



Civil's IAS
Empowering Nation

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A holistic magazine for UPSC Prelims, Mains and Interview Preparation

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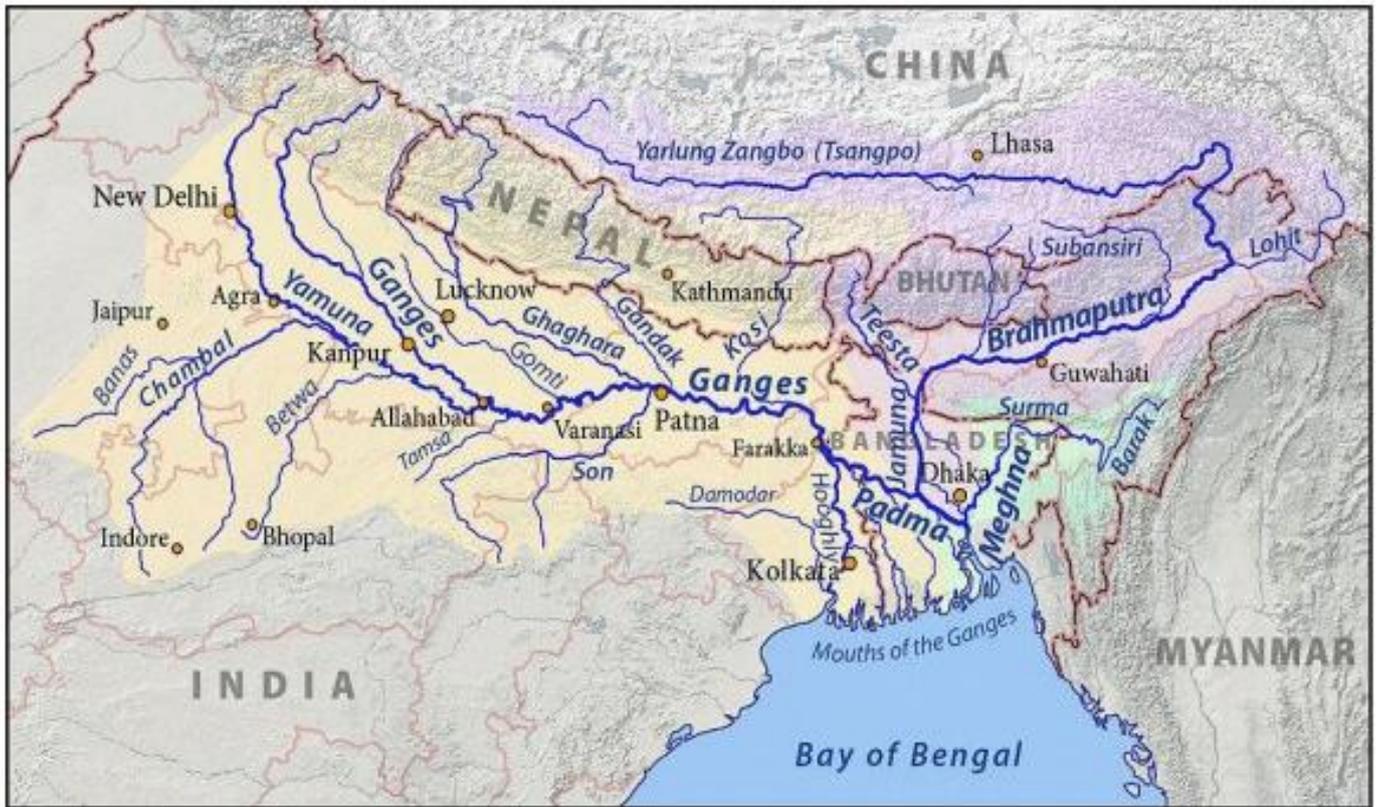
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FACTS for ANSWER WRITING

- FACT 1. JOBLESS
- FACT 2. CLINICAL TRIALS



1. Bangladesh is discussing an almost \$1 billion loan from China for a comprehensive management and restoration project on the Teesta river. The project is aimed at managing the river basin efficiently, controlling floods, and tackling the water crisis in summers.
2. India and Bangladesh have been engaged in a long-standing dispute over water-sharing in the Teesta. More importantly, Bangladesh's discussions with China come at a time when India is particularly wary about China following the standoff in Ladakh.

3. How has the Teesta dispute progressed?

- a. The two countries were on the verge of signing a water-sharing pact in September 2011, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was going to visit Bangladesh. But, West Bengal Chief minister Mamata Banerjee objected to it, and the deal was scuttled.
- b. After Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, he visited Dhaka in June 2015 — accompanied by Mamata Banerjee — and told Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina that he was confident they could reach a “fair solution” on the Teesta through cooperation between central and state governments.
- c. Five years later, the Teesta issue remains unresolved.

4. How has India's relationship with Bangladesh played out over the years?

- a. New Delhi has had a robust relationship with Dhaka, carefully cultivated since 2008, especially with the Sheikh Hasina government at the helm.
- b. India has benefited from its security ties with Bangladesh, whose crackdown against anti-India outfits has helped the Indian government maintain peace in the eastern and Northeast states.
- c. Bangladesh has benefited from its economic and development partnership. Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia. Bilateral trade has grown steadily over the last decade: India's exports to Bangladesh in 2018-19 stood at \$9.21 billion, and imports from Bangladesh at \$1.04 billion.
- d. India also grants 15 to 20 lakh visas every year to Bangladesh nationals for medical treatment, tourism, work, and just entertainment. A weekend shopping trip to India by Bangladesh' elite is

quite common — when the film Bahubali was released, a group of Bangladesh nationals came to India in chartered flights to watch it in Kolkata.

- e. For India, Bangladesh has been a key partner in the neighbourhood first policy — and possibly the success story in bilateral ties among its neighbours.
- f. However, there have been recent irritants in the relationship.

5.What are these irritants?

- a. These include the proposed countrywide National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed in December last year. Bangladesh had cancelled visits by ministers, and Hasina has expressed reservations about CAA. She had said that while the CAA and the proposed nationwide NRC are “internal matters” of India, the CAA move was “not necessary”.
- b. Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, who has served as India’s envoy in Dhaka, flew to Dhaka in early March to assuage such concerns. Amid discussions between Bangladesh and China, Shringla went to Bangladesh this week, too. He was the first visitor Hasina has met since the Covid-19 pandemic began.

6.How have relations between Bangladesh and China been developing?

- a. “China is the biggest trading partner of Bangladesh and is the foremost source of imports. In 2019, the trade between the two countries was \$18 billion and the imports from China commanded the lion’s share. The trade is heavily in favour of China,” said Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, Senior Fellow at Observer Research Foundation, a New Delhi-based think tank.
- b. Recently, China declared zero duty on 97% of imports from Bangladesh. The concession flowed from China’s duty-free, quota-free programme for the Least Developed Countries. This move has been widely welcomed in Bangladesh, with the expectation that Bangladesh exports to China will increase.
- c. India too has provided developmental assistance worth \$10 billion, making Bangladesh the largest recipient of India’s total of \$30 billion aid globally. China has promised around \$30 billion worth of financial assistance to Bangladesh.
- d. Additionally, Bangladesh’s strong defence ties with China make the situation complicated. China is the biggest arms supplier to Bangladesh and it has been a legacy issue — after the liberation, officers of Pakistan Army — who were well-versed with Chinese arms — joined Bangladesh Army and that’s how they preferred Chinese weapons As a result, Bangladesh forces are equipped with Chinese arms including tanks, missile launchers, fighter aircraft and several weapons systems. Recently, Bangladesh purchased two Ming class submarines from China.
- e. In the wake of the Ladakh standoff, India has become more sensitive to Chinese defence inroads into Bangladesh.

7.How has India been engaging with Bangladesh post CAA?

- a. Over the last five months, India and Bangladesh have cooperated on pandemic-related moves. Hasina supported Modi’s call for a regional emergency fund for fighting Covid-19 and declared a contribution of \$1.5 million in March 2020. India has also provided medical aid to Bangladesh.
- b. The two countries have also cooperated in railways, with India giving 10 locomotives to Bangladesh. The first trial run for trans-shipment of Indian cargo through Bangladesh to Northeast states under a pact on the use of Chittagong and Mongla ports took place in July.
- c. However, in recent weeks, Pakistan PM Imran Khan’s call to Hasina raised eyebrows in Delhi. While Islamabad portrayed it as a conversation on Kashmir, Dhaka said it was about cooperating to deal with Covid-19.

8.How has India sought to address China’s latest move?

- a. During Shringla’s recent meeting with Hasina, “security-related issues of mutual interest” were discussed. The visit tried to address issues on areas that have emerged as potential irritants in the relationship.

- b. Bangladesh expressed “deep concern” at the rise in killings at the Indo-Bangladesh border by “BSF or Indian nationals” during the first half of this year, and the Indian side assured that the BSF authorities have been sensitised of the matter and it will be discussed in detail at the DG-level talks between Border Guards Bangladesh and BSF to be hosted by Dhaka next month.

9. Among other issues:

- a. The two sides agreed that Implementation of projects should be done in a timely manner, and that greater attention is required to development projects in Bangladesh under the Indian Lines of Credit.
- b. Bangladesh sought return of the Tablighi Jamaat members impacted by the lockdown in India, and also early release of the 25 Bangladeshi fishermen in custody in Assam. India assured Bangladesh that its nationals would be able to return soon.
- c. Bangladesh requested for urgent reopening of visa issuance from the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, particularly since many Bangladeshi patients need to visit India.
- d. India was also requested to reopen travel through Benapole-Petrapole land port which has been halted by the West Bengal government in the wake of the pandemic.
- e. Bangladesh told Shringla that it is ready to collaborate in the development of a Covid-19 vaccine, including its trial, and looks forward to early, affordable availability of the vaccine when ready.

10. What is the way ahead?

- a. While the Teesta project is important and urgent from India’s point of view, it will be difficult to address it before the West Bengal elections due next year. What Delhi can do is to address other issues of concern, which too are challenging.
- b. Now, the test will be if India can implement all its assurances in a time-bound manner.
- c. Or else, the latent anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh — which has been revived after India’s CAA -NRC push — threatens to damage Dhaka-New Delhi ties.

THE NEW BOUNDARY

A look at the historic Land Boundary Agreement that aims to resolve the Indo-Bangladesh border issue

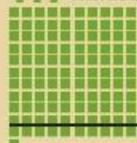


● COMING TO INDIA ● GOING TO BANGLADESH

History of the agreement

- Then PMs Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman first attempted to resolve the Indo-Bangla territorial disputes through the Indira-Mujib treaty of 1974
- The current Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) Protocol was signed by ex-PM Manmohan Singh and Sheikh Hasina in 2011.

India has
111 enclaves



17,158
acres of land
& 37,369* of
population

Bangladesh
has



7,110
acres of land
& 14,215* of
population

*FIGURES COLLECTED BETWEEN JULY 14-17, 2011

What is an enclave?

An enclave, or chitmahal, is a piece of land held by one country but lying in the territory of another

The swap

India shares a 3,909 km land boundary with Bangladesh.

States to be affected by the LBA swap deal are Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal

The numbers

According to West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, 60,000-70,000 people living in the enclaves will come from Bangladesh to West Bengal once the exchange materialises.

Whom will it affect?

- The swapping of enclaves would result in West Bengal losing 10,048 acres of land
- West Bengal will bear the additional burden of rehabilitating those coming to the state from Indian enclaves
- The Centre has already announced a rehabilitation package of ₹3,008.89 crore for West Bengal
- The compensation package is required to provide food and shelter, besides roads, schools, houses and hospitals, for those migrating to West Bengal
- The LBA would also address two other issues — un-demarcated border and adversely possessed land (APL) between the two countries.

TOPIC 2. DOMICILE-BASED JOB QUOTA

1. The Madhya Pradesh government's recent decision to reserve all government jobs for "children of the state" raises questions relating to the fundamental right to equality.
2. While domicile-based reservations have been implemented in education, courts have been reluctant to expand this to employment. Although Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has not outlined details of the proposal, reservation solely based on place of birth would raise constitutional questions.

3. What does the Constitution say?

- a. Article 16 of the Constitution, which guarantees equal treatment under law in matters of public employment, prohibits the state from discriminating on grounds of place of birth or residence.
- b. Article 16(2) states that "no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect or, any employment or office under the State". The provision is supplemented by the other clauses in the Constitution that guarantee equality.
- c. However, Article 16(3) of the Constitution provides an exception by saying that Parliament may make a law "prescribing" a requirement of residence for jobs in a particular state. This power vests solely in the Parliament, not state legislatures.

4. Why does the Constitution prohibit reservation based on domicile?

- a. When the Constitution came into force, India turned itself into one nation from a geographical unit of individual principalities and the idea of the universality of Indian citizenship took root. As India has common citizenship, which gives citizens the liberty to move around freely in any part of the country, the requirement of a place of birth or residence cannot be qualifications for granting public employment in any state.

5. But are reservations not granted on other grounds such as caste?

- a. Equality enshrined in the Constitution is not mathematical equality and does not mean all citizens will be treated alike without any distinction. To this effect, the Constitution underlines two distinct aspects which together form the essence of equality law — non-discrimination among equals, and affirmative action to equalise the unequals.

