



**Civil's IAS**  
Empowering Nation

# Weekly Current Affairs Compilations

A holistic magazine for UPSC Prelims, Mains and Interview Preparation

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- b. Gujarati Literature
- c. Anthropology
- d. Political Science
- e. Sociology
- f. Philosophy
- g. History

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## PRELIMS and MAINS TOPICS

### TOPIC 1. ARTICLE 1

1. Supreme Court on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 ordered that a plea **to change India's name exclusively to 'Bharat' be converted into a representation and forwarded to Union government for an appropriate decision.**
2. "Bharat and India are both names given in the Constitution. India is already called 'Bharat' in the Constitution", Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde orally said in a virtual court hearing.
  - a. The petitioner, Namah, through his counsel, said 'India' is a name of foreign origin. The name can be traced back to the Greek term 'Indica'.
  - b. The counsel said, "The word 'Bharat' is closely associated to our Freedom Struggle. The cry was 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'."
3. The court said petition be transformed into a representation and forwarded to Ministries, primarily **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
4. The petition seeks an **amendment to Article 1 of Constitution**, which says
  - a. "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States...". It wants 'India' to be struck off from Article.
  - b. "This will ensure citizens of this country to get over colonial past and instill a sense of pride in our nationality. Will also justify hard fought freedom by our freedom fighters".
5. The court had dismissed a similar petition in 2016. Then CJI T.S. Thakur had said that every Indian had the right to choose between calling his country 'Bharat' or 'India'.

#### Article 1 of Indian Constitution

1. India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.
2. The States and the territories thereof shall be as specified in the First Schedule.
3. The territory of India shall comprise —
  - a. the territories of the States;
  - b. the Union territories specified in the First Schedule; and
  - c. such other territories as may be acquired.

#### **Debate Summary**

- Article 1 of the Constitution of India (Draft Article 1) defines the name and territory of India.
- The Assembly debated the Draft Article on 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November 1948, and 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September 1949.
- A member of the Drafting Committee clarified the object of using the term 'Union of States': it was to make it explicit that India was a federation of states. The federation was an indestructible unit and not a result of an agreement between states.
- Another member proposed to add 'Secular, Federal, Socialist' to 'Union of States'. He argued that, as the Preamble of the Constitution was not yet adopted, Draft Article 1 should embody 'aspirations' that the Constitution seeks to achieve. The Chairman of the Drafting Committee opposed this amendment. He noted that the social and economic policy decisions were to be taken by elected parliamentarians. To encode the form of society would destroy 'democracy altogether'. He further pointed out several Directive Principles of the State Policy including the right to livelihood, redistribution of material resources and equal pay for equal work were socialistic. There was no need to include 'socialist' in Draft Article 1.
- Some members suggested alternative names to India. One wanted 'Bharat' or 'Hind' to gain more prominence and to be placed before 'India'. Another suggested 'Union of Indian Socialistic republics U. I. S. R.' on the lines of the U. S. S. R.
- When all the proposals were put to vote, they were negated. The Assembly adopted Draft Article 1 on 18 September 1949.

## TOPIC 2. RAJYA SABHA POLLS

1. Elections to six Rajya Sabha seats that are set to be vacated in June and July would be held on June 19, Election Commission of India (ECI). The counting of votes in three States would be held same day.
2. It said elections to 18 Rajya Sabha seats, that had been deferred in March due to COVID-19 lockdown, would be held on June 19.
3. Here's a look at how Rajya Sabha members are elected.
  - a. The **Rajya Sabha or Upper House** of Parliament is modeled after House of Lords in United Kingdom. The Rajya Sabha currently has **245 members**, including 233 elected members and 12 nominated. As per the constitutional limit, the Upper House strength **cannot exceed 250**.
  - b. **Nominated members of Rajya Sabha are picked by President of India**. These MPs are luminaries from the world of economics, sports, literature, art, social service etc.
  - c. The **Vice-President** is the chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, which is the final stop before a bill is sent for presidential assent.
  - d. While Lok Sabha members are elected directly by the voters, Rajya Sabha members are elected **indirectly** by the people, that is, by the MLAs. **How many Rajya Sabha members a state can send depends on its population**. Hence, the number of elected seats too changes as states are merged, bifurcated or new ones are created.
  - e. Every Rajya Sabha MP has a tenure of **six years** and **elections to one-third seats are held every two years**.
  - f. According to **Section 154 of the Representation of the People Act 1951**, a member chosen to fill a casual vacancy will serve for the remainder of his predecessor's term of office.
  - g. **Members of a state's Legislative Assembly** vote in the Rajya Sabha elections in what is called proportional representation with the single transferable vote (STV) system. Each MLA's vote is counted only once.
  - h. In this system, MLAs don't vote for each seat. If that were the case, then only ruling party representatives would make it through. Instead, the MLAs are given a paper with the names of all candidates. They have to give their order of preference for each candidate, marking 1,2,3... against their names. If 10 or more members choose a candidate as their first choice, he/she gets elected.
  - i. The political party that has a majority in the state Assembly normally gets to send the maximum number of MPs to the Rajya Sabha. Let's take a hypothetical example of a states which has three Rajya Sabha vacancies. Let's say Party A with 100 seats and Party B with 40 seats populate the 140-seat Assembly. Both parties can field three candidates each for the three Rajya Sabha seats.
    - i. Now, to make it through, a candidate should get a certain number of votes. In this case, the total number of MLAs (140) is multiplied by 100. This number is divided by the number of vacancies (3) plus 1. That brings us to 3,500. This total number is added to 1. Since each MLA has 100 votes, a candidate would, in this case, need 3,501 votes or the backing of 36 MLAs to win.

The formula simply is  $[(\text{Number of MLAs} \times 100) / (\text{Vacancies} + 1)] + 1$ .
    - ii. Simply put, **every candidate in race requires one-fourth of total number of votes plus one to get elected**. Each voter ranks his preferences and if candidate who is first choice has enough votes already or no chance of being elected, vote is transferred to second choice and so on.

### TOPIC 3. MSP

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 approved an increase in minimum support prices (MSPs) for all mandated **KHARIF crops, including paddy, PULSES and COTTON**, for 2020-21 marketing season.
- Union Cabinet **also extended repayment date for standard short-term loans upto ₹3 lakh for agriculture and allied activities till August 31, 2020.**
- “The increase in MSP for kharif crops is in line with Union Budget 2018-19 announcement of fixing the MSPs at a level of at least 1.5 times of the all-India weighted average cost of production, aiming at reasonably fair remuneration for the farmers,”.
- It added that the expected returns to farmers over their cost of production are estimated to be highest in case of bajra (83%) followed by urad (64%), tur (58%) and maize (53%).
- For rest of the crops, return to farmers over their cost of production is estimated to be at **least 50%**.
- **What is CACP?**
  - Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) is an attached office of **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.**
  - It came into existence in **January 1965.**
  - Currently, Commission comprises a Chairman, Member Secretary, one Member (Official) and two Members (Non-Official). The non-official members are representatives of the farming community and usually have an active association with the farming community.
  - It is mandated to **recommend minimum support prices (MSPs)** to incentivize the cultivators to adopt modern technology and raise productivity and overall grain production in line with the emerging demand patterns in the country.
  - Assurance of a **remunerative and stable price environment** is considered very important for **increasing agricultural production and productivity** since the market place for agricultural produce tends to be inherently unstable, which often inflict undue losses on the growers, even when they adopt the best available technology package and produce efficiently. Towards this end, **MSP for major agricultural products are fixed by the government, each year, after taking into account the recommendations of the Commission.**
  - As of now, CACP recommends **MSPs of 23 commodities**, which comprise
    - **7 CEREALS** (paddy, wheat, maize, sorghum, pearl millet, barley and ragi),
    - **5 PULSES** (gram, tur, moong, urad, lentil),
    - **7 OILSEEDS** (groundnut, rapeseed-mustard, soyabean, seasmum, sunflower, safflower, nigerseed), and
    - **4 COMMERCIAL CROPS** (copra, sugarcane, cotton and raw jute).
  - CACP submits its recommendations to government in form of Price Policy Reports every year, separately for five groups of commodities namely **Kharif crops, Rabi crops, Sugarcane, Raw Jute and Copra.**
    - Before preparing aforesaid five pricing policy reports, Commission draws a comprehensive questionnaire and sends it to all state governments and concerned National organizations and Ministries to seek their views.
    - Subsequently, separate meetings are also held with farmers from different states, state governments, National organizations like FCI, NAFED, Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), Jute Corporation of India (JCI), trader's organizations, processing organizations, and key central Ministries.
    - The Commission also makes visits to states for on-the-spot assessment of the various constraints that farmers face in marketing their produce, or even raising the productivity levels of their crops. Based on all these inputs, the Commission then finalizes its recommendations / reports, which are then submitted to the government.

- The government, in turn, circulates the CACP reports to state governments and concerned central Ministries for their comments. After receiving the feed-back from them, **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** of Union government takes a final decision on level of MSPs and other recommendations made by CACP. Once this decision is taken, CACP puts all its reports on the web site for various stakeholders to see the rationale behind CACP's price and non-price recommendations.
- While recommending price policy of various commodities under its mandate, Commission keeps in mind various **Terms of Reference (ToR)** given to CACP in 2009. Accordingly, it analyzes
  - demand and supply;
  - **cost of production;**
  - price trends in the market, both domestic and international;
  - inter-crop price parity;
  - terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture;
  - a minimum of 50 % as the margin over cost of production; and
  - likely implications of MSP on consumers of that product.
- It may be noted that cost of production is an important factor that goes as an input in determination of MSP, but it is certainly not the only factor that determines MSP.

Sl. No	Crops	Projected Cost* KMS 2020-21	MSP for Kharif 2020-21	Increase in MSP (Absolute)	Return over Cost (in %)
1	Paddy (Common)	1,245	1,868	53	50
2	Paddy (Grade A)	-	1,888	53	-
3	Jowar (Hybrid)	1,746	2,620	70	50
4	Jowar (Maldandi)	-	2,640	70	-
5	Bajra	1,175	2,150	150	83
6	Ragi	2,194	3,295	145	50
7	Maize	1,213	1,850	90	53
8	Tur (Arhar)	3,796	6,000	200	58
9	Moong	4,797	7,196	146	50
10	Urad	3,660	6,000	300	64
11	Groundnut	3,515	5,275	185	50
12	Sunflower Seed	3,921	5,885	235	50
13	Soybean (Yellow)	2,587	3,880	170	50
14	Sesamum	4,570	6,855	370	50
15	Nigerseed	4,462	6,695	755	50
16	Cotton (Medium Staple)	3,676	5,515	260	50
17	Cotton (Long Staple)	-	5,825	275	-

## TOPIC 4. STREET VENDORS

- **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** on 1<sup>st</sup> June launched a **micro-credit scheme for street vendors**, which was announced by Finance Minister on May 14 as part of economic package for those affected by COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.
- **PRADHAN MANTRI STREET VENDOR'S ATMANIRBHAR NIDHI SCHEME** is aimed at benefiting over 50 lakh vendors who had their **businesses operational on or before March 24**.
  - The scheme is valid till **March 2022**.
  - The vendors will be able to apply for a **working capital loan without collateral of up to ₹10,000**, which is **repayable in monthly instalments within a year**.
  - "On timely / early repayment of loan, an interest subsidy of 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through direct benefit transfer on a six-monthly basis. There will be no penalty on early repayment of loan,".
  - An online portal and mobile application were being developed to ensure speedy implementation of the scheme.
  - The loans are meant to help kick-start activity for vendors who have been left without any income since the lockdown began on March 25.
  - **Eligibility:** The scheme is applicable to vendors and hawkers in different areas / contexts who supply goods and services as well as street vendors in peri-urban / rural and surrounding areas.



Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs  
Government of India

50  
YEARS OF  
CELEBRATING  
THE INDEPENDENCE

सर्वोपरि धर्मः

सर्वोपरि धर्मः

### Striving for AtmaNirbhar Bharat

Launch of

## A SPECIAL MICRO-CREDIT FACILITY FOR STREET VENDORS

#### Salient Features

- Graded Credit Guarantee on the Portfolio Amount to the lending Institutions under CGTMSE;
- Mobile App and Web Portal based application process;
- Capacity building and digital financial literacy for all stakeholders;
- Facilitating e-Commerce and quality improvement; and
- No collateral required for the Loan

## TOPIC 5. INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

- SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft with two NASA astronauts on 31<sup>st</sup> May successfully docked with International Space Station (ISS) after a historic launch from Kennedy Space Center in Florida, marking dawn of a new age in commercial space travel.
- Elon Musk's SpaceX company confirmed successful docking of NASA astronauts Bob Behnken, 49, and Doug Hurley, 53, with ISS, the orbiting laboratory.
- The crew will be welcomed aboard ISS, where they will become members of Expedition 63 crew, which includes NASA astronaut Chris Cassidy.
- The liftoff also assumes significance as it **marks launch of humans into orbit from U.S. soil for first time in nearly a decade.**
- With liftoff, SpaceX became first private company to launch people into orbit, a feat achieved previously by only three governments: **U.S., Russia and China.**

### What is ISS?

- ISS is a **modular space station (habitable artificial satellite) in low Earth orbit.**
- ISS programme is a multi-national collaborative project between 5 participating space agencies: **NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe), and CSA (Canada).**
- The ownership and use of space station are established by intergovernmental treaties and agreements.
- ISS serves as a **microgravity and space environment research laboratory** in which scientific experiments are conducted in astrobiology, astronomy, meteorology, physics, and other fields.
- The station is suited for **testing the spacecraft systems and equipment** required for possible future long-duration missions to Moon and Mars.
- It is **largest artificial object in space** and largest satellite in low Earth orbit, regularly visible to naked eye from Earth's surface.
- It maintains an orbit with an average altitude of **400 kilometers (250 mi)** by means of reboost manoeuvres using engines of Zvezda Service Module or visiting spacecraft.
- The ISS circles Earth in roughly **93 minutes**, completing 15.5 orbits per day.
- The station is divided into two sections:
  - **Russian Orbital Segment (ROS)**, operated by Russia; and
  - **United States Orbital Segment (USOS)**, which is shared by many nations.
- 1<sup>st</sup> ISS component was launched in **1998**, with first long-term residents arriving on 2 November 2000.
- Since then, station has been continuously occupied for 19 years and 218 days.
- The ISS consists of pressurized **habitation modules, structural trusses, photovoltaic solar arrays, thermal radiators, docking ports, experiment bays and robotic arms.**
- Major ISS modules have been launched by **Russian Proton and Soyuz rockets and US Space Shuttles.**
- ISS is 9<sup>th</sup> space station to be inhabited by crews, following Soviet and later Russian Salyut, Almaz and Mir stations as well as Skylab from US.
- The station is serviced by a variety of visiting spacecraft:
  - **Russian Soyuz and Progress,**
  - **US Dragon and Cygnus,**
  - **Japanese H-II Transfer Vehicle** and
  - formerly **European Automated Transfer Vehicle.**
- As of September 2019, 239 astronauts, cosmonauts, and space tourists from 20 different nations have visited space station, many of them multiple times.
- United States sent 151 people, Russia sent 47, 9 were Japanese, 8 Canadian, 5 Italian, 4 French, 3 German and 1 each from Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Netherlands, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, United Arab Emirates and United Kingdom.



