21
Modernisation	8.8	45	40
Maintenance	6.2	11	11
Others	9.5	8	16

Age distribution of weapons | Close to 70% of the Army's equipments and weapons are "vintage", while the Standing Committee on Defence (2018) recommended that only 33.3% should belong to that category



MODEL ANSWER

Q 1. “**Social audits** have played a significant role in reducing malpractices and detecting irregularities in implementation of government schemes.” **Discuss.** [**12.5 Marks, 200 words**]

a. UNDERSTANDING KEYWORDS

- Social Audit

b. WAY OF WRITING (STRUCTURE)

- **Discuss**

- Debate with evidences - arguments/counter arguments
- Your conclusion

ANSWER

Introduction

- Social audit is practice where government schemes and policies are implemented by end beneficiaries.



Figure 1: The Social Audit Cycle

Body

- Social will help in reducing malpractices in following manner
 1. Supervision of government schemes and policies by public and end users
 2. Pressure on government to design effective policies and its proper implementation
 3. Capacity building of beneficiaries
 4. All information will be in public domain
- Social audit if not implemented in proper manner may act as obstruction as different pressure and interest groups may come into picture and may cause push and pull in governance.

Conclusion

- Social audit should help in increasing performance of government rather than increase in vigilantism.