6. What has the Supreme Court said on reserving jobs for locals?

- a. The Supreme Court has ruled against reservation based on place of birth or residence. In 1984, ruling in *Dr Pradeep Jain v Union of India*, the issue of legislation for "sons of the soil" was discussed. The court expressed an opinion that such policies would be unconstitutional but did not expressly rule on it as the case was on different aspects of the right to equality.
- b. Despite Article 16(2), "some of States are adopting 'sons of soil' policies prescribing reservation or preference based on domicile or residence requirement for employment or appointment... Prima facie this would seem to be constitutionally impermissible though we do not wish to express any definite opinion upon it, since it does not directly arise for consideration..".
- c. In a subsequent ruling in *Sunanda Reddy v State of Andhra Pradesh* (1995), the Supreme Court affirmed the observation in *Pradeep Jain* to strike down a state government policy that gave 5% extra weightage to candidates who had studied with Telugu as the medium of instruction.
- d. In 2002, Supreme Court invalidated appointment of government teachers in Rajasthan in which state selection board gave preference to "applicants belonging to district or rural areas of district concerned".
- e. "We have no doubt that such a sweeping argument which has the overtones of parochialism is liable to be rejected on the plain terms of Article 16(2) and in the light of Article 16(3). An argument of this nature flies in the face of peremptory language of Article 16(2) and runs counter to our constitutional ethos founded on unity and integrity of the nation," court said.
- f. In 2019, the Allahabad High Court struck down a recruitment notification by the UP Subordinate Service Selection Commission which prescribed preference for women who are "original residents" of the UP alone.

7. What about securing jobs for locals in the private sector?

- a. Such a law will be difficult to implement even if allowed. Private employers do not go on an annual recruitment drive to fill vacancies identified in advance but hire as and when required. The state can recommend a preference to locals but ensuring that it is followed would be difficult. In 2017, Karnataka mulled similar legislation but it was dropped after the state's Advocate General raised questions on its legality. In 2019, the state government once again issued a notification asking private employers to "prefer" Kannadigas for blue-collar jobs.

8. How do some states then have laws that reserve jobs for locals?

- a. Exercising the powers it has under Article 16(3), Parliament enacted the Public Employment (Requirement as to Residence) Act, aimed at abolishing all existing residence requirements in the states and enacting exceptions only in the case of the special instances of Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh.
- b. Constitutionally, some states also have special protections under Article 371. Andhra Pradesh under Section 371(d) has powers to have "direct recruitment of local cadre" in specified areas.
- c. In Uttarakhand, class III and class IV jobs are reserved for locals.
- d. Some states have gone around the mandate of Article 16(2) by using language. States that conduct official business in their regional languages prescribe knowledge of the language as a criterion. This ensures that local citizens are preferred for jobs. For example, states including Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu require a language test.

9. Beyond MP, have there been other recent moves on domicile-based job reservation?

- a. In April, the Centre issued a notification reserving jobs for J&K domiciles expanding the definition to central government employees who had served in the erstwhile state for over 10 years. Before the abrogation of the special status of J&K in August last year, state government jobs were reserved exclusively for state subjects as per Article 370 of the Constitution.
- b. In Assam, a committee has submitted its report for implementation of a key provision of 1985 Assam Accord, recommending reservation in jobs for those who can trace their ancestry in state before 1951.

<p>Maharashtra Private sector to employ 80% domiciled workers (Maha residents for more than 15 years); Status: Planned, not implemented</p> <p>Haryana Ordinance mandating 75% quota for locals in private sector jobs; Status: Planned, not implemented</p> <p>Madhya Pradesh 70% quota in pvt sector jobs for locals; only 'children of MP' to be eligible</p>	<p>for state govt jobs; Status: 70% quota applied, 'children of MP' at planning stage</p> <p>Karnataka Pvt industries to give priority to Kannadigas in clerical and shop-floor jobs; Status: Rules amended, follow-up law not passed yet</p> <p>Andhra Pradesh Up to 75% quota for locals in govt and pvt sector; Status: Law passed, yet to be implemented</p>
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Gujarat | A policy mandating that industries which have received govt benefits have to provide 85% employment to locals

Status: Has remained on paper, Guj among biggest migrant-receiving states

Jharkhand | A policy on reservations for locals in govt jobs

Status: Under review by current regime

Chhattisgarh | Govt jobs are for domiciles. Recruits migrants in certain areas such as security forces. Pvt sector asked to give preference to locals

Status: 'Preference to locals' is

advisory in nature

Goa | Govt jobs restricted to those who have been residing in Goa for 15 years and know Konkani, the state's official language. Offers incentives to pvt industries such as salary reimbursement if 80% of the employees are Goans

Status: Companies find it cheaper to hire trained workers from other states at lower pay

Himachal Pradesh | 10% EWS quota in Class I, II, III and IV posts in govt sector. Cash incentives to pvt units employing more than 80% Himachalis

Bihar | Backward quota in state jobs. No quota in pvt sector

TOPIC 3. SAUDI-PAKISTAN

1. Pakistan's Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa is on a visit to Saudi Arabia in a bid to straighten out diplomatic relations between the two countries, strained since early this year. On Monday however, Bajwa's request for a meeting with the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was declined. Instead, Bajwa met Saudi Vice Minister of Defence Khalid bin Salman, and was received by the Saudi Chief of General Staff Maj. Gen. Fayyad bin Hammad Al-Ruwaili.

2. Saudi-Pakistan relations

- a. Bajwa was sent to Riyadh after the latter insisted on early repayment of a \$3 billion loan, reports suggest. Earlier in August, Pakistan repaid a \$1 billion loan to Saudi Arabia with China's help.
- b. The two countries are long-time allies. In 2019, Saudi Arabia pledged investment deals worth over \$20 billion with Pakistan, including a \$10 billion investment in Gwadar, to boost its economy. Before that, in November 2018, Saudi Arabia had announced a loan package worth over \$6 billion as Pakistan was staring at a financial crisis with dwindling foreign reserves and a widening trade deficit.

3. What is the reason for strained Saudi-Pakistan relations?

- a. The dispute between the countries arose in February when Saudi Arabia rejected Pakistan's request to convene a special meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to gain Muslim countries' support on the Kashmir issue. OIC members include Malaysia, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, UAE, Bangladesh, Turkey and Afghanistan, among others, and are largely led by Saudi Arabia and therefore its support is important.
- b. Pakistan has been insisting on such a meeting since the abrogation of Article 370 by India that stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its special status on August 5 last year.
- c. Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi recently repeated the demand, when in a talk show interview, he said, "I am once again respectfully telling OIC that a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers is our expectation. If you cannot convene it, then I'll be compelled to ask Prime Minister Imran Khan to call a meeting of the Islamic countries that are ready to stand with us on the issue of Kashmir and support the oppressed Kashmiris."

4. Why is Saudi Arabia not supporting Pakistan on Kashmir?

- a. While Saudi Arabia has supported Pakistan on the Kashmir issue in earlier decades, the kingdom along with other Gulf countries has largely stayed away from issuing statements against India on the abrogation of Article 370.
- b. In fact, in 2019, while the foreign ministers of UAE and Saudi Arabia went to Islamabad on a symbolic visit to show their support with Pakistan after the abrogation of Article 370, they did not strongly condemn India's decision. One reason for this could be the emerging trade ties between the Gulf countries and India, especially with Saudi Arabia.
- c. The kingdom is India's fourth-largest trading partner and the value of bilateral trade between the two countries is estimated to be around \$28 billion, with a majority of it being crude oil exports to India, which imports around 19% of its oil requirements from Saudi Arabia. There is also a refinery project set to be jointly built by Saudi Aramco and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), which faced an estimated cost escalation to \$70 billion from the previous \$44 billion in late 2019.
- d. Apart from this, the countries also have defence, security and counter-terror cooperation, and have seen steady progress in relations since 2006, when King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud visited India. The two sides signed the landmark Delhi Declaration during that visit, which laid the framework for upgrading ties to the level of "strategic partnership" in 2010, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Saudi Arabia.

TOPIC 4. NATIONAL RECRUITMENT AGENCY

1. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has decided to set up a National Recruitment Agency (NRA). The proposed NRA will conduct a common preliminary examination for various recruitments in the central government.

2. Why is the NRA needed?

- a. As of now, aspirants have to take different exams that are conducted by various agencies for central government jobs. According to C Chandramouli, Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training, on an average 2.5 crore to 3 crore aspirants appear for about 1.25 lakh vacancies in the central government every year.
- b. As and when it will be set up, the NRA will conduct a common eligibility test (CET) and based on the CET score a candidate can apply for a vacancy with the respective agency.

3. Will the NRA conduct a test for all government vacancies?

- a. Initially, it will organise a CET to screen/shortlist candidates for the Group B and C (non - technical) posts, which are now being conducted by the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railways Recruitment Board (SSC) and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS). Later on, more exams may be brought under it.
- b. The agency will have representatives from SSC, IBPS and RRB. The test will be conducted for three levels: graduate, higher secondary (12th pass) and the matriculate (10th pass) candidates. However, the present recruitment agencies— IBPS, RRB and SCC — will remain in place. Based on the screening done at the CET score level, final selection for recruitment shall be made through separate specialised Tiers (II, III, etc.) of examination which shall be conducted by the respective recruitment agencies. The curriculum for CET would be common.

4. Each district to have an examination centre

- a. To make it easier for candidates, examination centres would be set up in every district of the country. A special focus will be on creating examination infrastructure in the 117 'Aspirational Districts'. The government says that the move will benefit the poor candidates, as in the present system they have to appear in multiple examinations conducted by multiple agencies. They have to incur expenditure on examination fees, travel, boarding, lodging and other things. The single examination is expected to reduce the financial burden on such candidates.

5. How long will the CET score be valid?

- a. The CET score of a candidate shall be valid for a period of three years from the date of declaration of the result. The best of the valid scores shall be deemed to be the current score of the candidate. While there will be no restriction on the number of attempts to be taken by a candidate to appear in the CET, it will be subject to the upper age limit. However, the relaxation in the upper age limit shall be given to candidates of SC/ST/OBC and other categories as per the extant policy of the Government.

6. What will be the medium of CET?

- a. The CET will be conducted in multiple languages. According to Minister of DoPT Jitendra Singh, the exam will be conducted in 12 languages that are in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

7. Will it lead to speedy recruitment?

- a. The government says that a single eligibility test would "significantly reduce" the recruitment cycle. Even some of the departments have indicated their intention to do away with any second-level test and go ahead with recruitment on the basis of CET scores, Physical Tests and Medical examination, say sources.

8. How much money will be spent on the NRA?

- a. Initially, the Union Cabinet has approved an amount of Rs 1517.57 crore for the NRA, for a period of 3 years. The money will be used for setting up of NRA, and examination centres in 'aspirational districts'.



National Recruitment Agency (NRA) **GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH TRANSPARENCY**



Reduces time taken in selection process



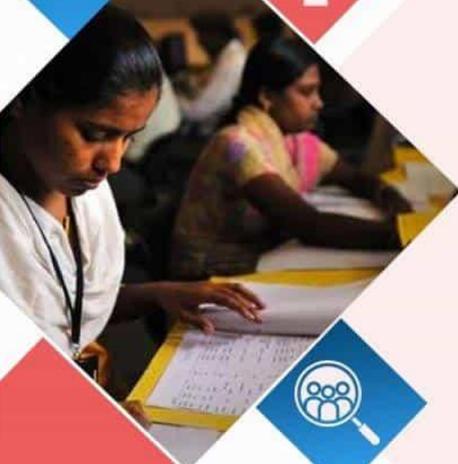
Mitigates hardships for candidates from appearing in multiple exams of multiple agencies with similar eligibility conditions



CET to be conducted at over 1000 centres, every District will have at least one exam centre, including the 117 aspirational districts



Better access to rural, underprivileged candidates and women



National Recruitment Agency (NRA) **COMMON ELIGIBILITY TEST (CET) GIVES MORE CHOICE TO JOB SEEKERS** (1/2)



Separate CET to be conducted for three levels -

- Graduate
- Higher Secondary (12th)
- Matriculate (10th pass)



For non technical posts, CET shall replace the Tier I exam held by SSC, Railway recruitment boards & Institute of Banking Personnel Selection



CET to shortlist candidates for Group B and C posts in Central government



National Recruitment Agency (NRA) **COMMON ELIGIBILITY TEST (CET) GIVES MORE CHOICE TO JOB SEEKERS** (2/2)



Standard Curriculum & degree of difficulty; to be conducted in multiple Indian languages



Based on CET score, final selection to be made through separate specialised Tier 2/Tier 3 examinations conducted by respective recruitment agency



CET score of a candidate will be valid for 3 years, best available score during 3 years will be the current score



No restriction on number of attempts by the candidate, subject to upper age limit prescribed



Relaxation in upper age limit to be given to candidates of SC/ST/OBC/PwD etc



Cabinet approves creation of National Recruitment Agency

1/2

1 To encompass the first level test by SSC, RRBs and IBPS

2 Common Eligibility Test (CET) to screen candidates at first level for SSC, RRBs and IBPS



3 CET in; multiplicity of exams out

4 Ease of access to rural youth, women and disadvantaged candidates

5 Focus on access to test centres in aspirational districts



Cabinet approves creation of National Recruitment Agency

2/2

6 Uniform transformative recruitment process

7 To eradicate malpractices



8 To reduce recruitment cycle

9 NRA to conduct mock test for rural youth

10 24x7 helpline and grievance redressal portal

TOPIC 5. PLASTIC POLLUTION

1. It is well-known that pollution from plastic, especially smaller microplastics, have reached the oceans and even some of the most remote corners of the Arctic. Even so, there is uncertainty about the magnitude of plastic pollution in marine environments and it cannot be exactly said how much pollution does plastic, especially microplastics cause.
2. Now, a new study published in Nature Communications has estimated the amount of microplastic pollution in the Atlantic Ocean and put it at 11.6-21.1 million tonnes, indicating that the inputs and stocks of ocean plastics are much higher than determined previously.
3. That microplastic pollution in oceans is underestimated is also not a novel finding, but the new study is one of the few that have tried to put a number to the amount of microplastic pollution that is present in the oceans.

4. What are microplastics?

- a. Microplastics are plastic debris smaller than 5mm in length, or about the size of a sesame seed. While they come from a variety of sources, one of them is when larger pieces of plastic degrade into smaller pieces, which are difficult to detect.