CIVILSIAS

## TOPIC 6. UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

- The ongoing crisis is creating changes that could end up dividing society into pre- and post-COVID-19 days. These changes are also likely to exacerbate novel challenges accompanying **fourth industrial revolution**.
- Today, disruptive technologies like **artificial intelligence** are ushering in productivity gains that we have never seen before. They are also steadily reducing human capital requirements, making jobs a premium. A microcosm of these trends can be seen in Silicon Valley. The region is home to five of the world's eight most valuable companies. These giants, all technology companies, have a cumulative market cap of over \$4 trillion, yet they together directly employ just 1.2 million people.

### Tool to eradicate poverty

- Many consider a universal basic income (UBI) programme to be a solution that could mitigate looming crisis caused by **dwindling job opportunities**. UBI is also deliberated as an effective poverty-eradication tool. Supporters of this scheme include Economics Nobel Laureates Peter Diamond and Christopher Pissarides, and tech leaders Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk.
- **UBI would entail the provision of an unconditional fixed amount to every citizen in a country.**
- Nevertheless, countries across world, including Kenya, Brazil, Finland, and Switzerland, have bought into this concept and have begun controlled UBI pilots to supplement their population.
- India's huge capacity and infrastructure-building requirements will support plenty of hands in the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, even before the pandemic, India was struggling to find enough opportunities for more than a million job aspirants who were entering the job market each month.
- The 2016-17 Economic Survey and International Monetary Fund (IMF) had once proposed quasi-basic income schemes that leave out well-off top quartile of population as an effective means of alleviating poverty and hunger. The fiscal cost of a UBI pegged at **₹7,620, at 75% universality**, was **4.9% of GDP**. A UBI on par with numbers suggested by Economic Survey could lead to targeted household incomes increasing by almost ₹40,000 per annum, since average Indian household size is approximately five.
- Political will was lukewarm because of **costs involved**. Requirements to trim some of existing subsidies to balance resultant deficit were also difficult **political minefields** for then government.

### Different times

- IMF has projected global growth in 2020 to be -3.0%, worst since Great Depression. India is projected to grow at 1.9%. The U.S. economy is expected to fall by 5.9%. The unemployment rate and unemployment claims in U.S., since President Donald Trump declared a national emergency, is the highest since the Great Depression. Unfortunately, India does not even have comparable data.
- Lockdowns in some format are expected to be the norm till the arrival of a vaccine. **With almost 90% of India's workforce in the informal sector without minimum wages or social security, micro-level circumstances will be worse in India than anywhere else.** The frequent sight of several thousands of migrant laborer's undertaking perilous journeys on foot in inhumane conditions is a disgraceful blight on India. One way to ensure their sustenance throughout these trying times is introduction of unconditional regular pay checks at maximum universality, at least till economy normalises. If universal basic income ever had a time, it is now.

## TOPIC 7. GULF OF MANNAR

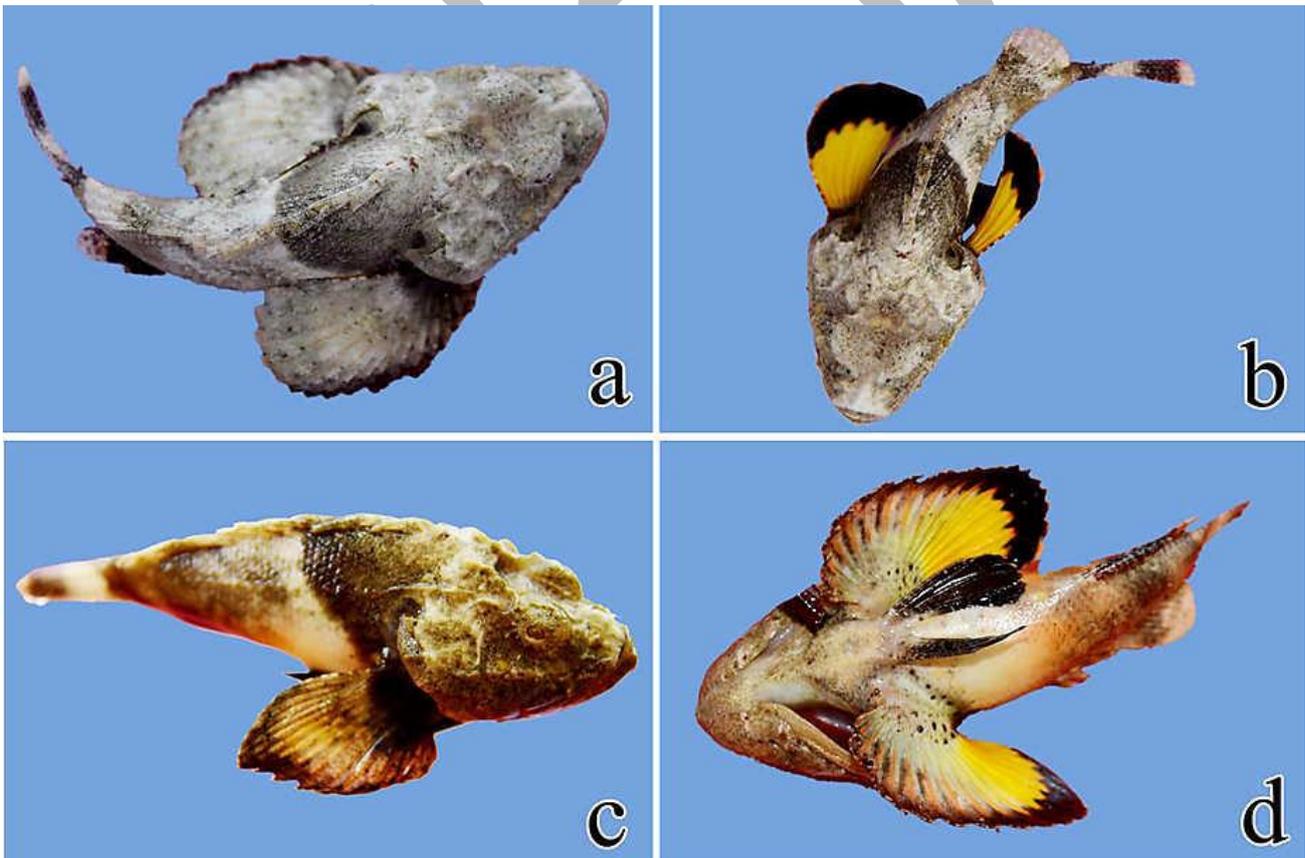
- Researchers at Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) have found a rare fish from Sethukarai coast in Gulf of Mannar.
- **Camouflaged within seagrass meadows, band-tail scorpionfish (*Scorpaenospsis neglecta*), well-known for its stinging venomous spines and ability to change colour, was found during an exploratory survey of seagrass ecosystem.**
- This was the first time that particular species was found alive in Indian waters.
- **The fish has ability to change colour and blend with its surrounding environment to escape from predators and while preying.**
- “During the underwater survey, this species was first sighted as a coral skeleton.
- On first look, its appearance was totally confusing, and we doubted if it was a fish or fossilized coral skeleton covered with bivalve shells.

### Colour changing

- “It started changing when we disturbed it by touching a dead coral fragment. Within four seconds, skin of the fish changed from white to mottled black colour,”.
- The fish is called ‘**scorpionfish**’ because its spines contain **neurotoxic venom**.

### Neurotoxic

- “When spines pierce an individual, venom gets injected immediately and it can be extremely painful,” eating fish would lead to death.
- The specimen has been deposited in National Marine Biodiversity Museum of CMFRI.



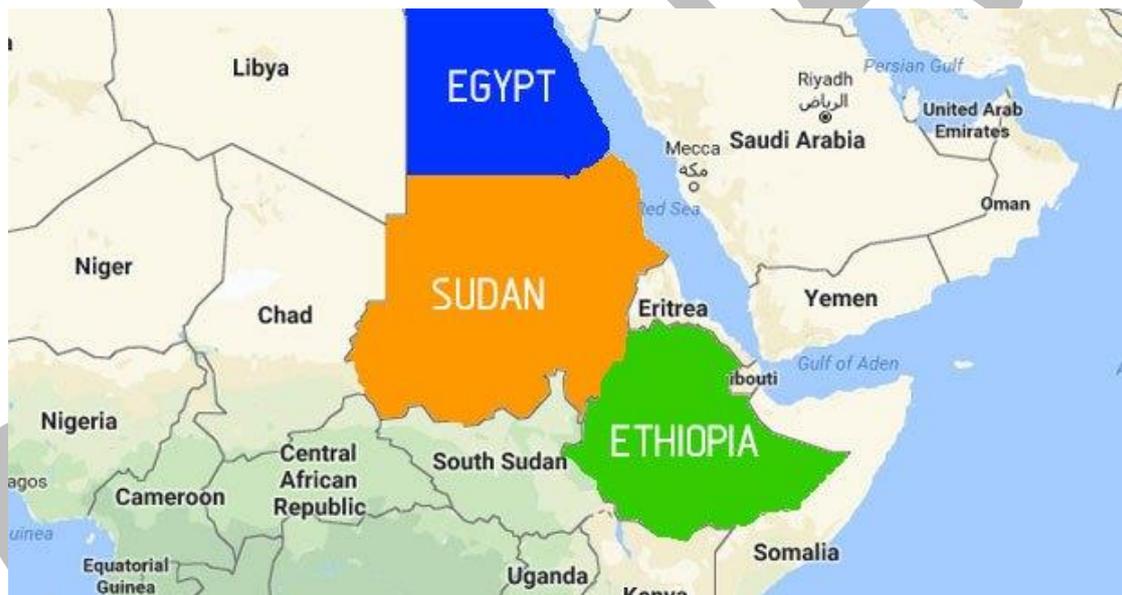
## TOPIC 8. ETHIOPIA-SUDAN BORDER ROW

- Amid heightened tension along its border with Ethiopia, Sudan swore in a new defense minister. Major General Yassin Ibrahim Yassin was recalled from retirement to fill position following death of General Gamal al-Din Omar. Yassin's swearing-in came after an alleged Ethiopian cross-border attack which left at least one Sudanese soldier and a child dead. 3 Sudanese civilians and a soldier were also wounded.
- The attack, which took place in eastern province of al-Qadarif, started after an Ethiopian militia group penetrated Sudan's border to fetch water at **Atbara river**.
- The border clashes flared up as Ethiopia and Sudan were preparing to meet in Sudan capital Khartoum, for a 2<sup>nd</sup> round of talks aimed at resolving border dispute. "There have been negotiations and they reached an understanding that **most or all of this contested land can be under Sudan,**"

### Ethiopia's call for diplomacy

- Ethiopia offered its "deep sympathy and condolences to families of victims of the conflict along Ethiopia and Sudan border." Addis Ababa urged two countries to pursue diplomacy as a means of resolving border dispute saying there was no need for countries to "descend into hostility".
- "There are various actors and processes within region, and this is an opportune moment for some to ignite some tension between Sudan and Ethiopia," "Hopefully, two sides can sit at negotiating table and come to a conclusion."

### Root of Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute



- Sudan and Ethiopia share a common boundary that stretches over **1,600 kilometers (994 miles)**.
- The border was drawn following a series of treaties between Ethiopia and colonial powers of Britain and Italy. However, to date, this boundary **lacks clear demarcation lines**.
- Sudan's **al-Fashqa region** which covers approximately 600 km, is a rich fertile land conducive for agriculture. For decades, Ethiopia has allowed its farmers to plant crops there.
- Former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir largely turned a blind eye to his country's territorial incursion. However, Sudan's transitional authorities, who took over after popular protests which eventually led to ousting of al-Bashir, have initiated talks with Ethiopia in a bid to have to Ethiopian farmers withdraw.

### More Sudanese boots at the Ethiopian border

- For first time in nearly 25 years, Sudan deployed its troops along the **al-Fashqa border strip** at end March. This came after an attack which prompted a top security team to visit the area.
- “There are old problems. Herders have lost their livestock and farmers have lost their lands,” Sudan armed forces were left with no choice but to protect their territory because Ethiopians had imposed their presence.
- Sudan’s military has vowed that it is **willing and ready to protect its citizens and territory**.

### Sudan’s about-turn in Ethiopia’s mega dam project



- The border dispute could complicate Ethiopia’s plan to construct **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)**. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June, Sudan wrote to UN Security Council calling on it to urge **Ethiopia and Egypt**, not to take unilateral action on dam. Sudan had initially backed Ethiopia’s project but later refused to sign on an initial agreement which would have paved way for Ethiopia to begin filling dam.
- “Ethiopia and Sudan are holding regular discussions to prepare ground for resumption of trilateral GERD talks, so process is restarting rather than stalled,” .“It does not appear therefore that border incident has caused a significant disruption to negotiations.”
- Sudan and Ethiopia need to ramp up their existing discussions over borderlands in order to come to an understanding that will lead to a final resolution of issue.

## TOPIC 9. NEAR-EARTH OBJECT (NEO)

- NASA announced that a **giant asteroid** is expected to pass Earth (at a safe distance) on June 6.
- The asteroid is estimated to be between 250-570 meters in diameter, according to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL). A Near-Earth Object (NEO), asteroid is called 163348 (2002 NN4) and is classified as a **Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA)**.

### What are Near-Earth Objects (NEOs), why are they studied?

- NEOs occasionally approach close to Earth **as they orbit Sun**, NASA Center for Near-Earth Object Study (CNEOS) determines **times and distances of these objects** as and when their approach to Earth is close.
- NASA defines NEOs as
  - **Comets and Asteroids nudged by gravitational attraction of nearby planets into orbits which allows them to enter Earth's neighborhood.**
  - **These objects are composed mostly of water ice with embedded dust particles.**
  - **Remnant debris from solar system formation process** over 4.6 billion years ago. Therefore, these NEOs offer scientists clues about chemical mixture from planets formed.
  - If we wish to know composition of primordial mixture from which planets formed, then we must determine chemical constituents of leftover debris from this formation process - comets and asteroids.
  - **Comets** originally formed in **cold outer planetary system** while
  - Most of **rocky asteroids** formed in warmer inner solar system between orbits of **Mars and Jupiter**
  - Giant **outer planets** (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune) formed from an agglomeration of billions of comets and left over bits and pieces from this formation process are comets we see today.
  - Likewise, today's **asteroids** are bits and pieces left over from initial agglomeration of **inner planets** that include Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars.
- Significantly, among all causes that will eventually cause extinction of life on Earth, an asteroid hit is widely acknowledged as one of the likeliest.
- Over the years, scientists have suggested **different ways to ward off such a hit**,
  - such as blowing up asteroid before it reaches Earth, or
  - deflecting it off its Earth-bound course by hitting it with a spacecraft.
- NASA's Near-Earth Object Observations Program **finds, tracks and characterises over 90 % of predicted number of NEOs that are 140 metre or larger in size** (larger than a small football stadium).
- NASA maintains that objects of this size and larger pose a risk to Earth of "greatest concern" due to **level of devastation that impact is capable of causing.**
- Further, no asteroid larger than 140 metre has a "significant" chance of hitting Earth for next 100 years, less than half of estimated 25,000 NEOs that are 140 metres or larger in size have been found to date.