5. How does plastic reach the oceans?

- a. There are multiple pathways. For instance, riverine and atmospheric transport from coastal and inland areas, illegal dumping activities and direct-at-sea littering from shipping, fishing and aquaculture activities, scientists have said.
- b. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), at least 8 million tonnes of plastic end up in the oceans every year and makes up about 80 per cent of all marine debris from surface waters to deep-sea sediments.

6. Why is plastic pollution especially harmful?

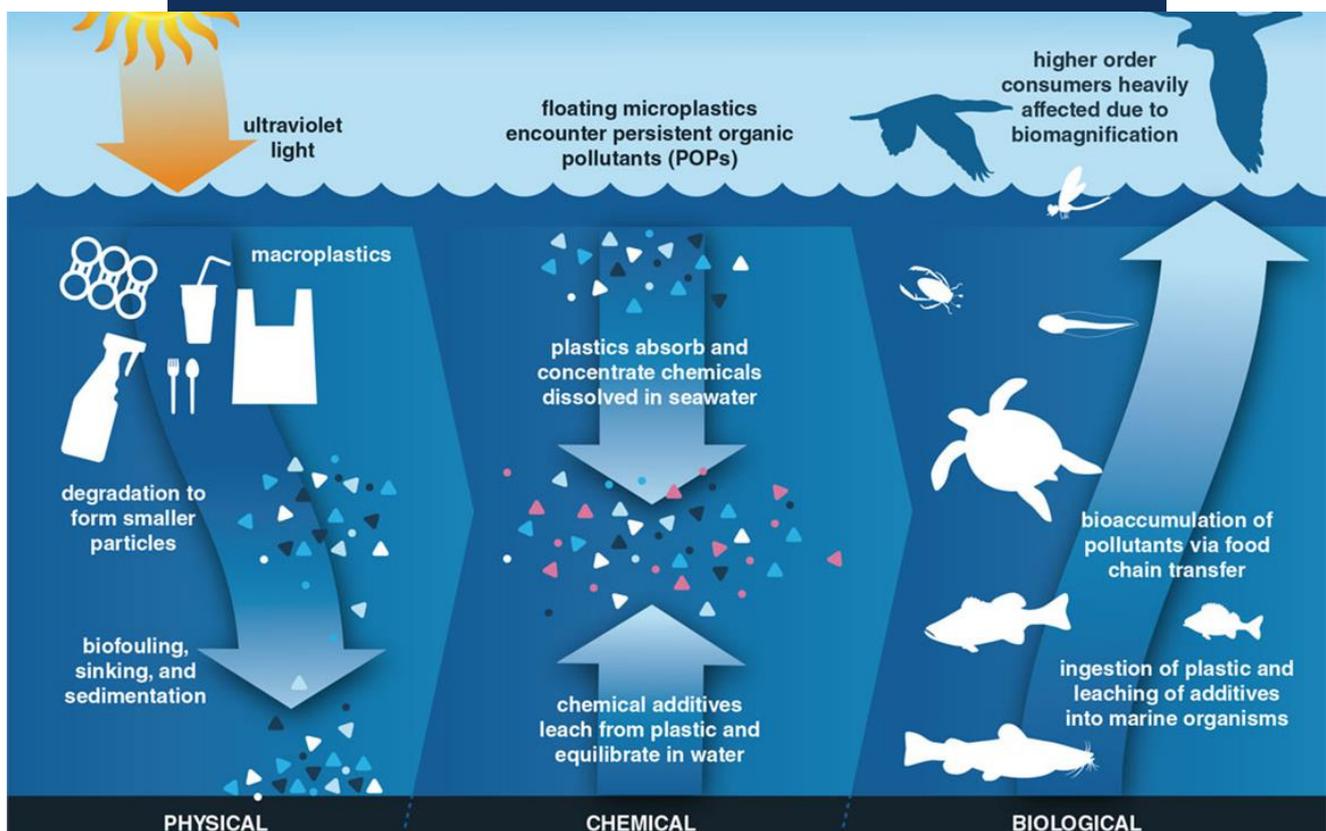
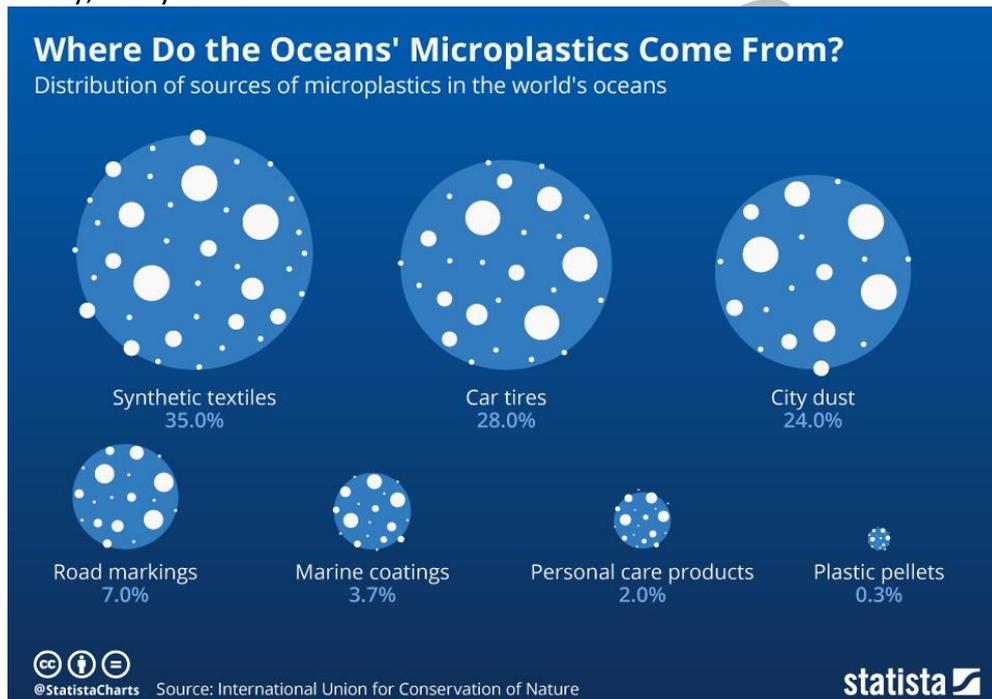
- a. The durability of plastic, which, on the one hand, makes the material suitable for widespread use from packaging to storing food is also a bane because it implies that plastic can take hundreds to thousands of years to decompose depending on the type of plastic and where it has been dumped.
- b. In the oceans, plastic pollution impacts marine life, ocean health, coastal tourism and even human health. Over the past few years, various news reports have shown that marine animals such as whales, seabirds and turtles unknowingly ingest plastic and often suffocate.
- c. One of the most popular images in the last few months was that of a dead sperm whale that washed up on a Scottish beach in December 2019 with an estimated 220 pounds of tangled debris, including netting, rope and plastic, inside it. Even so, it was not clear if the debris was responsible for the whale's death. While all sorts of marine species are prone to get impacted by plastic pollution, typically, bigger marine species tend to get more attention because of the amounts of debris they can hold up.
- d. For humans, too, marine plastic pollution is harmful if it reaches the food chain. For instance, microplastics have been found in tap water, beer and even salt. One of the first studies to estimate plastic pollution in human ingestion that was published in June 2019 said that an average person eats at least 50,000 particles of microplastic each year. Consumption of plastic by humans is harmful since several chemicals that are used to produce plastics can be carcinogenic.
- e. Even so, since microplastics is an emerging field of study, its exact risks on the environment and human health are not clearly known.

7. So what does this mean?

- a. In the study, scientists studied pollution of the Atlantic Ocean caused by three types of plastics: polyethylene, polypropylene, and polystyrene, which were suspended in the top 200 metres of the ocean. These three types of plastic are most commonly used for packaging.
- b. Smaller plastic particles are a hazard, the scientists note, as it is easier for them to sink to greater ocean depths and some marine species such as zooplanktons show preferential

ingestion of smaller particles, making them easier to enter the food chain and their conversion to fast-sinking faecal pellets.

- c. Scientists say that pollution caused by microplastics has been “severely” underestimated in previous assessments and that a considerable amount of small microplastics are lost from the surface and are stored in ocean interiors.
- d. They also estimate that based on plastic waste generation trends from 1950-2015 and considering that the Atlantic Ocean has received 0.3-0.8 per cent of the global plastic waste for 65 years, the Atlantic waters could hold 17-47 million tonnes of plastic waste.
- e. “To date, a key uncertainty has been the magnitude of contamination of the ocean and our findings demonstrate that this is much higher in terms of mass than has been estimated previously,” they note.



TOPIC 6. MLA SALARIES

1. As the Uttar Pradesh Assembly prepares to meet Thursday (August 20), on its agenda is to ratify salary cuts for legislators, announced amid the Covid-19 breakout by the government when the House was not in session.
2. Apart from UP, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala have announced salary cuts for their legislators to curb state expenditure amid the pandemic. The salaries and certain allowances have been reduced for one year, starting April 2020. With the exception of Bihar (which brought in the cuts through rules), all the other states promulgated Ordinances to bring the changes into effect.
3. Assam and Maharashtra are in the process of cutting legislators' salaries, and in Haryana, political parties have agreed that their MLAs will give up a percentage of their pay.
4. The salaries of MPs have also been reduced by 30 per cent for similar reasons.

5. What is Uttar Pradesh doing

- a. Uttar Pradesh, with 500 legislators, is the largest state Assembly in the country. In 1980, the basic salary of the state's MLA/MLC was Rs 500 a month. This amount was intermittently revised, and by 2016 they were being paid Rs.10,000 a month. The last upward salary revision was four years ago before the UP state elections, when then-Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav had upped the basic salary of the state's public representatives to Rs 25,000 per month.

Table 1: Five states have cut salaries and allowances of legislators by 30%; Bihar by 15%

Feature	Previous entitlement (in Rs per month)	New entitlement (in Rs per month)
Bihar⁷		
Basic salary	40,000	34,000
Gujarat⁴		
Basic salary	78,800	55,160
Himachal Pradesh⁵		
Basic salary	55,000	38,500
Constituency allowance	90,000	63,000
Karnataka³		
Salary and allowances	1,40,000	98,000
Kerala²		
Basic salary	2,000	1,400
Constituency allowance	25,000	17,500
Telephone allowance	11,000	7,700
Information allowance	4,000	2,800
Sumptuary allowance	8,000	5,600
Uttar Pradesh⁶		
Basic salary	25,000	17,500
Constituency allowance	50,000	35,000
Secretarial allowance	20,000	14,000

Note: The given changes in all these states are being made for a period of one year, effective from April 1, 2020.

Sources: Acts and Ordinances providing and amending salaries and allowances of MLAs and MLCs – please see endnotes for details; PRS.

6. Five states have cut salaries and allowances of legislators by 30%; Bihar by 15%
 7. Earlier this year, Yogi Adityanath's government cut the salary of the state's legislators by 30 per cent, bringing it down to Rs17,500 per month. This reduction is a temporary measure applicable for a year.
- ### 8. How are elected representatives paid in different states

- a. Amid the states that have announced the cut, before this measure, Kerala MLAs received the lowest basic salary at Rs 2,000 per month. Gujarat MLAs had the highest basic salary at Rs78,800. In addition to the basic salary, MLAs across the country receive allowances for office and constituency expenses. They also receive free housing in the state's capital and concessions for travelling in the state. Legislators also get a small daily allowance for attending a sitting of the Assembly.
- b. MLAs usually determine their own salaries by passing a law in the legislature brought by the government. States like Gujarat and Maharashtra have pegged the salaries of their legislators to the salaries of civil servants in their states.

- c. In one of his last acts as the Union finance minister, Arun Jaitley linked the salaries of MPs to the cost of inflation index, and provided that the salaries will be revised every five years.

9. How much the salary cuts will help

- a. Reducing the salaries of state legislators will result in negligible savings. Bihar, which like Uttar Pradesh has a bicameral legislature, reduced the salaries of its MLAs by 15%. It will save Rs 2.1 crore, 0.001% of its proposed expenditure for the year.

Table 4: Negligible savings through deductions in salaries (Rs crore per year)

States	Total Savings	Total Budgeted Expenditure 2020-21	Total saving as a % of total budgeted expenditure
Bihar	2.1	2,11,761	0.001%
Gujarat	5.8	2,14,133	0.003%
Himachal Pradesh	4.3	49,131	0.009%
Karnataka	15.9	2,37,893	0.007%
Kerala	3.1	1,44,265	0.002%
Uttar Pradesh	17.4	5,12,861	0.003%

Sources: Acts of states providing and amending salaries and allowances of MLAs, MLCs, Ministers, Whips, Speakers, and Leader of Opposition; Budget Documents 2020-21 for Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh; PRS.

10. Negligible savings through deductions in salaries

11. For a smaller state like Himachal Pradesh, which put a 30% cut for its 68 MLAs, the saving will be Rs 4.3 crore, 0.009% of this year's expenditure. UP, which has a budgeted expenditure of Rs 5,12,000 crore, will only end up saving approximately Rs 17.4 crore, 0.003% of its budget.

TOPIC 7. SECURITY AUDIT

1. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is all set to direct telecom companies to undertake an “information security audit” of their networks and submit the report by October end.
2. What is an information security audit for telecom networks?
3. As the name suggests, an information security audit is a step-by-step assessment of the complete network infrastructure which checks for the equipment installed and the latest upgrades done in order to prevent any data leakages. Read in Bangla
4. The auditors also check the data storage and security policies of the company and check whether all sections of the company adhere to the norms set by the company itself.
5. Apart from that, some auditing agencies also launch a controlled bug into the network of the company to check for vulnerabilities, and see what all systems are being impacted.
6. The objective of the audit is also to check for ‘backdoor’ and ‘trapdoor’ vulnerabilities. A ‘backdoor’ or a ‘trap door’ is a bug installed in the telecom hardware which allows companies to listen in or collect data being shared on the network.

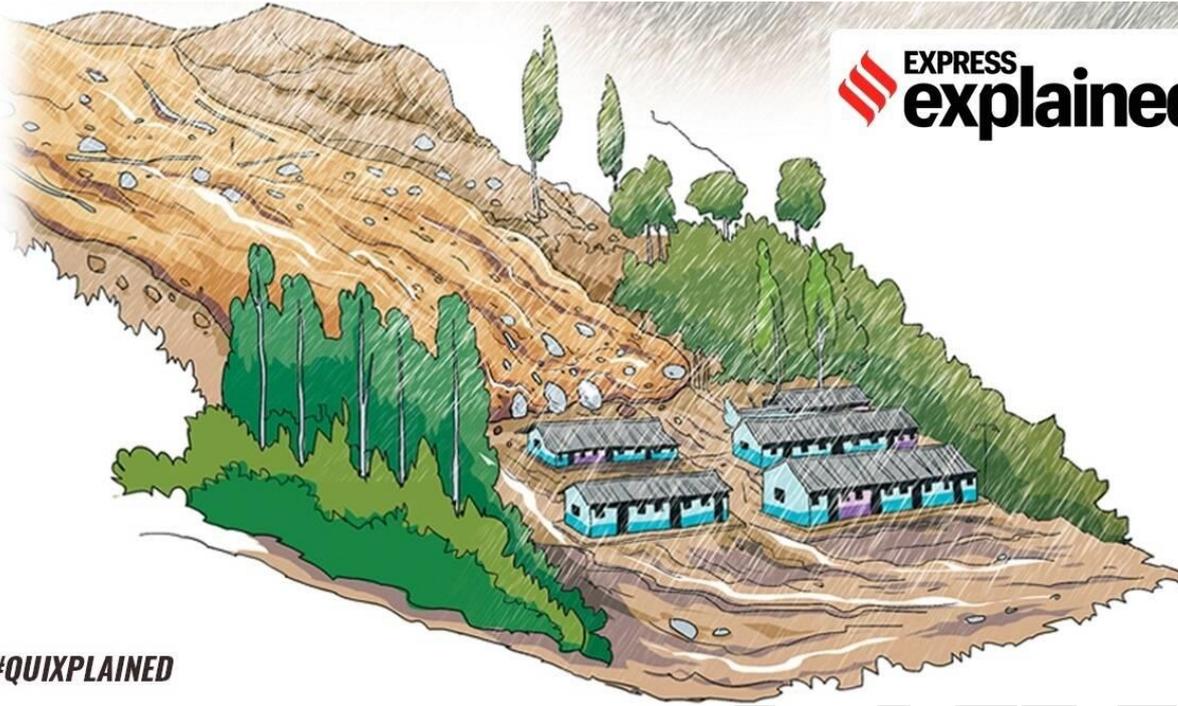
7. Why does the DoT want telcos to do this audit?

- a. One of the main reasons for the DoT asking telecom companies to get this external audit done by an agency empanelled with the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (Cert-IN) is to check for any ‘backdoor’ or ‘trapdoor’ bugs installed on their networks.
- b. While it has not specifically mentioned threat from any company, DoT officials did hint that this audit was necessary since there were reports from other parts of the world of such bugs being installed in telecom networks.
- c. The audit is likely to increase the scrutiny on Chinese vendors Huawei Telecommunication Company and ZTE, which have been alleged to spy for the Chinese government.
- d. For example, in January 2020, the US had released a report in which it had said that Huawei had inserted ‘backdoors’ in telecom networks it had helped build in mobile phone networks in the US and across the world.
- e. Apart from the US, other countries such as the UK and Australia have also banned both the Chinese companies on “national security” concerns with the same allegations.
- f. Nearly all the countries that have barred the operations of these companies have cited the same law which requires Chinese firms to cooperate with Chinese intelligence agencies no matter where they are located in the world.

8. Who will do the audit? How will it help?

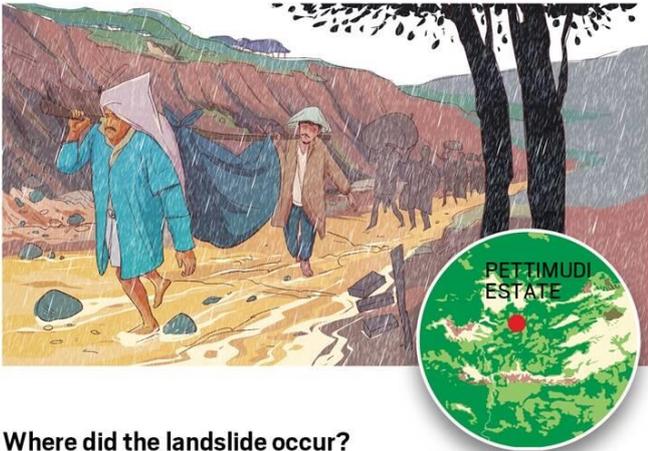
- a. In its guidelines, the DoT is likely to suggest to the companies that the external audit should be done only by an agency empanelled with Cert-IN. This means that the audit will no longer remain a commercial compliance norm for the company, but will also look into the national security aspects of the telecom network.
- b. Though such internal and external audits are done by companies every three or four years, it will be the first time that the audit will be done by an agency specified by the DoT. The report of the audit is likely to help DoT put in a concrete plan to bar Chinese vendors from the Indian telecom market space if any problems are found.

TOPIC 8. KERALA'S IDUKKI LANDSLIDE



#QUIXPLAINED

1. The location where the landslide was triggered had a 40° slope, and any slope above 20° is vulnerable to slipping during heavy rain.
2. The toll in the landslide in Kerala's Idukki district rose to 58 on Sunday even as 12 others remained buried under debris over two weeks after the incident at a settlement of tea estate workers. Local people said more are missing as many had come as guests from other areas. Only a handful of residents, who were away, have survived. The victims included 31 persons of one extended family who lived in adjacent quarters, and six temporary staff at the Eravikulam National Park. Nineteen schoolchildren have either died or are still missing.
3. The landslide happened at 10:45 pm on August 6 at Pettimudi, a hamlet in Rajamala ward under Munnar village panchayat in Kerala's Idukki district. Workers of Kanan Devan Hills Plantations Company (P) Ltd were living in Pettimudi. The location where the landslide was triggered, according to the Kerala Geology Department, has a 40° slope, and any slope above 20° is vulnerable to slipping during heavy rain. The soil has a high content of sand, which absorbs more water, takes a loose form, and is at risk of slipping down.



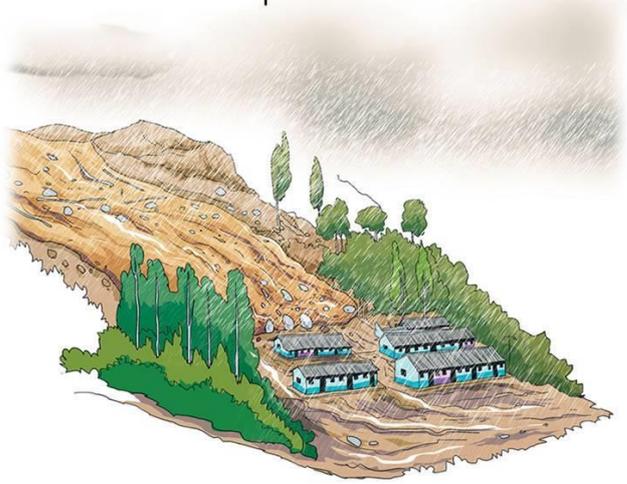
Where did the landslide occur?

On the night of August 6, a devastating landslide occurred in the hamlet of Pettimudi in Munnar's Rajamala, killing 58 people at last count

The landslide was triggered from a chola forest region in the Eravikulam National Park, that lies in Rajamala

#QUIXLAINED

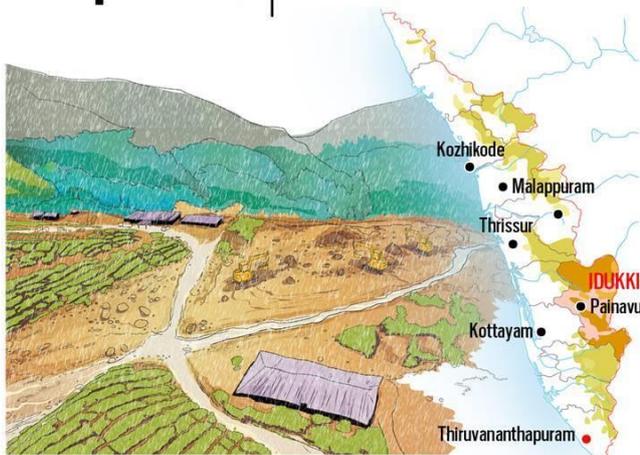
1



Rocks, slurry and sludge crashed down nearly 2 km to a patch of the valley, crushing the single-room sheet-roofed houses of estate workers that stood in two rows, facing each other

#QUIXLAINED

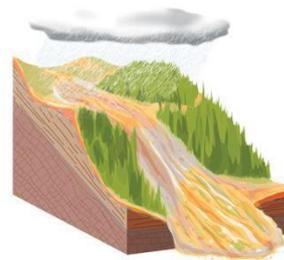
2



Known as the "spice garden of Kerala", Idukki district lies in the Western Ghats region of Kerala. To its north lie the Anamudi mountain range and the Eravikulam National Park. Munnar is one of the most popular tourist destinations of the district. To the south lie the Idukki Dam and the Periyar National Park

#QUIXLAINED

3



Rajamala had recorded very heavy rainfall — 216.35 cm — between August 1 and 7. This made the epicentre of the landslide vulnerable to slippage, because of the high sand content in the soil and a 40 degree slope

Human interventions such as building on the slopes without adequate protective measures



Blockage of river channels and change of river course due to previous landslides

#QUIXLAINED

4

TOPIC 9. GAS CHAMBERS

1. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) in an August 13 order asked four industrial firms in the Mahul-Chembur area of eastern Mumbai to pay Rs 286 crore as compensation for environmental damages caused by air pollution over five years. The NGT was acting on a 2014 application by Charudatt Koli, Dayaram Mahulkar, Mohan Mhatre and Dattaram Koli, residents of the area, who sought the closure of Sea Lord Containers Limited, a subsidiary of Aegis Logistics Limited.

2. What was the NGT order?

- a. In an order published Thursday, the principal bench of the NGT, headed by chairperson Adarsh Kumar Goel, directed Aegis Logistics Limited (ALL) to pay Rs 142 crore; Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd., Rs 76.5 crore; Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd., Rs 67.5 crore; and Sea Lord Containers Limited (SLCL), Rs 0.2 crore, as compensation, totalling Rs 286.2 crore.
- b. The NGT held them responsible for creating “gas chamber”-like conditions in Mumbai’s Ambapada, Mahul and Chembur areas in eastern Mumbai.
- c. M/s Sealord Containers Limited and Aegis Logistics Limited, which are involved in the logistics of storing oil, gas and chemicals, were found guilty of releasing volatile organic compounds (VOCs). These units are located in very close proximity to residential areas.

3. What are Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)?

- a. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids. VOCs include a variety of chemicals, including benzene, toluene, xylene, ethylbenzene, and are harmful toxic pollutants that cause exposure-related health effects in human beings. Among the major contributors to air pollution in Chembur are logistic services storing oil, gas and chemical items; and oil companies releasing VOCs during loading, storage and unloading or handling of hazardous chemicals at various stages. Many cases of pulmonary diseases and respiratory tract infections have been reported due to exposure to VOCs.
- b. VOCs are also emitted by a wide array of household products including paints, cleaning supplies and pesticides. “While it is true that there may be many reasons for the presence of VOCs in the atmosphere, like vehicular emissions, etc, it cannot be denied that the said four companies... contribute substantially and predominantly to the VOCs in Mahul and Ambapada villages,” the tribunal noted.

4. How was the environmental damage compensation calculated?

- a. The calculations were based on the report by an in-house technical committee of the Central Board of Pollution Control (CBPC). VOC emissions data was collected based on records produced by the companies. The fine is based on the “polluter pays” principle, which imposes absolute liability on parties handling harmful substances to pay for any damage caused.

5. Who will get the compensation?

- a. The tribunal appointed a 10-member joint committee, including two CPCB nominees and representatives of the Union Environment Ministry and Maharashtra State Pollution Control Board, apart from health experts, to prepare an action plan for restoration of the areas affected. The action plan will address the health problems of inhabitants due to air pollution in the Mahul-Chembur area and pollution abatement.
- b. The compensation will be made available for the plan to be executed by the respondents (firms) themselves, or otherwise as may be decided by the committee from time to time, said the order. The compensation will not be directly given to the four petitioners or the residents of the affected areas.

6. Can the NGT order be challenged?

- a. Under Rule 22 of the NGT Rules, there is a provision for seeking a review of a decision or order of the NGT. If this fails, an NGT Order can be challenged before the Supreme Court within 90 days.