### What is 163348 (2002 NN4)?

- This asteroid is classified as a PHA, which means the asteroid has the potential to make threatening close approaches to the Earth.
  - **Asteroids with a minimum orbit intersection distance (MOID) of about 0.05 (AU is the distance between the Earth and the Sun and is roughly 150 million km), which is about 7,480,000 km or less and an absolute magnitude (H) of 22 (smaller than about 150 m or 500 feet in diameter) or less are considered PHAs.**
  - Even so, it is not necessary that asteroids classified as PHAs will impact Earth. "It only means there is a possibility for such a threat. By monitoring these PHAs and updating their orbits as new observations become available, we can better predict close-approach statistics and thus their Earth-impact threat,".
- **2002 NN4 was discovered in July 2002 and is expected to approach the Earth on June 6.**

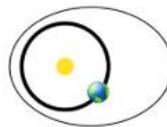
## NEO Groups

- In terms of orbital elements, NEOs are asteroids and comets with **perihelion distance  $q$  less than 1.3 au**.
- Near-Earth Comets (NECs)** are further restricted to include only short-period comets (i.e., orbital period  $P$  less than 200 years).
- The vast majority of NEOs are asteroids, referred to as **Near-Earth Asteroids (NEAs)**.
  - NEAs are divided into groups (Atira, Aten, Apollo and Amor) according to their perihelion distance ( $q$ ), aphelion distance ( $Q$ ) and their semi-major axes ( $a$ ).
- Potentially Hazardous Asteroids (PHAs)** are currently defined based on parameters that measure the asteroid's potential to make threatening close approaches to the Earth. Specifically, all asteroids with an Earth Minimum Orbit Intersection Distance (MOID) of 0.05 au or less and an absolute magnitude ( $H$ ) of 22.0 or less are considered PHAs. In other words, asteroids that can't get any closer to the Earth (i.e., MOID) than 0.05 au (roughly 7,480,000 km or 4,650,000 mi) or are smaller than about 140 m (~500 ft) in diameter (i.e.,  $H = 22.0$  with assumed albedo of 14%) are not considered PHAs.

Group	Definition	Description
NECs	$q < 1.3$ au $P < 200$ years	Near-Earth Comets
NEAs	$q < 1.3$ au	Near-Earth Asteroids
Atiras	$a < 1.0$ au $Q < 0.983$ au	NEAs whose orbits are contained entirely within the orbit of the Earth (named after asteroid 163693 Atira).
Atens	$a < 1.0$ au $Q > 0.983$ au	Earth-crossing NEAs with semi-major axes smaller than Earth's (named after asteroid 2062 Aten).
Apollos	$a > 1.0$ au $q < 1.017$ au	Earth-crossing NEAs with semi-major axes larger than Earth's (named after asteroid 1862 Apollo).
Amors	$a > 1.0$ au $1.017 < q < 1.3$ au	Earth-approaching NEAs with orbits exterior to Earth's but interior to Mars' (named after asteroid 1221 Amor).
PHAs	$MOID \leq 0.05$ au $H \leq 22.0$	Potentially Hazardous Asteroids: NEAs whose Minimum Orbit Intersection Distance (MOID) with the Earth is 0.05 au or less and whose absolute magnitude ( $H$ ) is 22.0 or brighter.

### Amors

Earth-approaching NEAs with orbits exterior to Earth's but interior to Mars' (named after asteroid (1221) Amor)



$$a > 1.0 \text{ AU}$$

$$1.017 \text{ AU} < q < 1.3 \text{ AU}$$

### Apollos

Earth-crossing NEAs with semi-major axes larger than Earth's (named after asteroid (1862) Apollo)



$$a > 1.0 \text{ AU}$$

$$q < 1.017 \text{ AU}$$

### Atens

Earth-crossing NEAs with semi-major axes smaller than Earth's (named after asteroid (2062) Aten)



$$a < 1.0 \text{ AU}$$

$$Q > 0.983 \text{ AU}$$

### Atiras

NEAs whose orbits are contained entirely within the orbit of the Earth (named after asteroid (163693) Atira)



$$a < 1.0 \text{ AU}$$

$$Q < 0.983 \text{ AU}$$

( $q$  = perihelion distance,  $Q$  = aphelion distance,  $a$  = semi-major axis)

## TOPIC 10. OIL SPILL IN RUSSIA'S ARCTIC REGION

- Russia declared a state of emergency on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, five days after a **power plant fuel leak in its Arctic region** caused 20,000 tonnes of diesel oil to escape into a local river, turning its surface crimson red.
- The **Ambarnaya river**, into which oil has been discharged, is part of a network that flows into environmentally sensitive Arctic Ocean.
- Emergency measures were announced within Russia's Krasnoyarsk Region, located in vast and sparsely populated Siberian peninsula. The power plant is located near Region's Norilsk city, around 3000 km northeast of Moscow.

### How did the leak happen?

- The thermoelectric power plant at Norilsk is built on **permafrost**, which has weakened over years owing to climate change. This caused pillars that supported plant's fuel tank to sink, leading to a loss of containment on May 29. Around 20,000 tonnes of diesel oil was released into Ambarnaya river, which has since drifted 12 km on its surface.

### What has Russia done so far?

- **Boom obstacles** were placed in river, but they were unable to contain oil because of shallow waters.
- So far, 3 criminal proceedings have been launched, and head of the power plant has been detained.
- State of emergency declared would bring in extra forces and federal resources for the clean-up efforts.

### What is the extent of the damage?

- Environmentalists have said **river would be difficult to clean,**
  - **given its shallow waters and remote location,**
  - **as well as the magnitude of the spill.**
- Second-largest known oil leak in modern Russia's history in terms of volume.
- The Russian chapter of activist group Greenpeace said **damages to Arctic waterways could be at least 6 billion rubles** (over \$76 million) and has compared incident to Alaska's 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster. Its estimate does not include **atmospheric damage due to greenhouse gases and soil pollution.** In a statement, NGO said, "The installed buoys will only help collect a small part of pollution, leading us to say that nearly all diesel fuel will remain in environment."
- An environmental oversight agency of Russian government pegged overall damage at "several dozen, perhaps hundreds of billions of rubles", as did a federal fishing agency.

### What are the clean-up measures being suggested?

- Russian minister of natural resources opposed setting vast quantity of oil afire and recommended **diluting layer with reagents.**
- An expert told BBC that **clean-up effort could take between 5-10 years.**



HANDOUT/RUSSIA MARINE RESCUE SERVICE/REUTERS IMAGES

## TOPIC 11. ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ACT

The Union Cabinet has approved an ordinance to amend **The Essential Commodities Act, 1955**, to **deregulate commodities such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes.**

The ordinance, once assented by the President of India and notified in the gazette, will become law.

The text of the ordinance has not been made public so far.

### **Essential Commodities Act: What is the amendment?**

Sources at the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said that the ordinance has **introduced a new subsection (1A) in Section 3 of The Essential Commodities Act, 1955.**

The amended law provides a mechanism for the **“regulation” of agricultural foodstuffs, namely cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, potato, and supplies under extraordinary circumstances, which include extraordinary price rise, war, famine, and natural calamity of a severe nature.**

### **What is the definition of an ‘essential commodity’?**

There is no specific definition of essential commodities in The EC Act. Section 2(A) of the act states that an **“essential commodity”** means a commodity specified in the **“Schedule”** of this Act.

The Act gives **powers to the central government to add or remove a commodity in the “Schedule.”** The Centre, if it is satisfied that it is necessary to do so in public interest, can notify an item as essential, in consultation with state governments.

At present, the **“Schedule”** contains 9 commodities —

- **Drugs;**
- **Fertilisers, whether inorganic, organic or mixed;**
- **Foodstuffs, including edible oils;**
- **Hank yarn made wholly from cotton;**
- **Petroleum and petroleum products;**
- **Raw jute and jute textiles;**
- **Seeds of food-crops and seeds of fruits and vegetables, seeds of cattle fodder, jute seed, cotton seed;**
- **Face masks; and**
- **Hand sanitizers.**

The latest items added to this schedule are face masks and hand sanitisers, which were declared essential commodities with effect from March 13, 2020 in the wake of Covid-19 outbreak.

**By declaring a commodity as essential, the government can control the production, supply, and distribution of that commodity, and impose a stock limit.**

### **How and under what circumstances can the government impose stock limits?**

Under amended EC Act, agri-food stuffs can only be regulated under extraordinary circumstances such as **war, famine, extraordinary price rise, and natural calamity.**

However, any action on imposing stock limits will be based on the **price trigger.**

- Thus, in case of **horticultural produce**, a **100 % increase in retail price of commodity** over immediately preceding 12 months or average retail price of last five years, whichever is lower, will be trigger for invoking stock limit for such commodities.
- For **non-perishable agricultural foodstuffs**, price trigger will be a **50 % increase in the retail price of the commodity** over the immediately preceding 12 months or the average retail price of the last five years, whichever is lower.

However, exemptions from stock-holding limits will be provided to processors and value chain participants of any agricultural produce, and orders relating to Public Distribution System.

### **Over to the private sector**

The key changes seek to **free agricultural markets from the limitations imposed by permits and mandis that were originally designed for an era of scarcity.**

The move provides **more choices for farmers to trade their produce**, but its success will depend on how the private sector leverages the opportunity.

### **So, why was an amendment needed in The EC Act?**

The EC Act was legislated at a time when the country was facing scarcity of foodstuffs due to persistent abysmal levels of foodgrain production. The country was dependent on imports and assistance (such as wheat import from US under PL-480) to feed the population.

In this scenario, to stop the hoarding and black marketing of foodstuffs, The Essential Commodities Act was enacted in 1955.

### **But now the situation has changed.**

A note prepared by Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution shows that

- Production of **wheat** has increased by **10 times** (from less than 10 million tonnes in 1955-56 to more than 100 million tonnes in 2018-19);
- During same period, production of **rice** has increased more than **4 times** from around 25 million tonnes to 110 million tonnes.
- The production of **pulses** has increased by **2.5 times**, from 10 million tonnes to 25 million tonnes.

In fact, India has now become an exporter of several agricultural products. With these developments, the EC Act has become anachronistic.

### **What will be the impact of the amendments?**

The amendments will remove commodities such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of regulated essential commodities.

The move is expected to **attract private investment in the value chain of these commodities**.

While the purpose of the Act was originally to protect the interests of consumers by checking illegal trade practices such as hoarding, it has now become detrimental for investment in the agriculture sector in general, and in post-harvesting activities in particular.

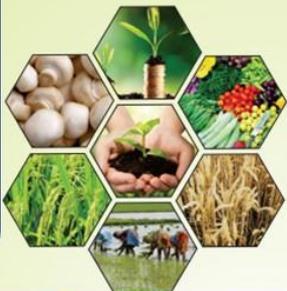
The private sector has so far hesitated investing in cold chains and storage facilities for perishable items as most of these commodities are under the ambit of the EC Act, and can attract sudden stock limits. But now the situation can change.



## Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan

### Amendments to Essential Commodities Act to enable better price realisation for farmers

- Agriculture food stuffs including cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potato to be deregulated.
- Stock limit to be imposed under very exceptional circumstances like national calamities, famine with surge in prices.
- No such stock limit shall apply to processors or value chain participant, subject to their installed capacity or to any exporter subject to the export demand.
- Government will amend Essential Commodities Act.



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## TOPIC 12. INNER LINE PERMIT

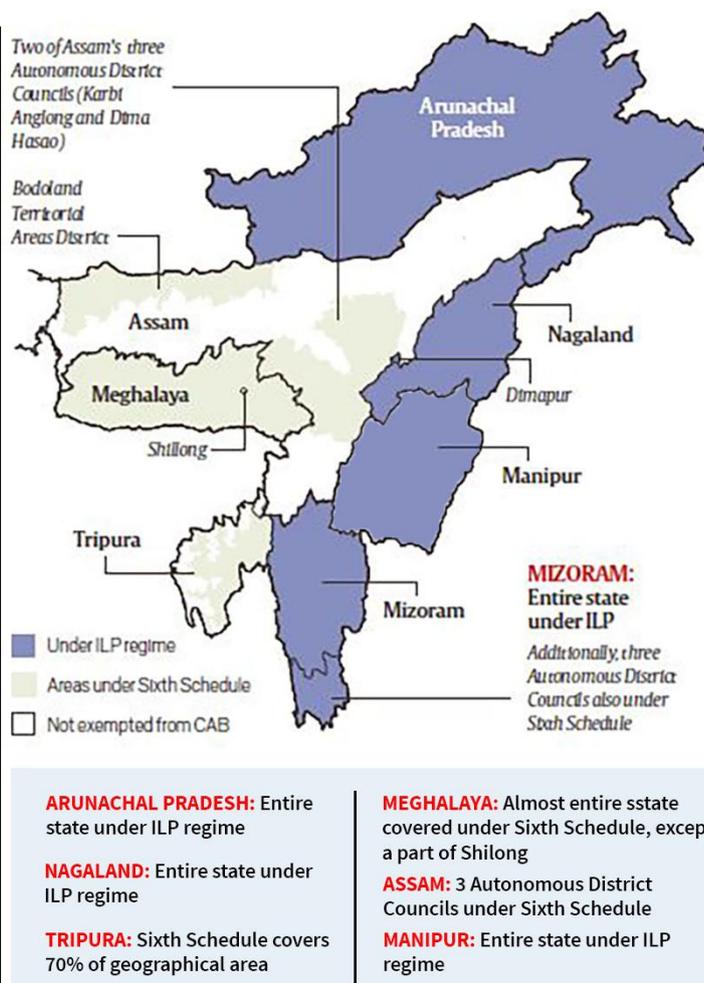
- Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram are protected by Inner Line and lately Manipur was added.
- The concept originates from Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act (BEFR), 1873.

### What is Inner Line Permit, and will it address N-E states' concerns over CAB?

- On 3<sup>rd</sup> June, Supreme Court declined to stay operation of a Presidential order which petitioners claimed deprived Assam of powers to implement Inner Line system in its districts and limit applicability of Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

#### What is Inner Line?

- A concept drawn by colonial rulers, **Inner Line separated tribal-populated hill areas in Northeast from plains.**
- **To enter and stay for any period in these areas, Indian citizens from other areas need an Inner Line Permit (ILP).**
- Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram are protected by Inner Line, and lately Manipur was added. The concept originates from Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act (BEFR), 1873.
- "The policy of exclusion first came about as a response to reckless expansion of British entrepreneurs into new lands which threatened British political relations with hill tribes,"
  - The BEFR prohibits an outsider's — "British subject or foreign citizen" — **entry into are beyond Inner Line without a pass and his purchase of land there.**
  - Inner Line also protects commercial interests of British from tribal communities.
- After Independence, Indian government replaced "British subjects" with "**Citizen of India**".
- In 2013, Home Ministry told Rajya Sabha, "The main aim of ILP system is to prevent settlement of other Indian nationals in States where ILP regime is prevalent, in order to protect indigenous / tribal population."