TOPIC 10. ARAB SOVEREIGNTY

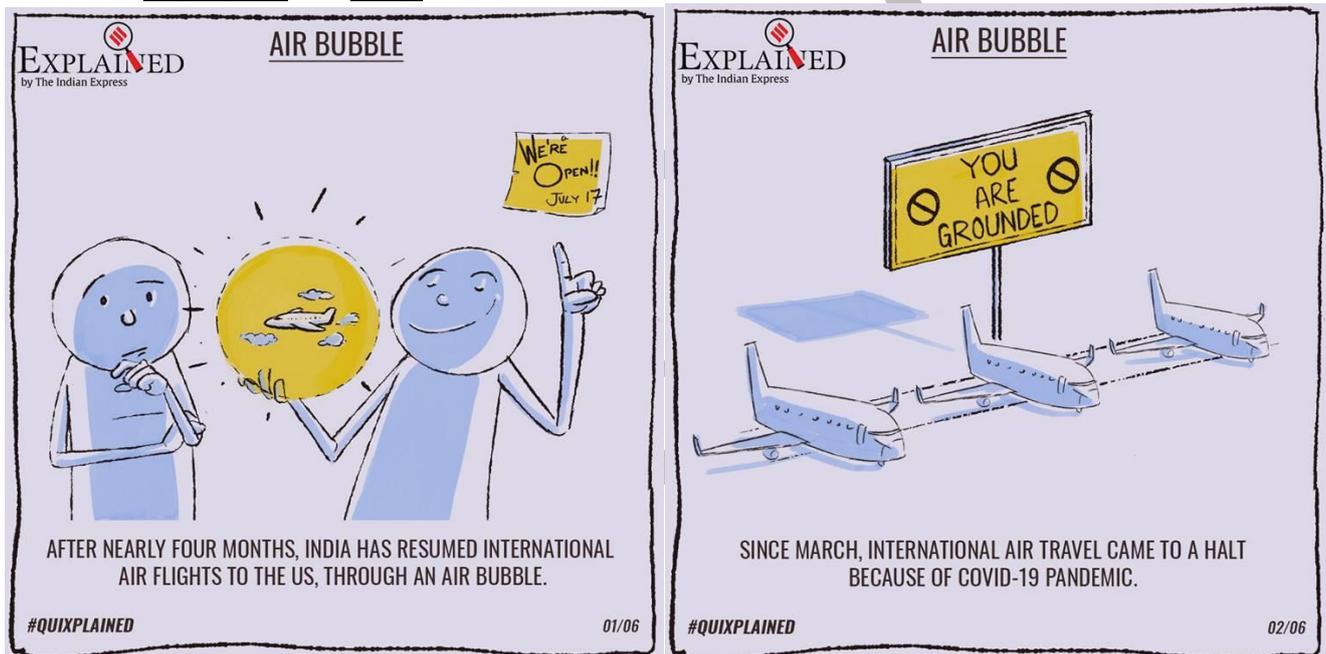
1. The geopolitical realignment in the Middle East, marked by last week's agreement on the normalisation of relations between the United Arab Emirates and Israel, intersects with the equally significant reorientation of the Subcontinent's relationship with the region.
2. "As Pakistan rediscovers its tradition of aligning with non-Arab powers, India must renew its defence of Arab sovereignty," argues C Raja Mohan, Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. Read in Tamil
3. In his latest column in *The Indian Express*, Mohan states that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the engagement with the Arab Gulf has become deeper. The last six years have also coincided with a significant deterioration of Pakistan's relations with the region, especially with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
4. Here is the essence of the emerging contradiction between Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the one hand and Pakistan on the other. Saudis and Emiratis see sharpening existential threats to their kingdoms from both the Sunni Muslim brotherhood backed by Turkey and Shiite Iran's regional expansionism.
5. On the other hand, Imran Khan appears to be dreaming of a new regional alliance with Turkey and Iran. Pakistan is also betting that a rising China and an assertive Russia will both support this new geopolitical formation as part of their own efforts to oust America from the Middle East.
6. For Turkey and Iran, the new non-Arab alliance backed by Russia and China is an instrument to advance their role in the Arab world at the expense of the Saudis.
7. It is no secret that Russians would like to bring the US down a notch or two in the Middle East. Beijing will be happy to let the Russians, Turks, and Iranians be the anti-American vanguard, while consolidating China's economic influence in the region.
8. Islamabad is probably betting that America is on its way out of the Middle East, and that its all-weather strategic partnership with a rising China would give Pakistan new leverage in the changing Middle East.
9. That is why, Mohan believes, that "standing up for Arab sovereignty and opposing the forces of regional destabilisation must be at the very heart of India's new engagement with the Middle East".

TOPIC 11. INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL

1. With various countries gradually lifting travel restrictions from India under air bubble arrangements, both Indian and foreign airlines are offering a number of flight options for those who want to travel to countries such as the US, Germany, France, Canada, the UK and the UAE. However, travel is subject to certain conditions imposed by India's Ministry of Home Affairs as well as the governments of the destination countries.

2. What are air transport bubbles?

- Transport bubbles are temporary arrangements between two countries aimed at restarting commercial passenger services when regular international flights are suspended as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are reciprocal in nature, meaning airlines from both countries enjoy similar benefits. India has created air travel arrangements with countries like the US, France, Germany, the UK, Canada, the UAE and Maldives. Read this story in Malayalam and Tamil



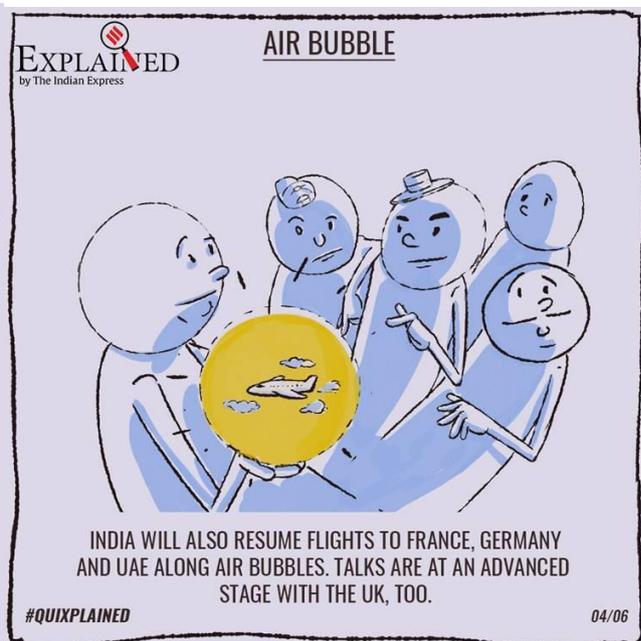
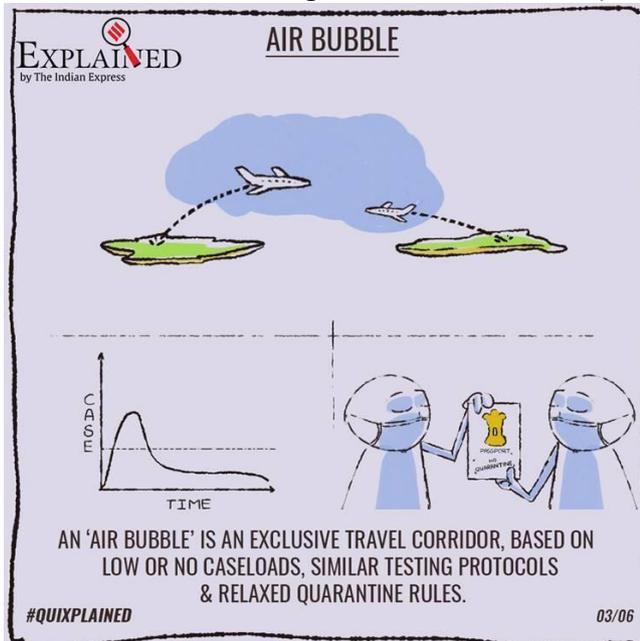
3. Who can travel abroad from India?

- According to the guidelines for these air bubbles, in addition to citizens of the respective countries and foreign nationals who want to transit through these countries, Indian nationals can also travel subject to certain conditions. For the countries with which India has air transport arrangements, Indian nationals holding a valid visa with validity of at least one month — other than visa for tourism purpose — are allowed to travel. The UAE, in fact, has also allowed tourists to travel into its borders. This means that visa holders of various categories such as student visa, business visa, work visa will be allowed to travel outside from India. The US Embassy in India resumed processing of student visas from Monday (August 17) on a limited basis, which could help students who want to join the fall semester.
- The Home Ministry guidelines state, however, that all such travel shall be “entirely at the risk of the person seeking to travel, bearing in mind the existing restrictions on International travel”.

4. Who can travel into India from abroad?

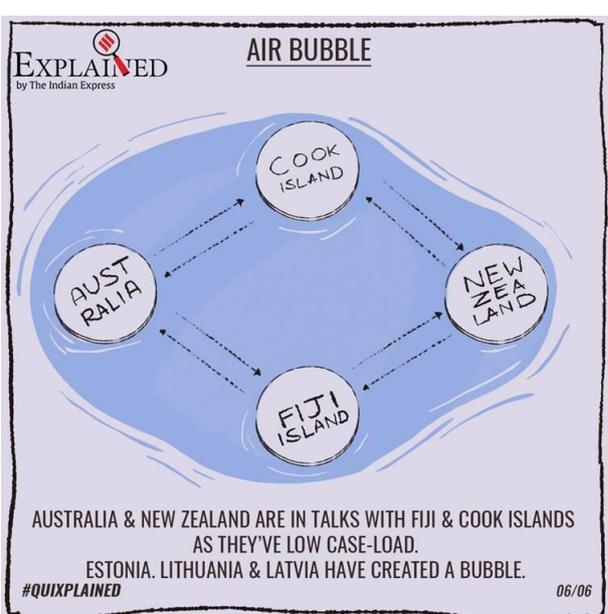
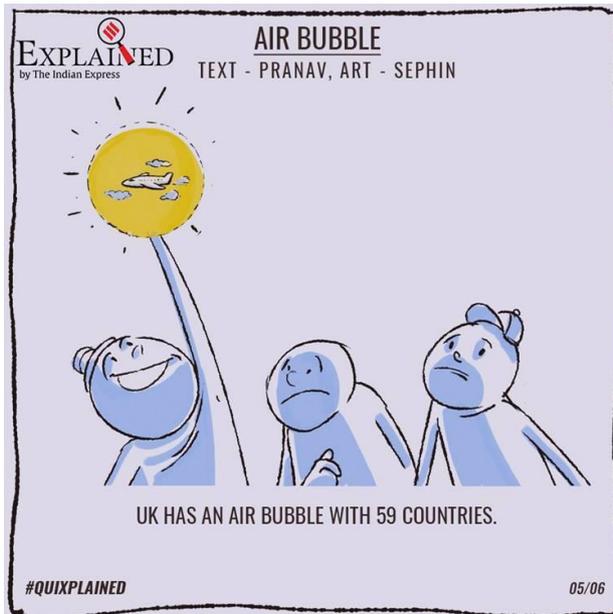
- In addition to Indian nationals being allowed to travel on inbound flights operated either by Indian carriers or foreign carriers, certain categories of foreign nationals are also allowed to travel to India. Until recently, only certain holders of Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards were allowed to enter India but the government has now allowed all OCI cardholders to arrive into India.
- For other foreign nationals, the categories allowed to enter India include foreign businessmen coming to India on a business visa (other than on B-3 visa for sports); foreign healthcare

professionals, health researchers, engineers and technicians for technical work at Indian health sector facilities, including laboratories and factories (subject to a letter of invitation from a recognised and registered healthcare facility, registered pharmaceutical company or accredited university in India); and foreign engineering, managerial, design or other specialists travelling to India on behalf of foreign business entities located in India (these include all manufacturing units, design units, software and IT units as well as financial sector companies, both banking and non-banking financial sector firms).



5. Which airlines are operating flights to/from India?

- National carrier Air India is leading the way with flights from various stations in India such as Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi, Amritsar and Thiruvananthapuram to destinations like London, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Paris, Newark, San Francisco, Chicago and Washington DC.
- Airlines of these countries, too, have been permitted to carry passengers on both legs of flights — a fundamental difference that sets these flights apart from the repatriation flights on which one leg was to be flown empty. These airlines include United, Air France, Lufthansa, Air Canada, Emirates, Etihad, Virgin Atlantic.
- The foreign carriers have also been permitted to carry passengers who want to transit through their countries subject to the destination country allowing travel into their borders. In a statement, Lufthansa said that with Indian citizens being eligible to fly to India from the US, Canada and Germany on its flights, it will operate flights from Frankfurt to Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru and from Munich to Delhi. Virgin Atlantic has said it plans to operate thrice-a-week flights from London to Delhi and back starting September 1, and from London to Mumbai and back starting September 16. Air Canada, too, is operating flights between Toronto and Delhi three times a week under the arrangement.
- In addition to foreign carriers and Air India, private Indian airlines are also expected to make the best of the air bubble arrangements. Full service carrier Vistara is expected to start operations between India and the UK, France and Germany. This will begin with thrice-a-week flights between Delhi and London's Heathrow airport, where Vistara has acquired slots. At a later stage, Vistara is expected to add Paris and Frankfurt to its route-map. Low-cost airline SpiceJet has also acquired slots at London's Heathrow airport from September 1 and is looking to operate one flight daily from multiple Indian cities.



6. What do you need to do to travel abroad?

- a. Earlier this month, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a set of guidelines for international arrival as per which all travellers should submit a self-declaration form on the portal <http://www.newdelhiairport.in> at least 72 hours before the scheduled travel. They should also give an undertaking on the portal that they will undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days i.e. 7 days institutional quarantine at their own cost, followed by 7 days isolation at home with self-monitoring of health.
- b. For those travelling outside India, various countries have different isolation and testing norms. For example, France requires on-the-spot Covid-19 tests for people arriving from 16 countries, including India, the US and Brazil, where the pandemic is spreading widely. The UK has a comprehensive list of countries with no requirement of self-isolation upon arrival in England. The list does not include India, meaning that those travelling to the UK from India will need to self-isolate for 14 days. For the UAE, according to Air India Express, passengers travelling to the West Asian country will need a prior approval from its Federal Authority for Identity & Citizenship.

TOPIC 12. NARMADA

1. The Gujarat government recently awarded the contract for a barrage project to a joint venture of Dilip Buildcon Ltd and Hindustan Construction Company Ltd. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2017 laid the foundation stone; Chief Minister Vijay Rupani last week announced the beginning of construction.
2. The Rs-4,167-crore Bhadbhut project in Bharuch is meant to solve freshwater problems in this region of Gujarat. It has also faced protests from local fishermen for its likely impact on fishing patterns, notably those of hilsa.

3. What is the Bhadbhut project?

- a. It is planned to be a 1.7-km causeway-cum-weir barrage with 90 gates, across the river Narmada, 5 km from Bhadbhut village, and 25 km from the mouth of the river, where it flows into the Gulf of Khambhat. The barrage will stop most of the excess water flowing out of the Sardar Sarovar Dam from reaching the sea and thus create a “sweet water lake” of 600 mcm (million cubic metres) on the river.
- b. The barrage will also have a six-lane road that will connect the left and right banks of the river and provide shorten the land distance between two large industrial estates in Surat and Bharuch.
- c. The project also aims to prevent flooding in years when rainfall is higher than normal. Embankments 22 km long will be made and will extend upstream towards Bharuch, from either side of the river.

4. Why was the need felt?

- a. The main purpose of the project is to prevent salinity ingress. At the beginning of the 21st century, an estimated 16.30 million acre feet (MAF) of water used to be released from the dam. By 2017, when the height of the dam rose, flow into the river reduced to 4.7 MAF. Due to the reduced flow of fresh water, saline seawater gushes into the Narmada estuary during high tide, thus increasing salinity along the banks.
- b. The sweet water from the reservoir will aim to meet the residential and industrial water requirements of Bharuch, Ankleshwar and Dahej.
- c. The project is part of the larger Kalpasar Project, which entails construction of a 30-km dam across the Gulf of Khambhat between Bharuch and Bhavnagar districts. The reservoir is meant to tap the waters of the Narmada, Mahisagar and Sabarmati.

5. Why are fishermen upset?

- a. The barrage is expected to interfere with the migration and breeding cycle of hilsa. A marine fish, hilsa migrate upstream and arrives in the brackish water of the Narmada estuary near Bharuch for spawning usually during the monsoon months of July and August, and continue doing so till November. Once the barrage is built, it is expected to block their natural entry.
- b. Fishermen in Bhadbhut village told The Indian Express that the hilsa catch between July and September every year has dropped to 10-15 fish a day from the earlier 50-100 a day. According to a study by Kolkata-based Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), fish production from the Narmada estuary has fallen from 15,889 tonnes in 2006-07 to just 1,618 tonnes in 2014-15. The hilsa catch during the same period has fallen to 419 tonnes from 5,180 tonnes. The reduced outflow of water from the dam, industrial effluents flowing into the river and salinity ingress are believed to be the major causes of this decline.

6. What is the government's stand on this?

- a. Government officials say entry of hilsa will not be restricted on account of barrage. “We have planned fish passes for hilsa fish. The Kolkata-based CIFRI has been asked to study migration patterns and they have already submitted a primary report,” said an official of the Narmada Water Resources, Water Supply and Kalpasar Department, which is executing the project.
- b. “Designs will be made by the EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) contractor based on this report. Studies have been on for the last one year and it will take another year for the institute to submit its final report. According to our estimate, the fish pass will be about 5

metres wide and that should be enough for this species to migrate into the estuary without any hindrance. The height of this fish pass will be decided on the final report of the institute. This fish pass will remain open almost throughout the year,” the official said.

7. How will fishermen from Bhadbhut, and villages that are located upstream, access the river?

- a. The barrage will have a fishermen navigation channel that will allow fishermen owning boats and living upstream on the Narmada beyond the barrage to get access to the sea. This channel will be about 10-15 metres wide and will have a gate that can be opened and shut as necessary.
- b. The barrage design also has a navigation lock to enable any future plans to run a ferry service or boats under the inland waterway scheme. The navigation lock is a passage about 18 metres wide and will allow larger vessels to cross the barrage, say officials.
- c. The Inland Waterway Authority of India has given clearance for this project.

8. What other areas will the project impact?

- a. Part of Aliya Bet, and island in the delta of the Narmada and known for shrimp farming, is likely to get submerged. A portion of the forest in Aliya Bet too will get affected by the project. Most of the Aliya Bet is downstream from the barrage.
- b. “We have already got the first stage of clearances from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climates Change,” the government official said. He declined to reveal the area that will get submerged due to the accumulation of water in Bhadbhut reservoir.



TOPIC 13. DWARF PLANET CERES

1. Researchers have shed new light on the dwarf planet Ceres, which lies in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter and is also the largest object in that belt. Ceres now has the status of an “ocean world”, after scientists analysed data collected by NASA’s Dawn spacecraft. Their findings have been published as a series of papers in the journals *Nature Astronomy*, *Nature Communications* and *Nature Geoscience*.

2. What is a dwarf planet?

- a. There are officially five dwarf planets in our Solar System. The most famous is Pluto, downgraded from the status of a planet in 2006. The other four, in order of size, are Eris, Makemake, Haumea and Ceres. The sixth claimant for a dwarf planet is Hygiea, which so far has been taken to be an asteroid.
- b. Last year, using observations made through the European Space Organisation’s SPHERE instrument at the Very Large Telescope (VLT), astronomers found that Hygiea may possibly be a dwarf planet since it satisfied the four criteria set by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) for a celestial body to be called a dwarf planet.
- c. These four criteria are – that the body orbits around the Sun, it is not a moon, has not cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit (which means it is not the dominant body in its orbit around the Sun and this is what differentiates a planet from a dwarf planet) and has enough mass for its gravity to pull it into a roughly spherical shape.

3. Ceres exploration in the past

- a. The dwarf planet was first spotted by Giuseppe Piazzi in 1801, who assumed that Ceres was the missing planet between Mars and Jupiter. It was classified as a dwarf planet in 2006 and is the first dwarf planet to be orbited by a spacecraft. In 2015, NASA’s Dawn reached it to study its surface, composition and history.
- b. Bright areas on dwarf planet Ceres come from salty water underneath.
- c. Dawn was launched in 2007 and visited Vesta and Ceres. In 2015, it went into the orbit around Ceres and the information it collected reinforced the idea that dwarf planets could have hosted oceans over a significant part of their history. The mission concluded in 2018.

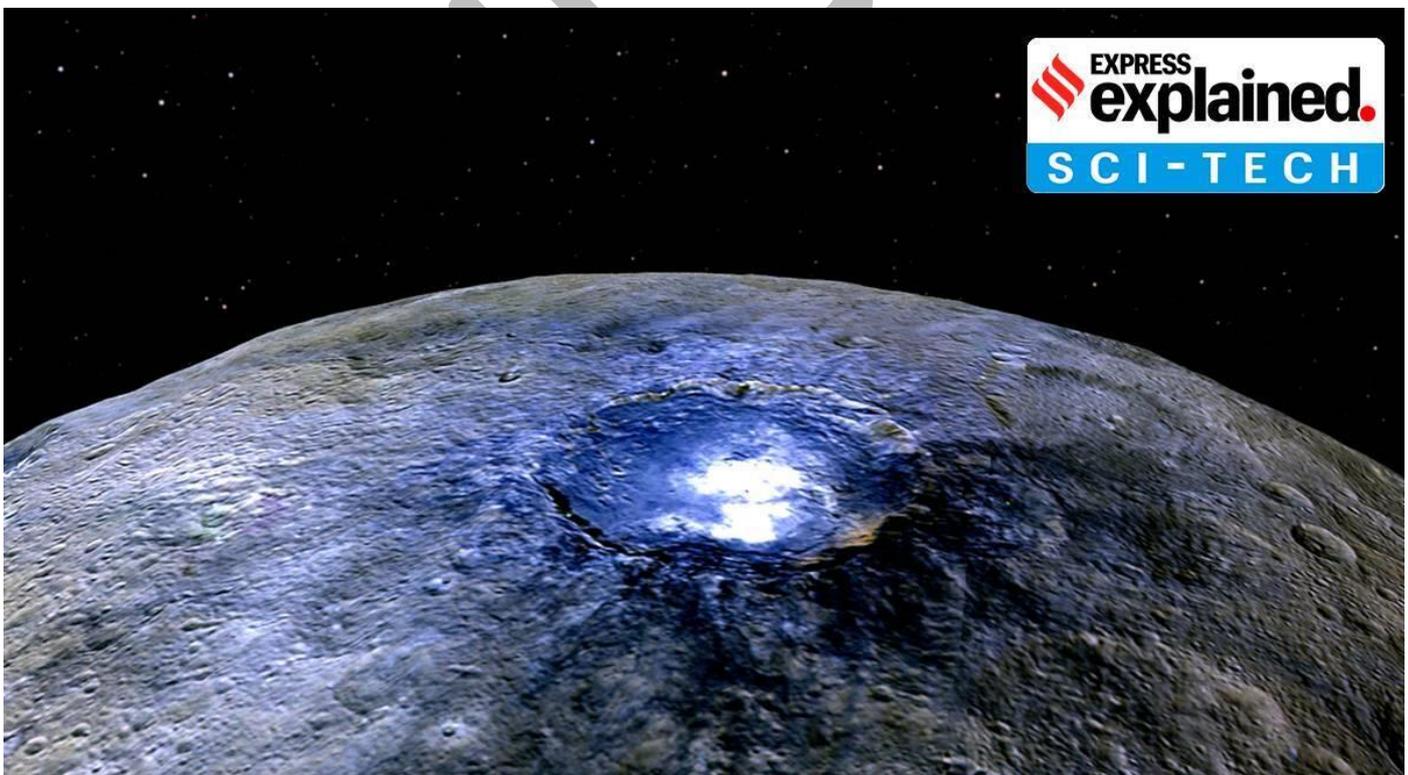
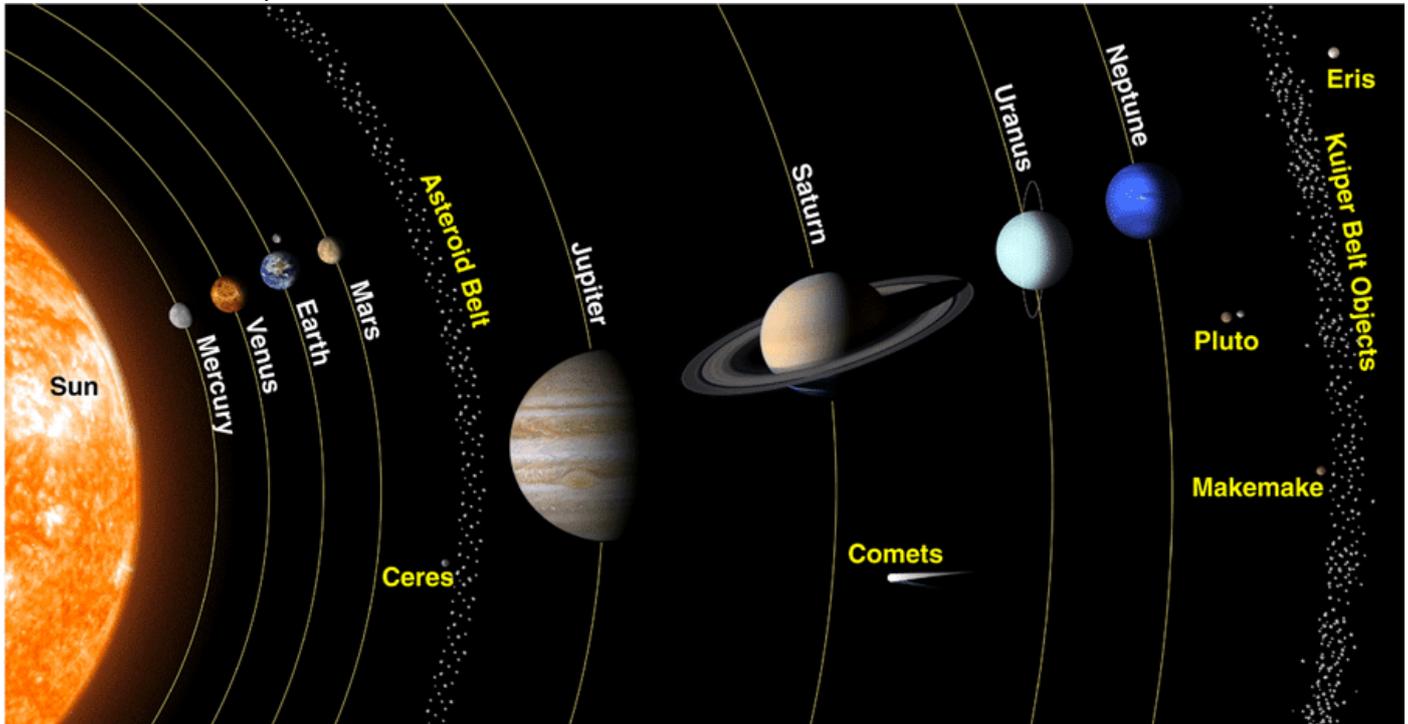
4. Why do researchers study Ceres?

- a. Scientists are interested in this dwarf planet because it hosts the possibility of having water, something that many other planets do not have. Therefore, scientists look for signs of life on Ceres, a possibility that has also maintained scientists’ interest in the planet Mars, whose atmosphere was once warm enough to allow water to flow through it.
- b. The possibility of the presence of water on celestial bodies makes them more intriguing for scientists since “almost everywhere we find water on Earth, we find life,” as NASA puts it.
- c. Another reason why scientists are interested in the dwarf planet Ceres is because studying it can give insights about the formation of the Solar System since it is considered to be a fossil from that time.

5. What does it mean to be an ‘ocean world’?

- a. Ceres, NASA has said, “is a crucial piece of the ocean worlds puzzle”. “With a crust that mixes ice, salts, rock-forming minerals and other materials, Ceres looks to be a remnant “ocean world,” wearing the chemistry of its old ocean and records of the interaction on its surface.” Scientists are interested in exploring ocean worlds because they may support life.
- b. The observations from Dawn suggest the presence of briny liquid water under Ceres’s surface. Before the mission ended in October 2018, the spacecraft dipped to less than 35 km above the surface of the dwarf planet, due to which it was able to collect data in a higher resolution.
- c. Now, by analysing this data, which was collected at the end of the mission, scientists have determined that Ceres has a brine reservoir located about 40 km deep and which is hundreds of miles wide, making the dwarf planet, “water rich”.