#### How is it connected to the Citizenship Amendment Act?

- CAA, which relaxes eligibility criteria for certain categories of migrants from three countries seeking Indian citizenship, exempts certain categories of areas, including those protected by Inner Line system.
- Amid protests against Act, **Adaptation of Laws (Amendment) Order, 2019**, issued by President, amended BEFR, 1873, extending it to Manipur and parts of Nagaland that were not earlier protected by ILP.

#### What is the petition?

- The influential Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) and All Tai Ahom Students' Union (ATASU) petitioned Supreme Court against Presidential order.
- Noting that original BEFR included then Assam districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong (now Nagaon), Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, and Cachar, petition said order took away Assam government's permissive power to implement ILP.
- This could have made CAA inapplicable in these areas.
- Groups such as AJYCP have long been campaigning for long for implementation of ILP in Assam.
- The CAA has given fresh legs to demand.

#### What does the SC order imply?

- The petition had sought a stay on Presidential order, which Supreme Court did not grant. The court said it will have to hear what other side (government) has to say on matter. It will hear matter again in two weeks.

## TOPIC 13. KILL VIRUS WITH UV LIGHT

- **Ultraviolet radiation in 200-300 nanometre range is known to destroy virus, making it incapable of reproducing and infecting.**
- Can you kill novel coronavirus with ultraviolet light?
  - Yes, you can, but hurdle for such an approach lies in finding a device that would emit enough ultraviolet light while being, at same time, energy-efficient and portable. Now, researchers have reported that such a device is feasible — personal, handheld, and built from a newly discovered class of conductors.

### Ultraviolet light

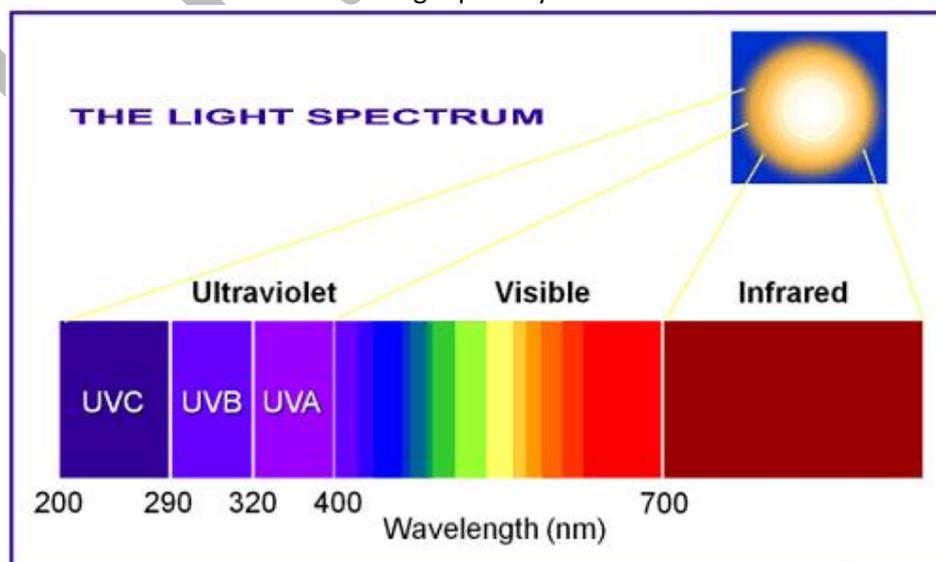
- In the broad spectrum of electromagnetic radiation that comes from sun, and which is transmitted in waves or particles, visible light is just one of several regions that are defined based on the wavelength and frequency of these waves or particles.
- When these regions are arranged according to wavelength, ultraviolet light comes between visible light and X-rays — that is wavelength of UV light is smaller than that of visible light and greater than that of X-rays. **The wavelength of ultraviolet radiation is between 10 nanometres and 400 nanometres (1 nanometre is a billionth part of a metre).**
- **Ultraviolet radiation is one of two methods for sanitising and disinfecting public spaces from bacteria and viruses — the other being chemicals.**
- Both chemicals and ultraviolet radiation are meant to disinfect public spaces only, not human skin. As the World Health Organization points out: **“Ultra-violet (UV) lamps should not be used to disinfect hands or other areas of your skin. UV radiation can cause skin irritation and damage your eyes.”**

### The hurdles

- **To disinfect areas from coronavirus with UV radiation, one needs sources that emit sufficiently high doses of UV light.** Such devices do exist, these radiation sources are **“typically an expensive mercury-containing gas discharge lamp, which requires high power, has a relatively short lifetime, and is bulky”**.
- The solution is to develop UV light-emitting diodes (LEDs), which would be **portable and energy-efficient**. Diodes are, simply put, specialized conductors that transmit electricity in one direction. LEDs that emit UV light, too, exist. But again, **“applying a current to them for light emission is complicated by fact that electrode material also has to be transparent to UV light”**.
- The challenge was to find such a material.

### The solution

- Solution to this challenge could lie in a recently discovered new class of transparent conductors that use a material called **strontium niobate**.
- The researchers reached out to Japanese collaborators to obtain strontium niobate films and tested their performance as UV transparent conductors. **“We immediately tried to grow these films using the standard film-growth technique widely adopted in industry, called **sputtering**.**
- The researchers said this is a critical step towards **technology maturation** which makes it possible to integrate this new material into UV LEDs at low cost and high quantity.



## TOPIC 14. SIXTH MASS EXTINCTION

- Researchers have described **6<sup>th</sup> mass extinction**, or **Anthropocene extinction**, as “most serious environmental problem”, since loss of species here will be permanent.
- The ongoing 6<sup>th</sup> mass extinction may be one of most serious environmental threats to persistence of civilization, according to new research published in journal Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences of United States of America (PNAS).
- The research claims that this extinction is **human-caused** and is more immediate than climate destruction. “**Even though only an estimated 2% of all of species that ever lived are alive today, absolute number of species is greater now than ever before. It was into such a biologically diverse world that we humans evolved, and such a world that we are destroying,**”.

### What is the mass extinction of species?

- Mass extinction refers to a substantial increase in degree of extinction or when Earth loses more than 3/4<sup>th</sup> of its species in a geologically short period of time. So far, during entire history of Earth, there have been five mass extinctions. The sixth, which is ongoing, is referred to as **Anthropocene extinction**.
- The five mass extinctions that took place in last 450 million years have led to destruction of 70-95 % of species of plants, animals and microorganisms that existed earlier.
- These extinctions were caused by “**catastrophic alterations**” to environment, such as massive volcanic eruptions, depletion of oceanic oxygen or collision with an asteroid. After each of these extinctions, it took millions of years to regain species comparable to those that existed before event.

### So what is the sixth mass extinction then?

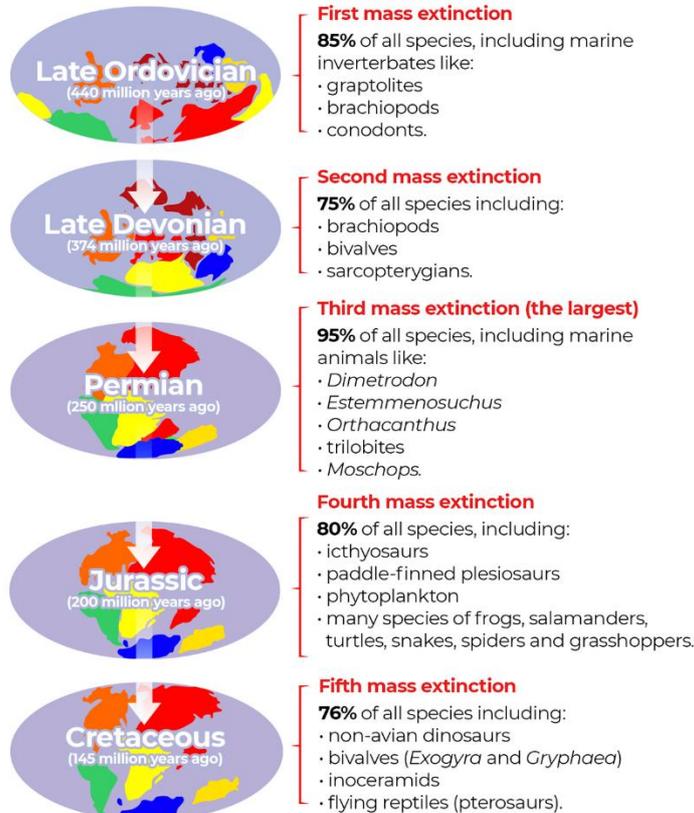
- Researchers have described it as “**most serious environmental problem**” since loss of species will be permanent.
  - 29,400 species of terrestrial vertebrates and determined which of these are on brink of extinction because they have fewer than 1,000 individuals. Out of studied species, they concluded that over 515 of them are near extinction, and that current loss of species, which is based on disappearance of their component populations, has been occurring since 1800s.
  - Most of these 515 species are from South America (30 %), followed by Oceania (21 %), Asia (21 %) and Africa (16 %) among others.
  - The study notes that more than 400 vertebrate species went extinct in last century, extinctions that would have taken over 10,000 years in normal course of evolution. In a sample of 177 species of large mammals, most lost more than 80 % of their geographic range in last 100 years, and as per a 2017 study published in same journal, 32 % of over 27,000 vertebrate species have declining populations.
- Further, attributing this mass extinction to humans, they said that one of the reasons that humanity is an “unprecedented threat” to many living organisms is because of their growing numbers. The loss of species has been occurring since human ancestors developed agriculture over 11,000 years ago. Since then, human population has increased from about **1 million to 7.7 billion**.
- Significantly, the study calls for a **complete ban on wildlife trade** as many of the species currently endangered or on the brink of extinction are being decimated by legal and illegal wildlife trade.
- Researchers point out that the current COVID-19 pandemic, while not fully understood, is also linked to the wildlife trade. “There is no doubt, for example, that there will be more pandemics if we continue **destroying habitats and trading wildlife for human consumption as food and traditional medicines.**”

### What happens when species go extinct?

- According to Center for Biological Diversity, when species go extinct, impact can be tangible such as in form of a **loss in crop pollination and water purification**. Further, if a species has a specific function in an ecosystem, **loss can lead to consequences for other species by impacting the food chain**.
- For instance, when the wolves in Yellowstone Park in California, US, were hunted to near extinction by the 1930s, the deer and elk they preyed upon thrived, as a result of which their grazing decimated the streamside willows and aspens, which provided habitat for songbirds.
- This also left the stream susceptible to erosion and a decline in the songbirds allowed mosquitoes and other insects that the birds would have eaten to multiply.
- Subsequently, the wolves were reintroduced into the park in 1995, after which they preyed on the elks and deer once again, the plant life returned and so did the songbirds.

- The study warns that the **effects of extinction will worsen in the coming decades as the resulting genetic and cultural variability will change entire ecosystems.**
  - “When the number of individuals in a population or species drops too low, its contributions to ecosystem functions and services become unimportant, its genetic variability and resilience is reduced, and its contribution to human welfare may be lost.”

### The “Big Five” mass extinctions



## WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF A 6<sup>TH</sup> MASS EXTINCTION

Made by Renée Kools

Ordovician-Silurian extinction  
450-440 million years ago

Late Devonian extinction  
375-360 million years ago

Permian-Triassic extinction  
251 million years ago

Triassic-Jurassic extinction  
205 million years ago

Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction  
65 million years ago

- Marine species that survived or aren't immediately threatened with extinction
- Terrestrial species that survived or aren't immediately threatened with extinction
- Species that went extinct
- Species threatened with extinction
- Species estimated to be extinct 100-500 years from now

### WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

**A mass extinction** is the extinction of a large number of species within a relatively short period of geological time.

**The Earth** has known five great mass extinctions in the past that each wiped off 50 to 85% of the species that were alive at that time. Some of these events were preceded by a huge disaster, such as a meteorite hitting the surface of the Earth or a supervolcano erupting, while others were caused by the shifting of the continents.

**But** the sixth mass extinction isn't like the ones that killed the dinosaurs; this one is entirely man-made. If we continue the precedent we have set up to this point, this extinction event could be the fastest and one of the most devastating ones we have seen, yet.

**Ecosystems are fragile.** Every animal, insect and plant species fulfills one or more invaluable roles to sustain the ecosystem it lives in. If one of those species goes extinct, the ecosystem needs time to adjust and restore. If several species go extinct in rapid succession, the consequences could be dire.

**Ecosystems are valuable,** and they provide us with resources and “services” free of charge. For instance, the total economic value of pollination by insects worldwide, was estimated to be \$200 billion in 2005.

**We depend on ecosystems to survive.** The environment provides us with clean air, fresh water, ores and fuel. It provides us with the fertile soil we need to build our crops. It regulates climates and functions as a natural buffer against floods and storms.

## TOPIC 15. ANTIFA

- While the movement has had a presence in several European countries and has come into focus in the United States in recent years, **Antifa does not have a formal organizational structure.**
- As massive protests following the death of George Floyd continued to rock the United States, President Donald Trump on Sunday announced that the far-left group Antifa would be designated as a terrorist organization by his government. **“The United States of America will be designating ANTIFA as a Terrorist Organization,”**.
- Even in the past, Trump has described Antifa as a terrorist group. Other right-wing politicians have also criticised the group, including Texas Senator Ted Cruz.
- The group made headlines in June last year when its members clashed with those of a far-right group called Proud Boys in Portland, Oregon. The violence left members of both sides injured, including a journalist with a conservative-leaning publication.

### ANTIFA: The group

- Antifa has been around for several decades, though accounts vary on its exact beginnings. The Merriam-Webster dates the term as far back as Nazi Germany, describing the etymology of ‘antifa’ as “borrowed from German **Antifa, short for antifaschistische ‘anti-fascist’**, in Antifaschistische Aktion (multiparty front initiated by the German Communist Party in 1932 to counter Nazism) and in other collocations”.
- While the movement has had a presence in several European countries and has come into focus in the United States in recent years, Antifa does not have a formal organisational structure. The New York Times said it draws its members from other movements such as Black Lives Matter and the Occupy movement.
- The movement has been known to have a presence in the US in the 1980s. It shot into prominence following the election of President Trump in 2016, with violence marking some of its protests and demonstrations.
- Antifa members typically **dress in black and often wear a mask at their demonstrations**, and follow far-left ideologies such as anti-capitalism. They take up causes such as **LGBTQ** and **indigenous rights**. What makes them stand out is the violence.
- Criticising mainstream liberal politicians for not doing enough, Antifa members have often physically confronted their conservative opponents on the streets, although the group also participates in non-violent protests. Apart from public counter-protests, Antifa members run websites that track white extremist and ultra-right groups.

### Recent activities

- The current group of Antifa members, according to media reports, appears to be a loose affiliation of activists opposing right-wing groups and white supremacists. Antifa groups do not have a uniform presence in the US, with their activity most prominent in the states of Oregon (which includes Portland), California, Texas, and Pennsylvania.
- Antifa members engaged in street clashes in Charlottesville (Virginia) in 2017, following a large demonstration by right-wing radicals. The same year, Antifa members were accused of disrupting a conference by a conservative leader at the University of California at Berkeley. In 2016, a member of the group had punched a right-wing leader on camera, The New York Times reported.
- Because of Antifa’s repeated involvement in violence, many liberal figures have criticised the group for bringing disrepute to existing anti-fascism movements in the country. Antifa’s activities, they note, allow right-wing organisations to portray organisers of peaceful events, too, as extremists. Writer and social commentator Noam Chomsky has been quoted as calling the Antifa “a major gift to the right”. Many have pointed out that major substantive reforms, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the ending of formal racial segregation, were achieved after years of non-violent disobedience.

## TOPIC 16. G-7 GROUP

- Calling the existing Group of Seven (G-7) club a “**very outdated group of countries**”, US President Donald Trump said on Saturday that he wanted to include **India, Russia, South Korea, and Australia** in group; although it was unclear whether he wanted the expansion to be permanent.
- Trump has also **deferred this year’s summit, 46<sup>th</sup> G-7**, saying, “I’m postponing it because I don’t feel that as a G7 it properly represents what’s going on in the world.” The summit was scheduled to be held through June 10-12 at Camp David in the US.
- Last year, G-7 summit was held on August 24-26 at Biarritz in southwestern France, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was invited to attend as a special guest of French President Emmanuel Macron.

### The Group of 7

- G-7 or ‘Group of Seven’ are **Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States**.
- It is an intergovernmental organisation that was formed in **1975** by top economies of the time as an **informal forum to discuss pressing world issues**.
- Canada joined the group in 1976, and the European Union began attending in 1977.
- Initially formed as an effort by the US and its allies to discuss economic issues, the G-7 forum has deliberated about several challenges over the decades, such as the oil crashes of the 1970s, the economic changeover of ex-Soviet bloc nations, and many pressing issues such as financial crises, terrorism, arms control, and drug trafficking.
- The G-7 was known as the ‘G-8’ for several years after the original seven were joined by Russia in 1997. The Group returned to being called G-7 after Russia was expelled as a member in 2014 following the **latter’s annexation of the Crimea region of Ukraine**.
- Since his election in 2016, President Trump has suggested on several occasions that Russia be added again, given what he described as Moscow’s global strategic importance.
- The G-7 does not have a **formal constitution or a fixed headquarters**. The decisions taken by leaders during annual summits are **non-binding**. The rise of India, China, and Brazil over the past few decades has reduced the G-7’s relevance, whose share in **global GDP has now fallen to around 40%**.

### How the G-7 summit works

- The G-7 nations meet at annual summits that are **presided over by leaders of member countries on a rotational basis**. The summit is an informal gathering that lasts two days, in which leaders of member countries discuss a wide range of global issues. **The host country typically gets to invite dignitaries** from outside the G-7 to attend the Summit.
- The groundwork for the summit, including matters to be discussed and follow-up meetings, is done by the “**sherpas**”, who are generally personal representatives or members of diplomatic staff such as ambassadors. The sherpa for Prime Minister Modi at last year’s summit was former Union Minister Suresh Prabhu.

### G-7 and G-20

- The G-20 is a larger group of countries, which also includes G7 members.
- The G-20 was **formed in 1999**, in response to a felt need to bring more countries on board to address global economic concerns.
- Apart from G-7 countries, G-20 comprises **Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey**.
- Together, G-20 countries make up around 80% of world’s economy. As opposed to G-7, which discusses a broad range of issues, deliberations at G-20 are confined to those concerning global economy and financial markets. **India is slated to host a G-20 summit in 2022**.
- US President Donald Trump is keen to expand G7 to include **India, Russia, South Korea and Australia**. He has invited PM Narendra Modi to attend G7 meeting in the US later this year.

### What prompted US to call for an expansion?

- The G7, formed in 1975-76, comprises the US, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, Japan, and Italy. Not all of these countries are among the most advanced now. India is both a military and economic giant but isn't part of the G7. So, its expansion, just like that of the United Nations Security Council, is called for. However, there is more than that to Trump's moves. China has emerged as the new nemesis for the US and many other countries, particularly after the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan. Having India and others in the G7 is Trump's way of **countering the rising influence of China on the world stage**.

### What could be the other reasons?

- The US goes to polls in November to elect its next president and Trump faces a tough fight against the Democratic candidate Joe Biden. The US and China have been fighting a trade war for quite a long time. Both have imposed tariffs on imports of a long list of goods from the other. Mentioning 'Wuhan virus' to provoke China and upping the rhetoric against it, along with inviting four other countries to G7, help Trump sell the promise of 'Make America Great Again' well to his audience. Trump hasn't had the best of relations with few members of G7. Expanding the group helps him accommodate friendly countries.

### Does the Indian diaspora in the US matter?

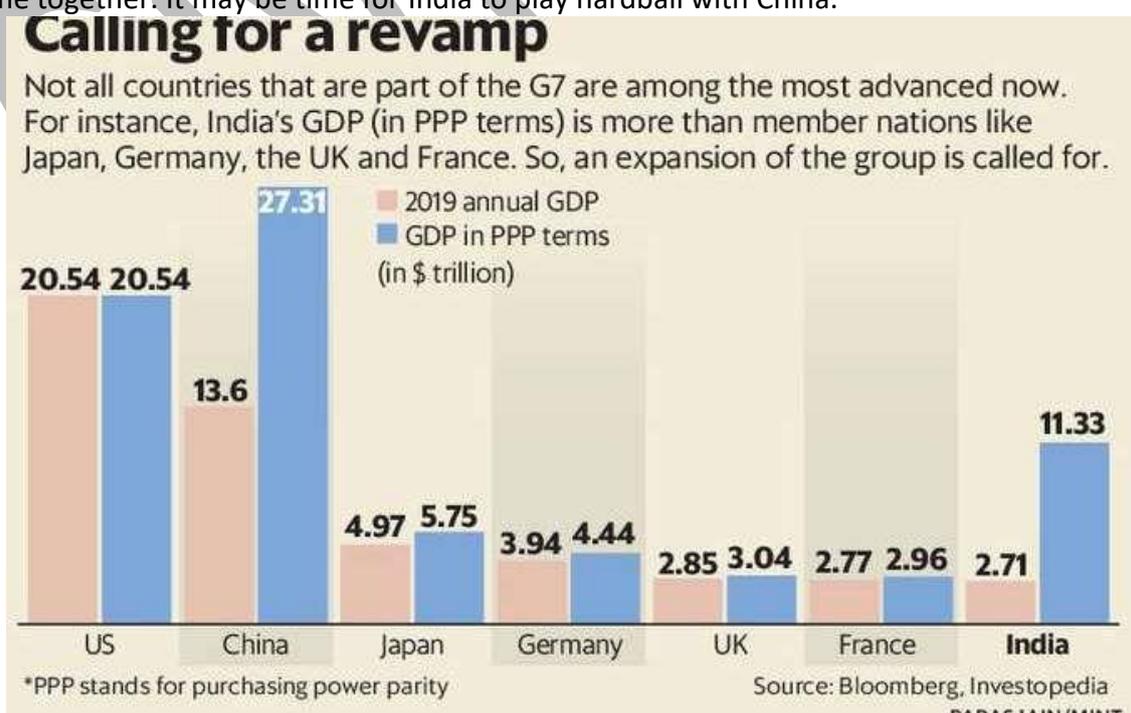
- It does. The Democratic Party is pro-immigration that goes well with Indians based there. However, the party has also been critical of India's record on minority rights, which doesn't go well with most Indians. The Republican Party, particularly under Trump, is anti-immigration but the President has often acknowledged Indians' contribution to the US.

### Why has Trump chosen the four countries?

- If there's any country in Asia that comes anywhere close to China in population, economic and military numbers, it is India. South Korea is a tech and economic superpower and US is committed to defending it against any enemy. Australia is a natural ally for the US in the South Pacific, a region where China has been expanding its influence. That leaves Russia, a force to reckon with any day, given its military superiority. Trump has also usually got along with Putin, its unpredictable leader. Russia also shares a large border with China.

### Should India play along as US takes on China?

- India has had a complex relationship with China. China's past record—it fought a war with India in 1962—makes it difficult for India to trust it. China and India are in a standoff in Ladakh. India and the US are natural allies. One is the world's largest democracy and the other the oldest. There is an urgent need for democracies and rules-based regimes that believe in fair trade and respect for intellectual property rights to come together. It may be time for India to play hardball with China.



## TOPIC 17. ARMISTICE AGREEMENT

- **1953 Korean Armistice Agreement was a ceasefire though there was no official declaration of end of war, and conflict has continued, without fighting between parties.** The events surrounding Korean War and ceasefire are extremely complex and cannot fully be explained without a deep dive into region's history and politics and Second World War.
- The UN Command, led by United States, found that North and South Korea were both guilty of violating armistice agreements following a recent incident involving gunfire along Demilitarized Zone between two countries. The investigations into shooting that occurred on May 3 at border, conducted by a multinational special investigations team, concluded this week, according to a Reuters report.

### What was this shooting about?

- This shooting, the first of its kind in approximately two and a half years, was in violation of the armistice agreement which brought a halt to the Korean War in 1953. According to reports, there were no casualties as a result of the shooting. On May 3, South Korea announced that the two countries had been involved in an exchange of gunfire early in the morning when North Korean soldiers reportedly opened fire at a South Korean guard post at the DMZ. South Korea said it had retaliated by firing 10 shots as a warning towards North Korean posts at the border.
- According to the announcement, South Korea had also warned North Korea through broadcast messages that the firings were a violation of the 2018 inter-Korean military agreement that had come about following a meeting between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in. One of the terms of this agreement, called the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018, said there would be reduced military tensions between the two countries.

### How have the two countries responded?

- Following the shooting, South Korea had stated that it was trying to investigate the shooting. It also said messages had been sent to North Korea to find out more about the causes, but they had not received any responses. North Korea did not separately address the issue. According to subsequent reports in South Korean news publications, the shootings from North Korea did not appear to be intentional. Prior to this, shootings occurred across the DMZ in December 2017 when a North Korean soldier defected to the other side.
- In November 2017, a month prior to this incident, another North Korean soldier defected only to be shot at, as per news reports. The defector required medical supervision following his defection to South Korea. In January 2016, there was another incident of warning shots being fired by South Korea at the border at what was a suspected drone from North Korea.

### What did UN Command find in investigations?

- The UN Command, presently helmed by General Robert B. Adams of the US, that oversees affairs pertaining to the DMZ, led a multinational special investigation regarding the latest shooting's incident at DMZ. A statement released by the UN Command stated that North Korea had been invited to share information regarding this incident, but no formal response had been provided by the country to the investigating team. The investigation said North Korea had violated the armistice of 1953 by firing four rounds, as had South Korea by firing five rounds in return. The report also said investigations had been unable to determine whether the shootings that originated from North Korea had been intentional.
- One of the roles of the UN Command is to ensure the terms of the armistice are being agreed upon by both North Korea and South Korea. Incidents such as these that involve shootings and other similar disturbances, violate the terms of the armistice agreement. Following the release of the UN Command's report this week, South Korea released a statement implying that it did not agree with the statement and that the UN Command ended the investigations without fully looking into North Korea's role in the shootings. South Korea also defended its stance of returning fire, saying it had been operating according to protocol.

### What is the Korean Armistice Agreement?

- The 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement was a ceasefire though there was no official declaration of the end of the war, and the conflict has continued, without fighting between the parties. The events surrounding the Korean War and the ceasefire are extremely complex and cannot fully be explained without a deep dive into the region's history and politics and the Second World War.
- Many do not realize that South Korea, under President Syngman Rhee, did not sign the armistice. In the absence of an official peace treaty, as is the norm, the two officially remain at war. However, in December 1991, North and South Korea signed a pact where they agreed to refrain from aggressions, in a step that would lead to better relations and a potential resolution of the situation. Since the armistice was enforced, there have been several violations of it from both North and South Korea, leading to persistent tensions between the two countries. However, despite this, there have also been a thawing of relations, particularly between South Korea's present leader Moon Jae-In and North Korea's Kim Jong Un.



### The divided Korean peninsula



Source : Ministry of National Defense, South Korea/Natural Earth/ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute/UN/NTI/IISS/CSIS

© AFP

## TOPIC 18. THAAD DEFENCE SYSTEMS

- According to some observers of East Asia, China believes US exerts influence over South Korea and Japan and may interfere with Beijing's long-term military, diplomatic and economic interests in region.
- China has issued a statement reiterating its long-standing **objections to presence of US THAAD missile defence system in South Korea**. Its opposition Friday came following reports of an overnight operation to bring in new, replacement interceptor missiles to the US base in South Korea.
- China has been objecting to defence system since it was first deployed in South Korea three year ago, causing a deterioration in ties between two countries.

### What is THAAD?

- **THAAD is an acronym for Terminal High Altitude Area Defense**, a transportable, ground-based missile defense system.
- THAAD is coupled with **space-based and ground-based surveillance stations**, which transfer data about the incoming missile and informs the THAAD interceptor missile of the threat type classification.
- THAAD is alarmed about incoming missiles by space-based satellites with **infrared sensors.**"
- This anti-ballistic missile defense system has been designed and manufactured by US company Lockheed Martin. South Korea is not the only country with THAAD missile defense system. It has been previously deployed in the UAE, Guam, Israel and Romania.

### What is this South Korea-China controversy over THAAD about?

- In South Korea, THAAD missile defense system is operated by US army stationed in country. The US had previously announced that deployment of this missile defense system was a countermeasure against potential attacks by North Korea, particularly after country had engaged in testing ballistic missiles.
- In 2017, matters escalated in the Korean Peninsula after North Korea test fired a few missiles in the direction of US bases in Japan. Following this incident, the US amended its plans and moved the systems to its army base in Osan, South Korea while the final deployment site was being prepared.
- These moves by the US and by extension, South Korea, particularly angered China. For a while the dispute has temporarily subsided, if not resolved. However, with the latest developments, it appears the controversy has resurfaced.

### Why is China opposing THAAD in South Korea?

- China's opposition has little to do with missiles itself and is more about **system's inbuilt advanced radar systems** that could track China's actions. The controversy also has much to do with **geo-politics and complex conflicts in East Asia**, with US having a presence in the region particularly through its many military bases in **Japan and South Korea**.
- China believes US exerts influence over South Korea and Japan and may interfere with Beijing's long-term military, diplomatic and economic interests in region.
- Following deployment of replacement missiles Friday, China had issued a statement urging US not to harm bilateral relations between Beijing and Seoul. China warned US not to interfere in its "national interests". The US and South Korea have consistently maintained that these missiles are only to counter potential threats by North Korea.
- South Korea also issued a statement saying number of missiles had not increased but had only been replaced with newer versions.