6. Significantly, in the papers, scientists note that an ocean world in Ceres was not expected, since it is too far away from the Sun and is too small to have radioactive materials to keep the oceans liquid for most of the dwarf planet's history. "Ceres can then be added to the rather short list of bodies for which we know the interior structure at high resolution, and the only ocean world to date (bar Earth)," the scientists note.
7. There are other dwarf planets and moons in our solar system where oceans exist, including the moons of Saturn and Jupiter.



TOPIC 14. BIOETHANOL

1. The government has set targets of 10 per cent bioethanol blending of petrol by 2022 and to raise it to 20 % by 2030 under the ethanol blending programme to curb carbon emissions and reduce India's dependence on imported crude oil. 1G and 2G bioethanol plants are set to play a key role in making bio-ethanol available for blending but face challenges in attracting investments from the private sector.
2. We examine key challenges to raising the ethanol blending level for petrol from around 5 per cent currently to the targets set by the central government.

3. What are 1G and 2G biofuel plants?

- a. 1G bioethanol plants utilise sugarcane juice and molasses, byproducts in the production of sugar, as raw material, while 2G plants utilise surplus biomass and agricultural waste to produce bioethanol. Currently, domestic production of bioethanol is not sufficient to meet the demand for bio-ethanol for blending with petrol at Indian Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs). Sugar mills, which are the key domestic suppliers of bio-ethanol to OMCs, were only able to supply 1.9 billion litres of bio-ethanol to OMCs equating to 57.6 % of the total demand of 3.3 billion litres.

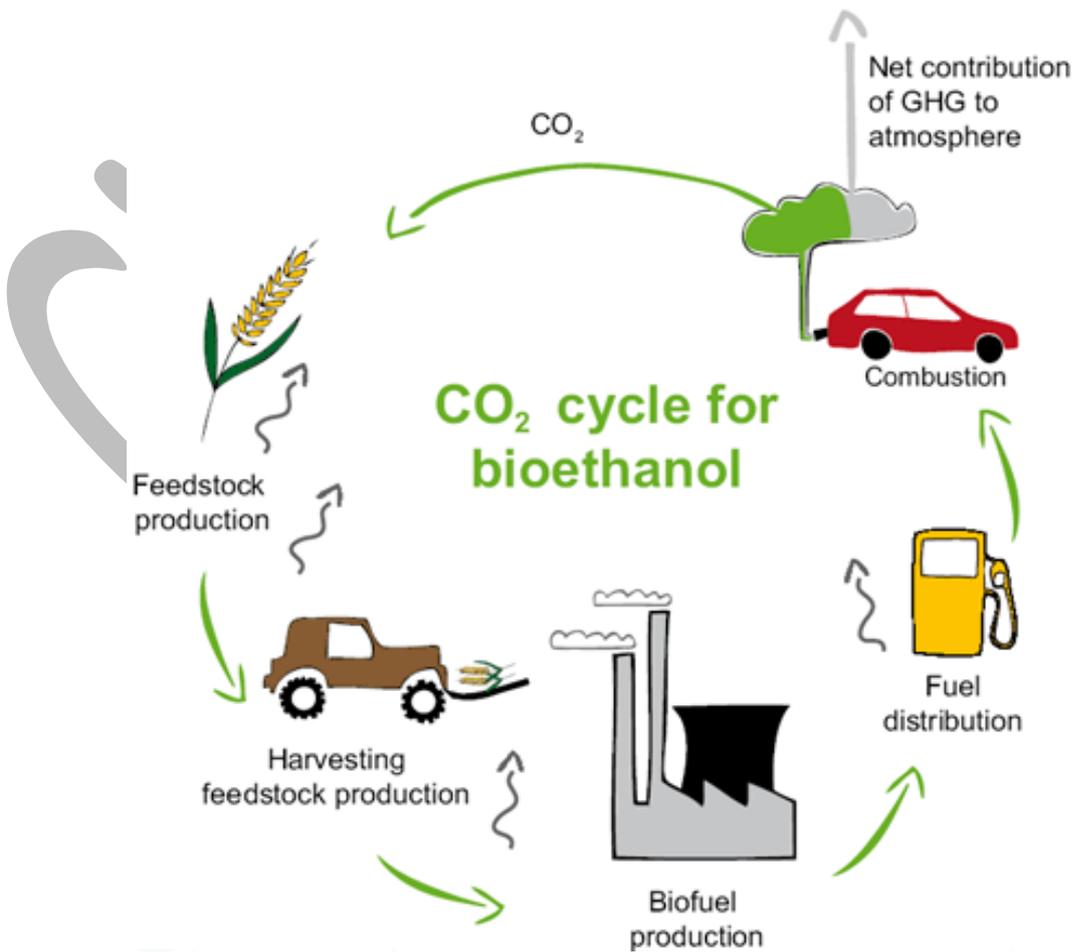
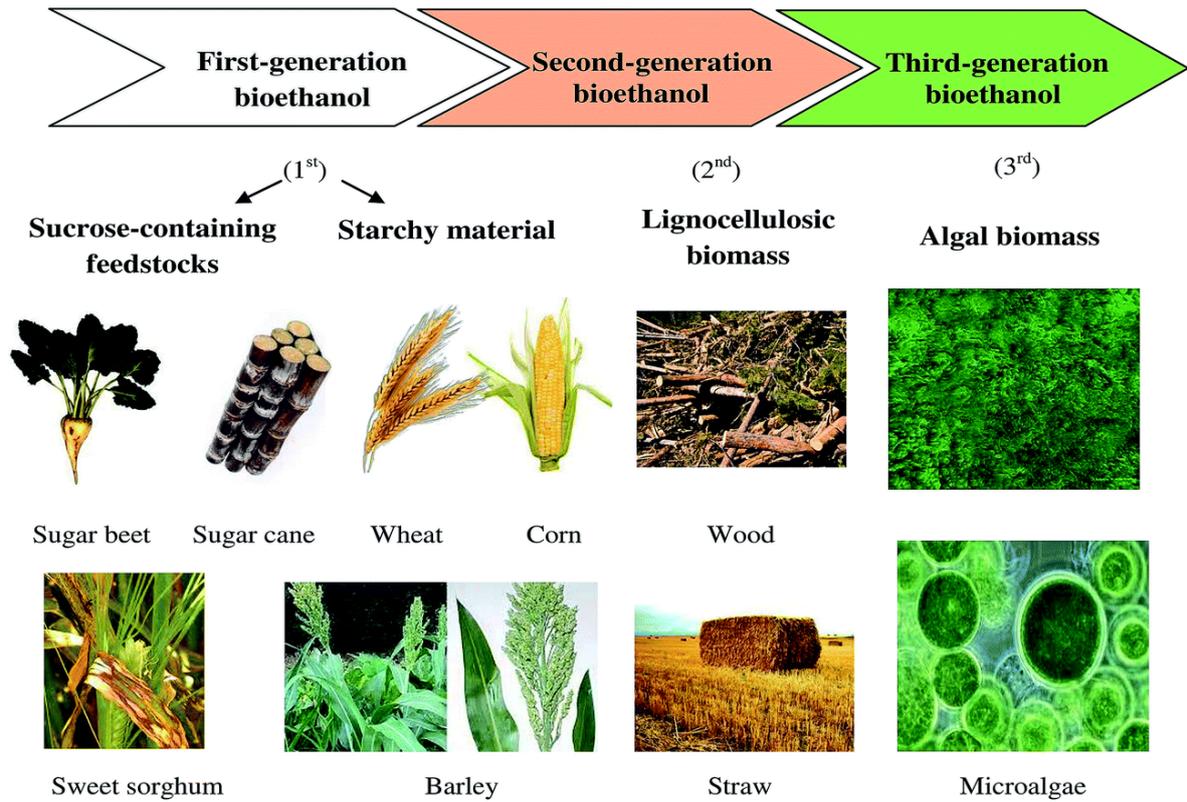
4. Why are Indian plants not able to meet the demand for bio-ethanol?

- a. Experts point out that many sugar mills which are best placed to produce bioethanol do not have the financial stability to invest in biofuel plants and there are also concerns among investors on the uncertainty of the price of bio-ethanol in the future. "In general, the sugar sector has its own balance sheet issues," said Shishir Joshipura, CEO and MD of domestic biofuel technology provider Praj Industries, noting that sugar mills have had to pay high prices for sugarcane set by the government even when there have been supply gluts.
- b. The prices of both sugarcane and bio-ethanol are set by the central government.
- c. An expert at a leading OMC, said the price of obtaining agricultural waste required for the production of bio-ethanol at 2G plants was currently too high for it to be viable for private investors in the country. The expert noted that state governments needed to set up depots where farmers could drop their agricultural waste and that the central government should fix a price for agricultural waste to make investments in 2G bioethanol production an attractive proposition.
- d. The three state-run OMCs Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. are currently in the process of setting up 2G bio-ethanol plants.

5. What can be done to boost investment in bioethanol production?

- a. Experts say the government could provide greater visibility on the price of bioethanol that sugar mills can expect by announcing a mechanism by which the price of bio-ethanol would be decided. The impetus for bioethanol uptake was driven by government worldwide, and a target that a certain percentage of ethanol blending be done using ethanol generated from 2G plants would help boost investment in the area.
- b. Joshipura said 2G bioethanol not only provided a clean source of energy, but also helped to provide greater income to farmers and prevent them from having to burn agricultural waste which can be a major source of air pollution.

Bioethanol production



TOPIC 15. AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

1. On August 9, PM Modi launched the Rs 1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) to be used over next four years. This fund will be used to build post-harvest storage and processing facilities, largely anchored at Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), but can also be availed by individual entrepreneurs.
2. The fund will also be used to provide loans, at concessional rates, to FPOs and other entrepreneurs through primary agriculture credit societies (PACs). NABARD will steer this initiative in association with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
3. “The fund is a major step towards getting agri-markets right,” writes Ashok Gulati, the Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIER. But he points out some missing parts of the puzzle.
4. Firstly, unless NABARD ensures that FPOs get their working capital at interest rates of 4 to 7 per cent — like farmers get for crop loans — the mere creation of storage facilities will not be enough to benefit farmers. “Currently, most FPOs get a large chunk of their loans for working capital from microfinance institutions at rates ranging from 18-22 per cent per annum. At such rates, stocking is not economically viable unless the off-season prices are substantially higher than the prices at harvest time,” he writes.
5. The second missing item is the future of the agri-futures markets. A vibrant futures market is a standard way of hedging risks in a market economy. Several countries — be it China or the US — have agri-futures markets that are multiple times the size of those in India.

6. How do we fix this?

- a. “First, as NABARD forms 10,000 FPOs and creates basic storage facilities through the AIF, it should devise a compulsory module that trains FPOs to use the negotiable warehouse receipt system and navigate the realm of agri-futures to hedge their market risks,” writes Gulati.
- b. Second, government agencies dabbling in commodity markets should increase their participation in agri-futures.
- c. Third, the banks that give loans to FPOs and traders should also participate in commodity futures as “re-insurers” of sorts for the healthy growth of agri-markets.
- d. Finally, government policy has to be more stable and market-friendly.
- e. “The bottom line is that India needs to not only spatially integrate its agri-markets (one nation, one market) but also integrate them temporally — spot and futures markets have to converge. Only then will Indian farmers realise the best price for their produce and hedge market risks,” concludes Gulati.

CABINET DECISIONS
8 JULY, 2020

More Job Opportunities in Agriculture Sector

Central Sector Scheme 'Agriculture Infrastructure Fund' Approved

- To provide debt financing facility for post-harvest management Infrastructure & community farming assets
- ₹1 lakh crore to be provided by banks as loans to PACS*, FPOs, SHGs, Farmers, Startups, other farm processing-based activities
- Loans to be disbursed in 4 years; ₹10,000 crore in 2020 & ₹30,000 crore each in next 3 FYs; to be implemented from FY2020 to FY2029
- Interest subvention of 3% per annum up to ₹2 crore for a max. period of 7 years; Moratorium for repayment from 6 months up to 2 yrs
- Agri Infra fund to be managed through MIS platform; National, State & District level Monitoring Committees to be set up

*Primary Agricultural Credit Societies

TOPIC 16. VICTORY IN JAPAN DAY

1. 15 August 1945 is remembered in history as Victory in Japan or V-J Day, when Allied forces mark their victory over Imperial Japan during World War II.

2. Japan, which had entered the war in September 1940, was part of the Axis bloc—consisting of itself, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and had occupied several parts of Asia during the international conflict.

3. What is V-J Day

- a. In May 1945, Axis powers in Europe had been defeated (Victory in Europe or V-E Day is marked every year on May 8). Allied forces, however, continued fighting Japan in East Asia in following months.
- b. As a part of the British Empire, India also played a key role in the war with Japan—its troops helping secure Singapore and Hong Kong for the Allies in August 1945.
- c. Things started changing rapidly after the US dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and three days later, another one on Nagasaki, killing hundreds of thousands of people.
- d. On August 14, US President Harry S Truman announced that Japan was surrendering, and British Prime Minister Clement Atlee confirmed the news at midnight.
- e. On August 15, Japanese emperor Hirohito in his first radio address ever announced Japan's surrender. V-J Day marked complete end of World War II, and Japan formally signed surrender documents on September 2 that year.

4. Japanese rule in India

- a. During the war, Japan had also forced its exploitative control over one of India's territories.
- b. Japanese forces landed in South Andamans on March 23, 1942 and in the next three to four hours gained complete control over the area. Japanese control over the Andamans coincided with Subhash Chandra Bose-led Indian National Army (INA)'s occupation over the area and the internal understanding between the two, ensured that the Japanese faced no resistance while trying to take over the Andamans.
- c. Bose believed that India could never achieve independence without resorting to revolutionary forces, and held faith in acquiring help from international powers for expelling the British from Indian soil.
- d. Once freed from the British, Bose convinced the Japanese to hand over the islands to him and consequently hoisted the tricolour there on December 30, 1943. He also named the islands Shaheed (martyr) and Swaraj (self-rule).
- e. Soon after, however, things turned bitter as the Japanese force erupted over the island's population with the kind of barbarity unheard of before, as administration remained only nominally in the hands of the INA. It is estimated that close to 2,000 Indians in the Andamans died as a result of Japanese brutality. Finally, the islands were again taken over by the British in October 1945.