### China's response to THAAD in the past

- When the controversy first arose in 2017, China had hit South Korea economically. South Korean businesses, including large conglomerates like LG, Lotte and Samsung, found their diversified operations hampered. These included the shutting down of institutions and enterprises that had little to do with the defence and military, like golf courses and shopping malls.
- Post this development in 2017, tourism from China to South Korea fell drastically. Many Chinese tourists who are fans of Korean entertainment travel to South Korea — the tourism industry contributes significantly to South Korea's economy.

- South Korea's entertainment industry witnessed concerts, shows and other commercial ventures in China by K-pop stars being forced to cancel because of this controversy.
- South Korean cosmetics and beauty products that are extremely popular in China also witnessed their sales being impacted, due to calls on social media to boycott South Korean products. Hence, the impact of the controversy was not limited to a diplomatic level, but had far-reaching consequences.
- Three years on, it is yet to be seen if the latest development will have a similar effect on relations between the countries.



## TAKING THE HIGH GROUND

The THAAD system provides the critical capability to defend against short and medium ranged ballistic missiles.

**ABILITY TO INTERCEPT MISSILES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ATMOSPHERE**

**DEFENDS POPULATION CENTERS AND HIGH VALUE INFRASTRUCTURES**

**INTEROPERABLE WITH OTHER BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEMS**

**HIGHLY MOBILE AND DEPLOYABLE WORLDWIDE**

## INTERCEPTING A MISSILE

The system has a track record of 100% mission success in flight testing since 2005.

**1**

Radar detects incoming threat.

**2**

The target is identified and engaged.

**3**

Interceptor is fired from truck-mounted launcher.

**4**

Interceptor uses kinetic energy to destroy incoming missile.

## TOPIC 19. INDIA-CHINA TRADE

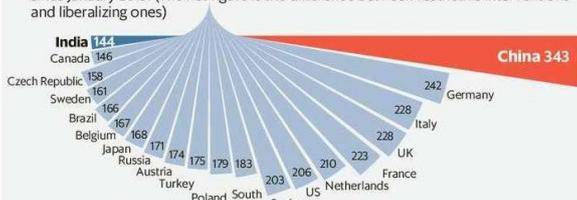
- The **global backlash against China** could tempt India too, but trade and investment are essential to see off coronavirus-induced economic crisis
- The covid-19 pandemic has earned China the ire of quite a few countries. India has not yet complained openly, but the deep-rooted mistrust towards the giant neighbour has been intensifying, nonetheless. The focus may be on the military skirmishes in Ladakh, but the trade screws are also at work—India has been tightening investment norms for China.
- Just last month, India mandated government approval for foreign direct investment (FDI) from countries with which it shares land borders. The curbs aimed to shield Indian companies from predatory investments, particularly those from China—a big hint that policymakers in New Delhi have become ever more cautious of Beijing’s growing role in the Indian economy.
- India’s actions have possibly been made easier by a recent global context. Backlash over covid-19 is just weeks old, but China is not a new trading target. Latest data from Global Trade Alert shows it has faced more trade restrictions than any other country since 2019. Covid-19 is only making its case worse, with Germany and the UK hesitating to let in tech giant Huawei, and Australia and US, among others, calling for inquiries and reparations (**See charts 1a and 1b**).
- Jabin T. Jacob, associate professor of international relations at Shiv Nadar University, called India’s step an “opportunistic move”. **“Since China is being accused of predatory action in other countries, and justifiably so, India can do it too without drawing too much attention,”** he said. **“The fear of predatory investments in the wake of covid-19 disruptions has made India more alert, but analysts and diplomats have been sounding alarm over it for a very long time.”**
- India’s FDI measure against its neighbours came days after the Chinese central bank raised its stake in HDFC to over 1% in April. To be sure, China’s investments, even after including Hong Kong, contribute only a tiny share in India’s total FDI inflow. This holds true even if one goes by China’s numbers, which are higher. Singapore and Japan take up a bigger space in FDI into India (**See chart 2**).
- Given the small FDI share, some of the fears may even be exaggerated because of the growing mistrust towards Beijing, but not all of it. **China’s dominating presence in strategic sectors such as telecom and e-commerce have also raised eyebrows.** Chinese tech giant Alibaba, for instance, holds a significant stake in Paytm, which produces huge volumes of data. This has led to concerns of security of India’s data.
- **Opaque lending practices also lead to mistrust.** Research shows developing countries owe much larger debts to China than was earlier believe. Critics call this the ‘Trojan Horse’ approach. They allege many loans to build infrastructure projects using Chinese contractors in strategically located developing nations are a form of debt-trap diplomacy (**See chart 3**).
- **China is accused of extending excessive credit with the intention of extracting economic or political concessions when countries cannot honour their debts.** This raises fears that China’s credit to countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal could be a strategic disadvantage for India. However, such concerns, may also be a bit overplayed, experts say.
- Moreover, India must remember that even though its **widening trade deficit with China** remains an eyesore for policymakers, dependence on Chinese products has only grown year after year. In 2019, Chinese imports alone accounted for 34% of all the foreign value-added in India’s exports, data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development shows. In 2009, this figure was just 1.8%.
- Foreign value-added refers to the value of imported goods used as inputs in producing intermediate or final goods meant for export.
- Over the last decade, **India’s dependence on China for inputs for the manufacture of drugs and consumer goods has shown a marked increase.** All this will matter even more in this time of crisis after the coronavirus. A strengthening anti-China sentiment and louder calls for self-reliance could actually go against India’s interests and economic logic.

- For instance, to recover from the demand shock, India needs low prices that Chinese goods provide. Entrepreneurship and infrastructure development will also benefit from Chinese financing, and the technology, healthcare and farm sectors need access to Chinese markets right now.
- Indeed, India has played it safe by only blocking the automatic route for investments and not tightening the limit itself. Nor has it named China explicitly. This is a clever move and leaves India room for negotiation. Any outright FDI curbs could hamper trade overall.
- The economic relationship was earlier believed to be a “balm” for geopolitical woes, but now, problems in one aspect only appear to worsen problems in the other. The solution may just be to remember that China is a neighbour India cannot wish away. There is no single policy to tackle the complex and multifaceted relationship. **Even as India confronts China militarily, the need of the hour is better economic cooperation.**

**MINT GRAPHITI**

**Chart 1a**  
**China has been the biggest target of trade restrictions globally since 2019**

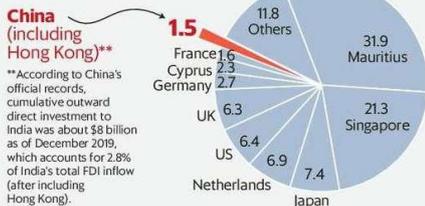
Number of net restrictive trade interventions against each country by other countries since January 2019. (The net figure is the difference between restrictive interventions and liberalizing ones)



Trade interventions are policy instruments used by governments to influence trade with other countries. The Global Trade Alert classifies such interventions as “harmful” (restrictive interventions against another country) or “liberalizing” (favourable interventions). Data as of 2 June.

**Chart 2**  
**Investments from China account for a small share of India's total FDI inflows**

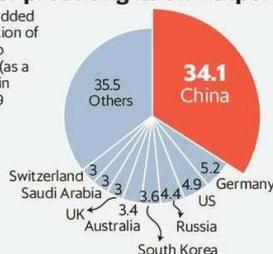
FDI equity inflows from April 2000 to December 2019 (% share in total)



\*\*According to China's official records, cumulative outward direct investment to India was about \$8 billion as of December 2019, which accounts for 2.8% of India's total FDI inflow (after including Hong Kong).

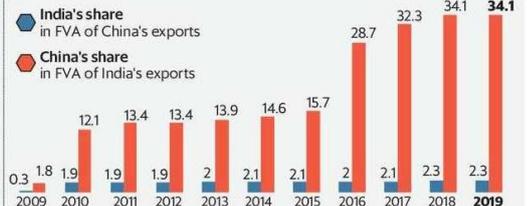
**Chart 3a**  
**India depends most on Chinese imports for producing its own exports**

Foreign value-added (FVA) contribution of each country to India's exports (as a % of total FVA in exports) in 2019



**Chart 3b**  
**Inputs from China have become increasingly important in the production of Indian exports**

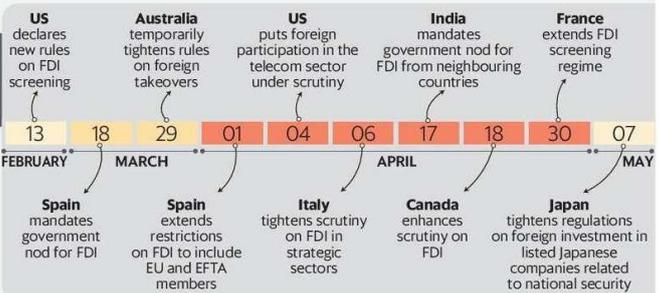
Foreign value-added (FVA) in gross exports refer to the value added by imported inputs in the total value of a country's gross exports



Source: Global Trade Alert, UNCTAD Investment Policy Monitor, Hom, Sebastian, Carmen M. Reinhart, and Christoph Trebesch. 2019. "China's Overseas Lending." NBER Working Paper No. 26050, UNCTAD EORA GVC database, DIPP, Mint calculations



**Chart 1b**  
**Many countries have enforced restrictions on foreign investments amid covid-19**

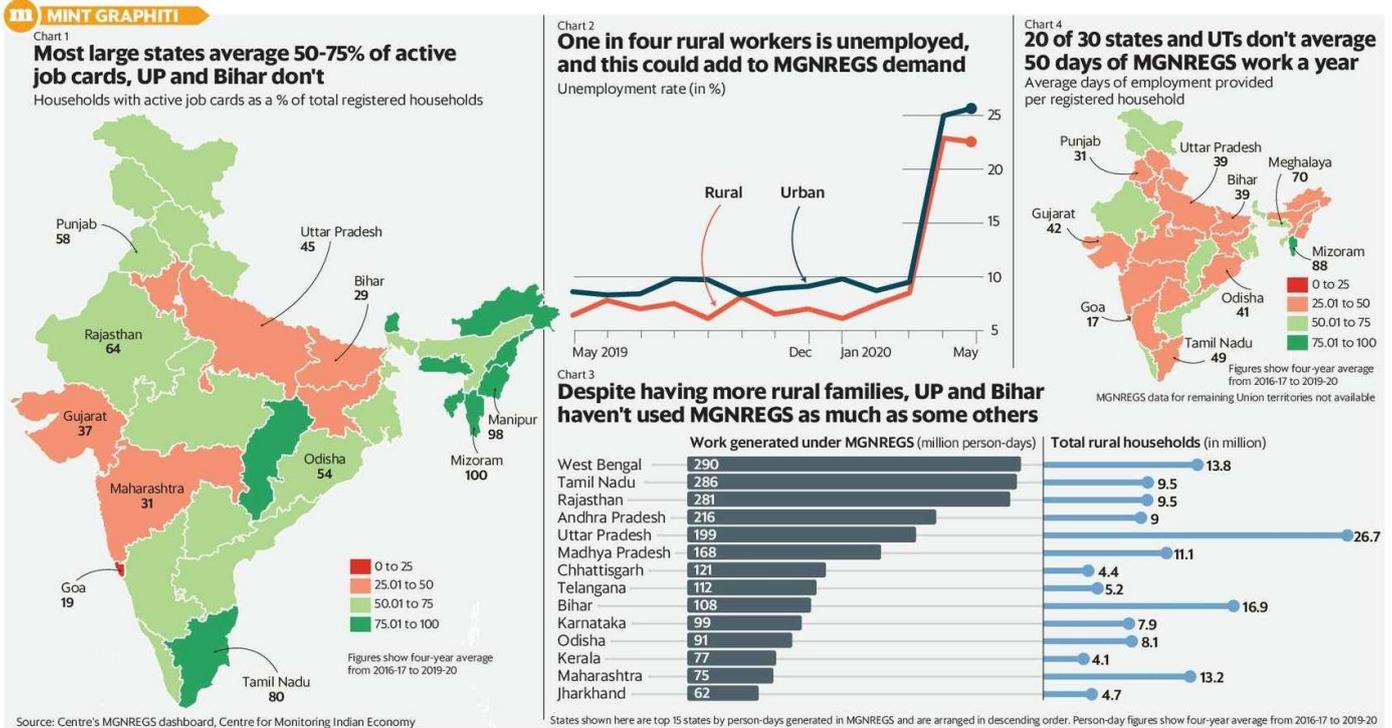


## TOPIC 20. UP AND BIHAR'S MGNREGS CHALLENGE

- As migrant workers return home, rural jobs scheme is key—but two states that will matter the most have a poor record in implementing it
- As covid-19 cases keep rising, ensuing economic crisis continues to take its toll. One of worst-hit groups is **rural migrants**, who have been compelled to go to their villages because of a standstill in cities. At home, these migrants face spectre of poverty due to lack of suitable livelihood opportunities.
- As such, **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)**, which **promises a minimum 100 days of wage employment to every rural household**, takes on added importance. It is best poised scheme in terms of coverage and systems to channel Centre's funds to supplement lost incomes. Moreover, Centre has revised its 2020-21 allocation for scheme from ₹60,000 crore that had earlier been earmarked to **₹1 trillion**.
- Not all states are set to benefit equally. An assessment of performance indicators from 2016-17 to 2019-20 shows that states differ widely on usage, implementation, and effectiveness of MGNREGS. Certain trends become evident, though no state is clearly ahead on all parameters. **Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh** have a good track record. As do Rajasthan and West Bengal to some extent. However, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar, which will account for the maximum number of returning migrants, have mostly underperformed and will need to step up administrative infrastructure in case demand for wage employment spurts.
- **MGNREGS is a highly devolved scheme, with gram panchayats (GPs) empowered to assess demand for wage employment in the villages.** The labour budget prepared by GPs is authorized by programme officers and consolidated across blocks, districts, and the respective state governments. The states then provide labour budgets to an empowered committee of the Union ministry of rural development. The ministry also considers past implementation levels to set state-wise budgets. If work demand increases universally, and states compete for the incremental ₹40,000 crore, those more active in the past will be better placed.
- A key metric that captures effective demand for MGNREGS is the percentage of active job cards, which is the number of registered households seeking work. Around **132 million rural households were registered for MGNREGS in 2019-20**. That is **79% of the 168 million rural households enumerated in Census 2011**.
- However, not all registered households seek work. **Of the 132 million households, just about 59 million, or 45%, sought work in 2019-20**. There are state-level variances. In the last four years, average active job cards range from 29% in Bihar to nearly 100% in Mizoram. This is 50% to 75% for most large states but is lower in Maharashtra, Gujarat, UP, and Bihar (**See chart 1**).
- This demand could jump across states with migrants coming home. Rural unemployment ranged between 6.3% and 8.4% between May 2019 and March 2020, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).
- This had risen to 22.5% by end of May and could increase further as migrants in significant numbers are still retreating from urban areas, where unemployment levels are equally grim (**See chart 2**).
- On supply side, the number of person-days represents the total quantum of work generated. In the past four years, on average, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan generated the most person-days of work. UP and Bihar, which lead in total rural households and migrant workers, do much less.
- UP has twice as many rural households as West Bengal, but recorded 31% fewer MGNREGS person-days during the period. Bihar's MGNREGS profile is more like UP than West Bengal. Bihar is also among the three states that used less than 80% of its approved labour budget, suggesting capacity issues. If demand spikes, these factors will come into play to determine incremental state outlays (**See chart 3**).
- MGNREGS promises 100 days of employment in a year to all work-seeking households, but this has never been realized in the last four years. Barring Meghalaya and Mizoram, no state exceeded 60 days. Among major states, West Bengal leads with 57 days, followed by Andhra Pradesh (53). By comparison, both UP and Bihar registered 39 days. If the rural unemployed flock to MGNREGS, states will come

under pressure to offer more days (See chart 4). States will also be under pressure to offer higher wages. In the last four years, average daily wages have varied from ₹136 in Rajasthan to ₹276 in Haryana. Yet, in most states, MGNREGS wages are significantly below rural wages, even minimum wages. Large pending dues compound this.

- When the lockdown began in March, MGNREGS wages of ₹11,499 crore were pending with the Centre. In the weeks and months ahead, how states and the Centre navigate this matrix of demand and supply, and cash flows, will determine how MGNREGS fares as a distress alleviation programme.



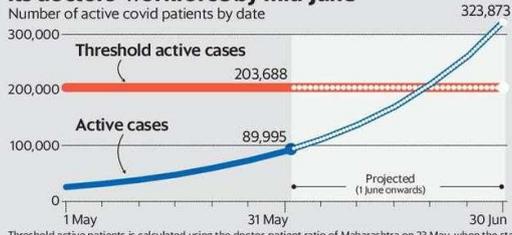
## TOPIC 21. INDIA'S HEALTH WORKER EMERGENCY

- Maharashtra recently sought doctors from Kerala. Some other coronavirus hotspot states could also be in dire need of doctors and nurses soon
- On 23 May, Maharashtra wrote to Kerala, requesting extra doctors and nurses for a new covid-19 treatment centre in Mumbai. The worst-hit state in the pandemic, Maharashtra is also one of the few that meet the World Health Organization's (WHO's) benchmark of sufficient doctors.
- The request raised alarm bells, serving a troubling reminder of how covid-19 can disrupt health systems. The question that follows is: When would other states reach a similar stage?
- With cases rising and the lockdown being relaxed significantly, at least 11 more states could reach this threshold point within a month, a Mint analysis shows. Nationally, the brink could be less than three weeks away, if cases rise at a similar pace as in May. States such as Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Odisha will likely be among the first major ones to get there **(See charts 1a and 1b)**.
- The day Maharashtra sought outside help, the ratio of active coronavirus cases to the number of doctors in the state had reached a high of 0.17. Keeping that as the benchmark, this analysis looked at when other states would reach such a threshold, given their case trajectories and existing health workforce. This threshold should not be seen as an indicator of a complete collapse of the health system. Delhi, for example, has already crossed this threshold, but has not sought external help. Rather, it should be considered an inflection point, after which it may be very difficult to attend to even critical cases in good time.
- In this analysis, doctors referred to allopaths registered with the Medical Council of India, or state medical councils, and their number was 1,201,354 as of September 2019. To project future coronavirus tallies for states, the analysis uses the compounded daily growth rate (CDGR) of active cases in May. But lockdown relaxations could lead to a sharp rise, and the threshold could come faster than what this analysis indicates.
- The analysis suggests that Haryana, which has a poor doctor-to-population ratio, could begin to get stretched in 10 days and, Tamil Nadu, with a high caseload, in 12 days. Delhi is the only one to have crossed Maharashtra's threshold, though it is not clear how it is managing the undeclared crisis, given the limited information the state government provides. A questionnaire sent by Mint to the Delhi health department on Sunday afternoon had not elicited a response by Monday evening.
- Some low burden states, such as Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, appear to be even closer to the threshold, but that is because of the base effect. These states had very few active cases on 1 May and have seen a surge since then.
- Bihar and Assam are also within three weeks to the brink. With migrant labourers returning from high-burden cities, cases have surged in these states. The covid-19 pandemic may have brought about this tipping point, but the real reason for the crisis lies in India's historically low doctor-to-population ratio. Poor and populous states, such as Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, have among the worst doctor-to-population ratios, with nearly 3,000 or more people per doctor, as opposed to the WHO's standard of 1,000 **(See chart 2)**.
- **Overall, each Indian doctor caters to 1,134 people on an average.** However, in reality, this ratio could be even worse.
- A study in the Indian Journal of Public Health found that just about **two-thirds of the registered doctors are actually practising at a time.** Most Indian states have dismal nurse density, too. Long work shifts and possibility of infection among medical staff have only increased the strain on the healthcare workforce. One major reason for the **low density of doctors is the delay in filling up vacant posts and the limited number of medical graduates.** About 45% of districts in India do not have a medical college. Even in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), the apex medical institute, several faculty and health staff posts are vacant. As of February, 30% faculty positions and 15% paramedical posts at AIIMS, Delhi, were vacant. **India ranks 118 among all United Nations members in terms of doctor-to-people ratio, according to WHO data.**

- India's ratio is the worst among the dozen nations with over 2,000 covid-19 deaths. The country also has the second-worst ratio among G20 economies (See chart 3).
- Unlike isolation beds and personal protective equipment, doctors cannot be produced in a month or a year.
- The pandemic is a grim reminder that India does not have enough doctors to fight a highly infectious disease. It is paying the price for neglecting a key sector for several decades.

**MINT GRAPHITI**

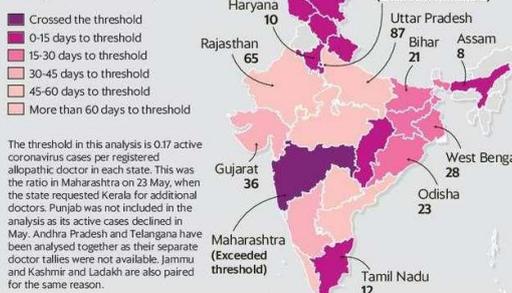
**Chart 1a**  
India likely to reach the threshold point of its doctors' workforce by mid-June



Threshold active patients is calculated using the doctor-patient ratio of Maharashtra on 23 May, when the state requested Kerala for additional doctors. The threshold should not be seen as an indicator of complete collapse of the health system. The rate of growth of active patients is based on compound daily growth rate in May.

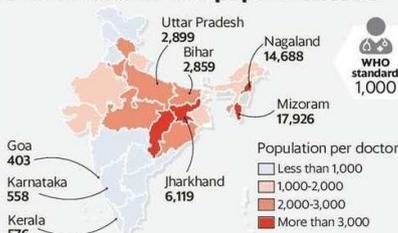
**Chart 1b**  
Haryana and Tamil Nadu may need additional doctors within a fortnight

Days left to reach threshold number of active coronavirus cases, projected based on each state's compound daily growth rate in May.



The threshold in this analysis is 0.17 active coronavirus cases per registered allopathic doctor in each state. This was the ratio in Maharashtra on 23 May, when the state requested Kerala for additional doctors. Punjab was not included in the analysis as its active cases declined in May. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have been analysed together as their separate doctor tallies were not available. Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are also paired for the same reason.

**Chart 2**  
Most states in India fall short of the WHO standard for doctor-population ratio

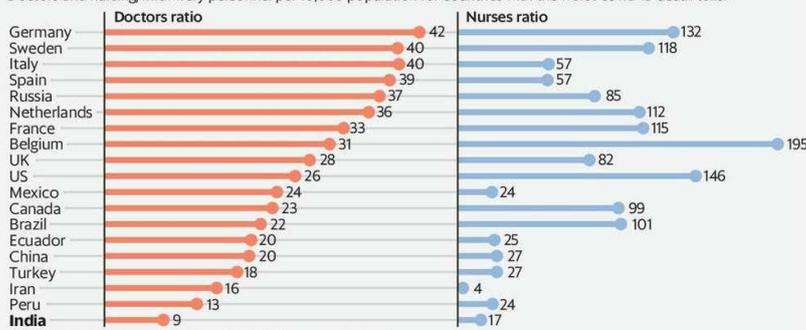


Based on data shared by the health ministry in Parliament. Data as of 30 September 2019. Population used to calculate the ratio is 2020 estimate. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have been listed together as their separate doctor tallies were not available. Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are also paired for the same reason.



**Chart 3**  
Among countries with 2,000+ covid-19 deaths, India has the worst doctors ratio

Doctors and nursing/midwifery personnel per 10,000 population for countries with the worst covid-19 death tolls.



Data for covid-19 deaths as of 31 May (only for the 19 countries with 2,000+ deaths). Doctors and nurses ratio based on latest available data from WHO.

Source: MoHFW, Johns Hopkins Covid-19 dashboard, WHO

## TOPIC 22. RELATIONSHIPS MILLENNIALS WANT

- A fourth of millennials do not wish to marry and a fifth do not want children, data from the latest round of YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey shows
- Millennials are quick to be blamed for ruining well-established industries. Now, they may have also ruined the business of marriage. One in four young adults in India do not want to marry, data from the YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey shows. Among millennials, 19% aren't interested in either children or marriage. Another 8% want children but are not interested in marriage. Among post-millennials, or Gen Z adults, 23% aren't interested in either children or marriage. As in the case of millennials, 8% want children but are not interested in marriage. There is very little gender-wise differences in these trends **(See chart 1)**.
- **Financial insecurity** appears to be a key driver of such decisions. Among households with monthly income less than ₹10,000, 40% millennials said they were unwilling to marry. In richer households (with income over ₹60,000), the survey finds only 20% to be disinclined. Richer millennials are also more likely to have children than poorer ones, the survey suggests.
- Given that the survey was conducted against the backdrop of an economic slowdown, intensified by fears of a looming pandemic, it is possible that uncertainty about the future played a role in shaping the responses on marriage and children **(See chart 2)**.
- The YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey was conducted online between 12 March and 2 April and covered a sample of 10,005 respondents across 184 towns and cities. Of these, 4,957 were millennials, 2,983 post-millennials, and 2,065 pre-millennials. The World Health Organization declared covid-19 to be a global pandemic just before the survey began, on 11 March. The survey was conducted jointly by Mint, the Indian arm of the global market research firm, YouGov, and the Delhi-based think tank, CPR (Centre for Policy Research) to gauge the aspirations and attitudes of India's digital natives.
- **Caste and class** still hold sway over the marriage market, the survey shows. Among those who wish to get married, affluent respondents expressed a stronger preference for a partner from a similar income bracket, class, religion, and language. Relatively poorer respondents preferred to have a partner from the same caste as theirs **(See chart 3)**.
- **Who are Millennials?**
  - Millennials refer to those who have attained adulthood in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and grew up at a time when the world became digitally connected.
  - **Here, millennials refers to those born between 1981 and 1996 (aged 24-39 years now).**
  - Those born after 1996 (aged 23 years or below) are referred to as **post-millennials or Gen Z**.
  - The rest (40 years and above) have been classified as **pre-millennials**.
- A part of this aversion to marriage perhaps springs from frustration at trying and not finding a suitable life-partner. Aversion to marriage is higher among older millennials (those above 30) than among younger ones (those below 30). Among older millennials—who are likely to have been in the marriage market longer—35% said they didn't want to get married. Only a quarter of younger millennials expressed the same preference.
- Given that only 14% of pre-millennials surveyed were unmarried, they have been excluded from this analysis. Of the rest, 32% of respondents were married. 57% were single, 8% were in a relationship but not married, and another 3% were previously-married (currently separated, divorced, or widowed).
- Nearly four of ten millennials who wished to get married said they were fine with an arranged marriage. Only three of ten post-millennials said the same. Among post-millennials, those living in metros expressed a greater desire for having a "love marriage" **(See chart 4)**.
- It is worth noting that the share of respondents expressing their desire for a "love marriage" is far higher than the actual share of such marriages in which people choose their own partners. As these pages have pointed out earlier, only a small minority tend to marry a partner of their choice even in urban India. Among millennials, women were more averse to an arranged marriage than men. Of the

non-married millennials, 49% women said they wanted to have a “love marriage”. Only 41% of men from the same cohort expressed a similar preference (See chart 5).

- One reason for such gender-wise differences may lie in the limited say that women typically have in arranged marriages. Many get married without even a basic introduction to their partners. Only half of the women in the age group of 15-32 years who were married as of 2011-12, had interacted with their spouses in person or through phone or email or had even seen a picture before their wedding, the India Human Development Survey showed.
- The decision to marry early or late depends on education levels, the latest survey suggests. Over a third of unmarried post-graduates said they wanted to marry after 30 (See chart 6). This proportion was lower for those with only a college degree or vocational education. Nearly a third of those with only school education said they wanted to marry after 30.

**MINT GRAPHITI**

**Chart 1**  
**Compared to millennials, a lower proportion of Gen Z aspires to marry and have children**

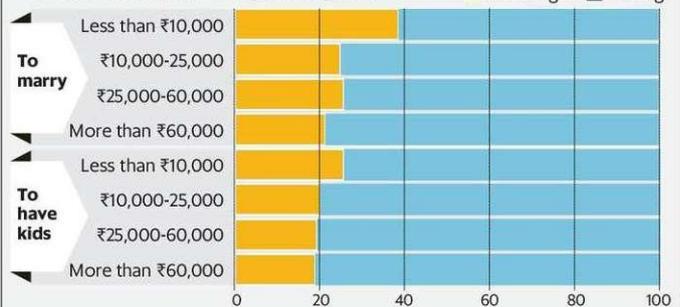
The following two-by-two table shows the proportion of each combination of responses. For instance, 65% of millennial respondents (57% among GenZ) wish to get married and also wish to have children

	MILLENNIALS		POST MILLENNIALS	
	Don't wish to have children	Wish to have children	Don't wish to have children	Wish to have children
Wish to get married	9%	65%	12%	57%
Don't wish to get married	19%	8%	23%	8%

For 4,899 respondents (2,152 millennials and 2,747 post-millennials) who were non-married and did not already have children.

**Chart 2**  
**Poorer millennials are less willing to marry and have kids**

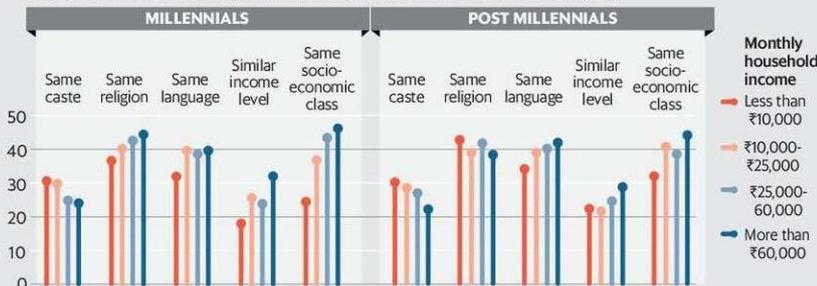
Millennial respondents, given their household income, who said that they were willing/unwilling (in %)



The chart on willingness to marry is based on responses of 2,462 non-married millennials. Chart on willingness to have kids is based on responses of 4,957 millennials and includes those who have children and want to raise more.

**Chart 3**  
**Richer households look to marry within same class and income levels**

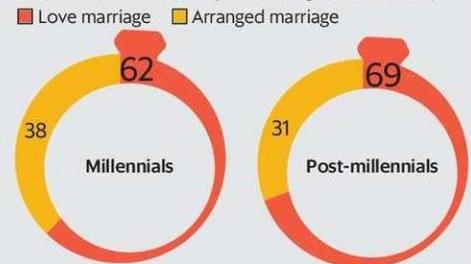
Respondents with following partner preferences, given household income (in %)



For 3,765 (1,989 post-millennial and 1,776 millennial) non-married respondents who said they wished to get married.

**Chart 4**  
**Seven out of 10 post-millennials want a love marriage**

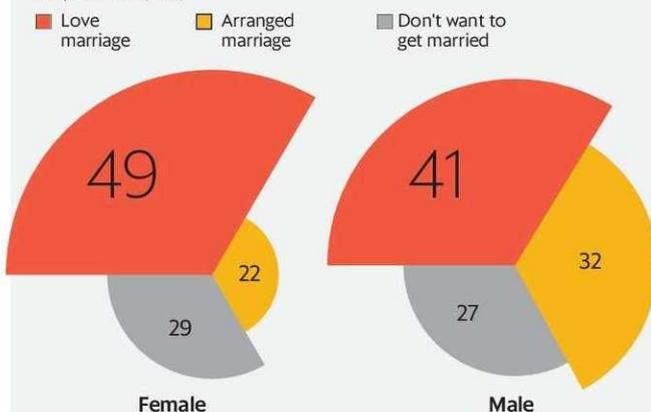
Respondents who said they wished to get married (in %)



For 3,756 non-married respondents (1,989 post-millennials and 1,776 millennials) who said they wished to get married.

**Chart 5**  
**Among millennials, women are more keen on love marriage**

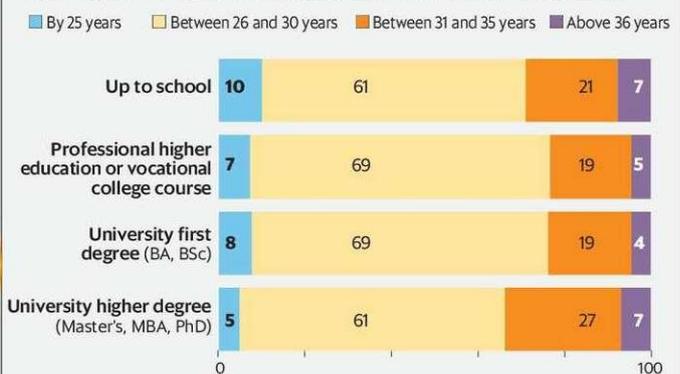
Respondents (in %)



For 2,462 non-married millennials (1,239 females and 1,223 males)

**Chart 6**  
**Millennials with higher education do not aspire to get married early**

Aspired age of marriage, given highest education level attained (% respondents)



This analysis is based on 1,627 non-married millennials. Professional higher education or vocational college course category clubs "Professional higher education (e.g. to qualify as a lawyer, accountant)" and "Vocational college education (e.g. to qualify as an electrician, nurse) and general junior college education". Uptil school includes all categories such as till secondary school, upper primary school. Only respondents whose current age is lower than their desired age of marriage are considered here.

Source: YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey (Mar - Apr 2020)

## FACTS for ANSWER WRITING

### FACT 1. INDIA'S RATING

## Heading for course correction

In 2017, Moody's was one notch above other rating agencies. Now, two-and-a-half years later, it admits that the implementation of reforms has been relatively weak.

Date	Rating	Rating action
1 Jun 2020	Baa3	<b>Downgrade</b> , Outlook unchanged at <b>negative</b>
7 Nov 2019	Baa2	<b>Rating affirmation</b> , Outlook changed to <b>negative</b>
16 Nov 2017	Baa2	<b>Upgrade</b> , Outlook changed to <b>stable</b>
16 Nov 2016	Baa3	<b>Rating affirmation</b>
9 Apr 2015	Baa3	<b>Rating affirmation</b> , Outlook changed to <b>positive</b>
22 Jan 2004	Baa3	<b>Upgrade</b>
16 Oct 2003	Ba1	<b>On watch</b> , possible upgrade
3 Feb 2003	Ba1	<b>Upgrade</b>
14 Nov 2002	Ba2	<b>On watch</b> , possible upgrade
19 Jun 1998	Ba2	<b>Downgrade</b>
8 Jan 1998	Baa3	<b>On watch</b> , possible downgrade

Source: Moody's

## 'Moody's downgrade expected, India unlikely to slip to junk status'

*India's sovereign credit rating downgrade by Moody's was expected and factors like high quantum of forex reserves and prospects of a good farm harvest would prevent a further slip to the non-investment grade, Bank of America said*

### What did Moody's do?

Moody's Investors Service on Monday downgraded the country's rating by one notch to 'Baa3', the lowest in the investment grade, with a negative outlook on worries over growth and fiscal risks

### Way out:

Economists at Bank of America (BofA) Securities pitched for the country to continue with the fiscal



stimulus measures because of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic

### OUTLOOK:

The brokerage said India should not fear a further downgrade in the ratings into the non-investment grade category

### Reasons for growth worries:

- Excessive tightening of rates by the RBI in 2018
- Real lending shock due to fall in wholesale price inflation in 2019
- Global COVID-19 shock

### Factors protecting India from a further downgrade:

- High quantum of forex reserves
- Expected recapitalisation of state-owned banks through issuance of dedicated bonds or using RBI's \$127 billion revaluation reserves
- Prospect of a good farm harvests

**Cyclical slowdown:** *Terming the slowdown in growth cyclical and not structural, the brokerage said 2020-21 growth will be 9 percentage points lower than the potential, which necessitates fiscal support*

Source: Bank of America/PTI

## FACT 2. IMD

The India Meteorological Department on Monday confirmed that the southwest monsoon has set in over Kerala ahead of its initial forecast of 5 June.

### WHAT THE MET DEPT PREDICTS

#### NORMAL RAINFALL

Rainfall in the June-September period will be normal, that is 96-104% of the long-period average, or LPA.

#### THE JULY DOWNPOUR

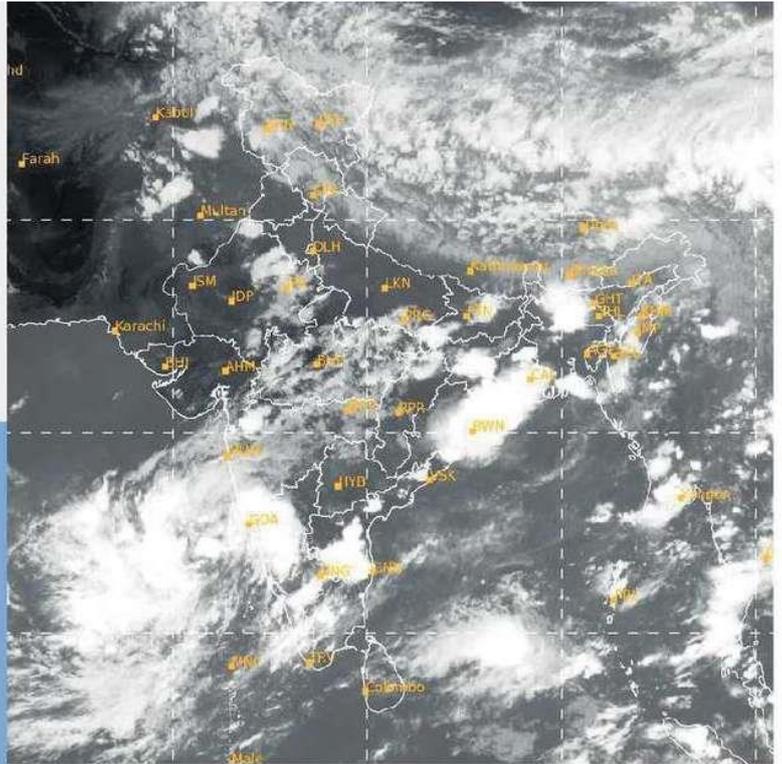
Rainfall over the country as a whole is likely to be 103% of its LPA during July and 97% of LPA during August.

#### NO EL NIÑO THIS YEAR

The global ocean phenomenon known for its link to below-normal monsoon rains in India is likely to be inactive.

### Region-wise forecast of rainfall

Long-period average estimate (in %)



A satellite image shows the onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala, and the brewing cyclonic storm in the Arabian Sea.

## FACT 3. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

### 'Most consumers want to buy goods from kiranas'

A majority of Indian consumers want to buy from locally sourced items going forward, according to the 'Deloitte Global State of the Consumer Tracker' survey



**NO RUSH TO STOCKPILE:** CONSUMERS IN THE COUNTRY ARE ALSO NOT RUSHING TO STOCK GROCERY IN THEIR HOMES

**MOST AGAINST USING PUBLIC TRANSIT:** ON MOBILITY, MAJORITY CONSUMERS SAID THEY WANT TO LIMIT THE USE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

**55%**  
Willing to spend a lot more on less discretionary items like groceries

**52%**  
Willing to spend on everyday household goods

**72%**  
Want to buy from locally sourced items going forward

**64%**  
Said they will buy from brands

that have responded well to crisis

**70%**  
Want to avoid ride-hailing options altogether, so as to maintain social distancing to ward off COVID-19 risk

**TRUST IN KIRANAS:** The survey reflects the trust built by kiranas, also known as convenience stores or 'mom-and-pop' stores, during the lockdown

Source: Deloitte/PTI

**1,000:** Number of respondents over 18 years who participated in each of the 13 countries — including India, Australia, Canada, China, and France — surveyed between April 19 and May 16

**79%:**  
Have an intention to own a new vehicle

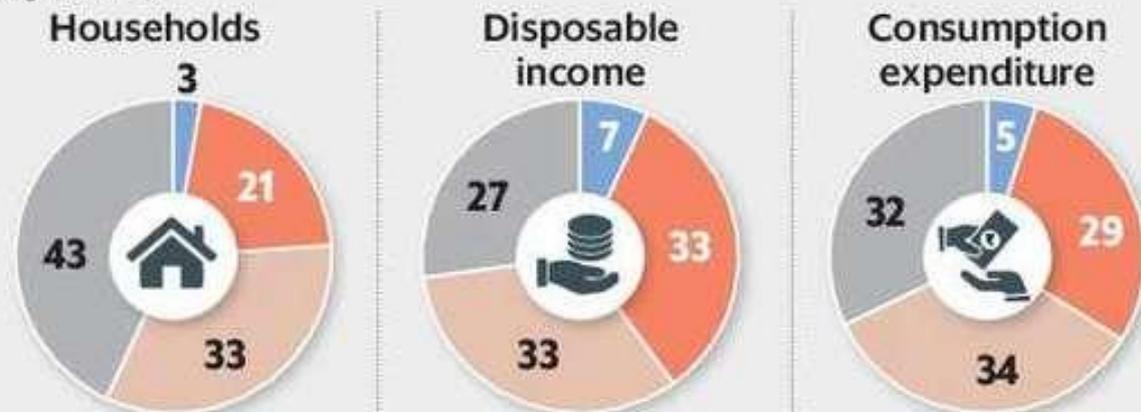


### Spending pattern

76% of India's households are either in the low-income or lower-mid income segment, contributing 66% of the overall consumption.

Low-income (<₹2.5 Lakh)
  Lower-mid-income (₹2.5–5 lakh)
  Upper-mid-income (₹5–27 lakh)
  High-income (>₹27 lakh)

(Figures in %)



Source: PRICE projections based on ICE 360° surveys (2014, 2016, 2018)

## FACT 4. GLOBAL DEPRESSION

### 'COVID-19 could cause \$8.5 trillion loss in global output'

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres has warned that the COVID-19 pandemic will cause unimaginable devastation, usher in hunger and famine of historic proportions and lead to a loss of \$8.5 trillion in global output



**SHARPEST CONTRACTION** since the Great Depression

**NEED FOR THE WORLD** to respond to the unprecedented crisis with unity

**NEED TO INVEST** in a sustainable and inclusive recovery

**60 MILLION** more people pushed into extreme poverty

**UP TO HALF THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE** — 1.6 billion people — without livelihoods

**LOSS OF \$8.5 TRILLION** in global output — the sharpest contraction since the Great Depression of the 1930s

**TROUBLING SIGNS:** Increasing risk of nuclear proliferation to the lawlessness of cyberspace

**Word of caution:** Ignoring these warning signs is senseless arrogance. Existential threats demand humility, unity and solidarity, the Secretary General said

**Beginning with the global liquidity crisis, he said this was where the health and economic crises meet**

Source: PTI

## MODEL ANSWER

**Q 1.** Explain how the foundations of the modern world were laid by the American and French revolution. [12.5 Marks, 200 words]

### ANSWER

#### INTRODUCTION

- American and French Revolution along with renaissance in Europe laid foundation of modern world in **social, economic, and political spheres characterised by emergence of scientific thought and humanism.**

#### BODY

American Revolution or American war of Independence, 1777 introduced following values in world

- Every human being should have some basic **Human Rights** which will help them to live with dignity.
- **Democracy**, which is form of government elected by and working for people
- Emergence of **Liberal Thoughts**, which means people were free to do whatever they desire.

French Revolution, 1789 introduced following values in world

- **Liberty, Equality and Fraternity** in all spheres of life.
- **Constitutionalism** – emergence of constitution which is ultimate rule book and ruling countries according to rule of law rather than any arbitrary diktat.
- **Emergence of Nationalism** as unifying force, which helped countries to expand.
- **Republic**, which is absence of any privilege class and ultimately rule by people.

#### CONCLUSION

- The **world we see today and rights we enjoy** would not have been possible without American and French revolution.

**Q 2. Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Comment [12.5 Marks, 200 words]**

### **ANSWER**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- **Arts** refers to individually or collectively created products of value, expression or application of creative skill and imagination such as painting, sculpture, music, dance, theatre, films, graphic arts etc.
- **Heritage** refers to valued property such as historic buildings, artwork, books and manuscripts and other artefacts that have been passed down from previous generations. They are of special value and are worthy of preservation.
- But presently Indian art heritage is facing challenges such as **cheap piracy , lack of maintenance from government , face lifting and makeover in the name modernisation ultimately losing its original values , attack by vested interests and manipulation** etc.

#### **BODY**

- Indian Art heritage should be safeguarded because
  - It is **reflection of our past** and can be **great seat of learnings.**
  - It serves as **identity and pride** of our country.
  - We can **attract tourism and boost our economy.**
  - It creates a **sense of attachment** and **enhances a sense of belonging.**

#### **CONCLUSION**

- We can safeguard Indian art heritage in following way
  - **Strengthening institutions** engaged in cultural preservation
  - **Cultural awareness programs.**
  - Including **essence of culture** in school and colleges curriculum
- If Indian heritage is not safeguarded, then **our future generation will be deprived** our great past and its glory.