5. V-J Day and India's Independence Day

- a. For almost two decades before India actually became independent, the country's freedom fighters had been celebrating January 26 as "Poorna Swaraj Day"—after Congress leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Bose pushed for complete independence from British rule over dominion status at the Lahore session of 1929-30.
- b. But when independence finally arrived in 1947, British rulers coincided the date of transfer with the second anniversary of V-J Day, August 15. The historian Ramachandra Guha notes, "freedom finally came on a day that resonated with imperial pride rather than nationalist sentiment."
- c. Two years later when Indian leaders finished writing the country's Constitution, it was decided to adopt the document on Poorna Swaraj Day in 1950 as it was associated with national pride. January 26 has since been celebrated as India's Republic Day.

TOPIC 17. NATIONAL HEALTH ID

1. PM Modi's announcement of a national health ID for every Indian finds its roots in a 2018 Niti Aayog proposal to create a centralized mechanism to uniquely identify every participating user in National Health Stack.

2. What is the national health ID system?

- a. The national health ID will be a repository of all health-related information of a person. According to the National Health Authority (NHA), every patient who wishes to have their health records available digitally must start by creating a Health ID. Each Health ID will be linked to a health data consent manager — such as National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) — which will be used to seek the patient's consent and allow for seamless flow of health information from the Personal Health Records module. The Health ID is created by using a person's basic details and mobile number or Aadhaar number. This will make it unique to the person, who will have the option to link all of their health records to this ID.

3. What was the original proposal for the health ID?

- a. The National Health Policy 2017 had envisaged creation of a digital health technology ecosystem aiming at developing an integrated health information system that serves the needs of all stakeholders and improves efficiency, transparency and citizens' experience with linkage across public and private healthcare. In the context of this, central government's think-tank Niti Aayog, in June 2018, floated a consultation of a digital backbone for India's health system — National Health Stack.
- b. As part of its consultation, Niti Aayog proposed a Digital Health ID to "greatly reduce the risk of preventable medical errors and significantly increase quality of care". This, in addition to the system enabling users "to obtain a longitudinal view of their healthcare records". This proposal was then further taken up by the Central government with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the NHA, and the Ministry of Electronics and IT preparing a strategy overview document last month for "Making India a Digital Health Nation Enabling Digital Healthcare for all".

4. Which systems does the national health ID interact with?

- a. As envisaged, various healthcare providers — such as hospitals, laboratories, insurance companies, online pharmacies, telemedicine firms — will be expected to participate in the health ID system. The strategy overview document points out that while option of digital Health ID will be there, in case a person does not want Health ID, then also treatment should be allowed.

5. Have there been global instances of such a centralised health record system?

- a. In 2005, the UK's National Health Service (NHS) started deployment of an electronic health record systems with a goal to have all patients with a centralised electronic health record by 2010. While several hospitals acquired electronic patient records systems as part of this process, there was no national healthcare information exchange. The program was ultimately dismantled after a cost to the UK taxpayer was more than £12 billion, and is considered one of the most expensive healthcare IT failures. According to The Independent, the project had been beset by changing specifications, technical challenges and clashes with suppliers, which left it years behind schedule and way over cost.

TOPIC 18. MINIMUM AGE OF MARRIAGE FOR WOMEN

1. Prime Minister Modi said that central government has set up a committee to reconsider the minimum age of marriage for women during his address to the nation on the 74th Independence Day.
2. “We have set up a committee to reconsider the minimum age of marriage for girls. The Centre will take a decision after the committee submits its report,” he said.
3. The minimum age of marriage, especially for women, has been a contentious issue. The law evolved in the face of much resistance from religious and social conservatives. Currently, the law prescribes that the minimum age of marriage is 21 years and 18 years for men and women respectively.
4. The minimum age of marriage is distinct from the age of majority which is gender-neutral. An individual attains the age of majority at 18 as per the Indian Majority Act, 1875.

5. What is the committee that the Prime Minister mentioned in his speech?

- a. On June 2, the Union Ministry for Women and Child Development set up a task force to examine matters pertaining to age of motherhood, imperatives of lowering Maternal Mortality Ratio and the improvement of nutritional levels among women. The task force will examine the correlation of age of marriage and motherhood with health, medical well-being, and nutritional status of the mother and neonate, infant or child, during pregnancy, birth and thereafter.
- b. It will also look at key parameters like Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Total Fertility Rate (TFR), Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) and Child Sex Ratio (CSR), and will examine possibility of increasing age of marriage for women from present 18 years to 21 years.
- c. Headed by former Samata Party president Jaya Jaitely, the committee includes Member Health at the NITI Aayog, Dr Vinod Paul, and several Secretaries to the Government of India.

6. Why is there a minimum age for marriage?

- a. The law prescribes a minimum age of marriage to essentially outlaw child marriages and prevent the abuse of minors. Personal laws of various religions that deal with marriage have their own standards, often reflecting custom.
- b. For Hindus, Section 5(iii) of The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, sets 18 years as the minimum age for the bride and 21 years as the minimum age for the groom. However, child marriages are not illegal — even though they can be declared void at the request of the minor in the marriage.
- c. In Islam, the marriage of a minor who has attained puberty is considered valid.
- d. The Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 also prescribe 18 and 21 years as the minimum age of consent for marriage for women and men respectively.
- e. Additionally, sexual intercourse with a minor is rape, and the ‘consent’ of a minor is regarded as invalid since she is deemed incapable of giving consent at that age.

7. How did the law evolve?

- a. The Indian Penal Code enacted in 1860 criminalized sexual intercourse with a girl below age of 10. The provision of rape was amended in 1927 through The Age of Consent Bill, 1927, which declared that marriage with a girl under 12 would be invalid. The law faced opposition from conservative leaders of Indian National Movement, who saw British intervention as an attack on Hindu customs.
- b. A legal framework for the age of consent for marriage in India only began in the 1880s.
- c. In 1929, The Child Marriage Restraint Act set 16 and 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys respectively. The law, popularly known as the Sarda Act after its sponsor Harbilas Sarda, a judge and a member of Arya Samaj, was eventually amended in 1978 to prescribe 18 and 21 years as the age of marriage for a woman and a man respectively.

8. Why is the legal age of marriage different for men and women?

- a. There is no reasoning in the law for having different legal standards of age for men and women to marry. The laws are a codification of custom and religious practices. The Law Commission consultation paper has argued that having different legal standards “contributes to the stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands”.

- b. Women’s rights activists have argued that the law also perpetuates the stereotype that women are more mature than men of the same age and, therefore, can be allowed to marry sooner.
- c. The international treaty Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also calls for the abolition of laws that assume women have a different physical or intellectual rate of growth than men.
- d. The Commission recommended that the minimum age of marriage for both genders must be set at 18. “The difference in age for husband and wife has no basis in law as spouses entering into a marriage are by all means equals and their partnership must also be of that between equals,” the commission noted.

9. Why is the law being relooked at?

- a. From bringing in gender-neutrality to reduce the risks of early pregnancy among women, there are many arguments in favour of increasing the minimum age of marriage of women. Early pregnancy is associated with increased child mortality rates and affects the health of the mother.
- b. Despite laws mandating minimum age and criminalising sexual intercourse with a minor, child marriages are very prevalent in the country.
- c. Last year, the Delhi High Court also sought the central government’s response in a plea that sought a uniform age for marriage for men and women. The public interest litigation was filed by advocate and Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson Ashwini Kumar Upadhyaya.

10. What are the grounds on which the law was challenged?

- a. Upadhyaya, the petitioner in this case, had challenged the law on the grounds of discrimination. He argued that Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, which guarantee the right to equality and the right to live with dignity, were violated by having different legal ages for men and women to marry.
- b. Two significant Supreme Court rulings can act as precedents to support the petitioner’s claim.
- c. In 2014, in the ‘National Legal Services Authority of India v Union of India’ case, the Supreme Court, while recognising transgenders as the third gender, said that justice is delivered with the “assumption that humans have equal value and should, therefore, be treated as equal, as well as by equal laws”.
- d. In 2019, in ‘Joseph Shine v Union of India’, the Supreme Court decriminalised adultery, and said that “a law that treats women differently based on gender stereotypes is an affront to women’s dignity”.

11. How common are child marriages in India?

- a. A report published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on July 2 said that while child marriages were almost universally banned, “yet they happen 33,000 times a day, every day, all around the world”.
- b. An estimated 650 million girls and women alive today were married as children, and by 2030, another 150 million girls under the age of 18 will be married. Although advances in India have contributed to a 50 per cent decline in child marriage in South Asia—to 30 per cent in 2018, the region still accounts for the largest number of child marriages each year, estimated at 4.1 million in 2017, the report said.
- c. In India, an analysis of child marriage data show that among girls married by age 18, 46 per cent were also in the lowest income bracket.
- d. UNICEF estimates suggest that each year, at least 1.5 million girls under the age of 18 are married in India, which makes the country home to the largest number of child brides in the world — accounting for a third of the global total. Nearly 16 per cent adolescent girls aged 15-19 are currently married.

TOPIC 19. NCC

1. In his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke about the expansion of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) in coastal and border districts of India. He announced that from the 173 coastal and border districts, one lakh cadets, a third of them girls, will be trained.
2. A look at the NCC, arguably the world's largest voluntary uniformed youth organisation and significance of its expansion in coastal and border districts of the country and the road ahead.

3. Prime Minister's Announcement.

- a. In his speech, the Prime Minister said under the new initiative, training will be given to around one lakh new NCC cadets and an attempt will be made that one-third of these will be girl cadets. "In border areas, the Army will train the cadets. In the coastal area, the Navy will train the cadets. And where there are air bases, the Air Force will undertake training activities. Border and coastal areas will get trained manpower to fight with disasters. Youth will acquire required skills for careers in armed forces," he said in his speech.
- b. Expansion of NCC in border and coastal area has been under consideration of Ministry of Defence for quite some time. There have also been discussions about increasing footprints of organisation in tribal areas too. On May 5, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reiterated that MoD was determined to go ahead with expansion in coastal and border areas.

4. The organisation

- a. The NCC, which was formed in 1948, has its roots to British era uniformed youth entities like University Corps or University Officer Training Corps. Currently NCC has a strength of around 14 lakh cadets from Army, Navy and Air Force wings. It enrolls cadets at high school and college level and also awards certificates on completion of various phases. Headed by a Director General of three-star military rank, NCC falls under purview of MoD and is led by serving officers from Armed forces at various hierarchical positions. The NCC currently has 17 regional directorates which govern NCC in units in various states or groups of states and union territories.
- b. Each school and college units have Associate NCC Officers and cadets are also assigned various leadership roles in the form of cadet appointments. Of the total 14 lakh strength, a little less than one third are girl cadets. The NCC cadets receive basic military training at various levels and also have academic curriculum basics related to Armed forces and their functioning. Various training camps, adventure activities and military training camps are an important aspect of NCC training.
- c. NCC cadets have played an important role over years in relief efforts during various emergency situations. During the ongoing pandemic, over 60,000 NCC cadets have been deployed for voluntary relief work in coordination with district and state authorities across the country.

5. Significance of expansion in border and coastal area

- a. While the NCC does have units in several border and coastal districts, officials believe there is a lot of scope for expansion. Restructuring of the NCC was one of the key recommendations of the Committee of Experts (CoE) headed by Lt Gen DB Shekatkar (Retd) and constituted by then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar back in mid-2016. Speaking to Express after the Prime Minister's speech, Gen Shekatkar said, "There is certainly scope for NCC to increase its footprint in coastal and border areas. In the coastal regions, where youth are already familiar with the sea, the training will increase interest in careers in Navy, Coast Guard and also Merchant shipping avenues. In the border area, the trained cadets can play an important role in various contingencies and also in supporting roles to the Armed forces in various roles."

6. Road ahead for the NCC

- a. In his interaction with NCC directorates across India on May 5, Defence Minister had stressed on 'modernisation of NCC with a view to make it more relevant to new and changed times.' And also to 'make NCC activities compatible with semester system of colleges and universities.'
7. Lt Gen Shekatkar said, "NCC has a dual funding model where both the centre and states or union territories provide budgetary support. Many states have shown lack of seriousness towards this issue. However, the CoE has recommended that along with Defence Ministry, the Home Ministry and Education Ministry should also contribute towards the NCC, considering the importance of this institution to education and overall security." From the current strength of 14 lakh, the NCC is slated to grow upto 15 lakh cadet strength when the expansion in coastal and border areas is implemented.

TOPIC 20. DIGITAL INDIA

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the Independence Day speech to launch the National Digital Health Mission, announce a new cyber security policy and promise optical fibre connectivity to all six lakh villages in 1,000 days. The announcements mark the culmination of projects that have been in the offing for a few years, or are a reaction to the present situation, as in the context of the tensions with China. Here is the context of the three big announcements around Digital India today.

2. Optical-fibre connectivity

- a. Modi government calls it the “world’s largest connectivity project”, but BharatNet — which envisages laying of about 8 lakh kilometre of incremental optical fibre cable (OFC) to all the 2,50,000-plus Gram Panchayats (GP) in the country at an estimated cost of Rs 42,068 crore (\$6.2 billion) — has had significant snags in deployment for years now.
- b. First, it was unable to meet its March 2020 deadline for its second phase of deployment, which was shifted to August 2021. Even this month, the state-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) did not have any bidders for a maintenance and upkeep tender for the fibre that has already been laid. Some told The Indian Express that the decision to keep out Chinese equipment and vendors for 4G work and the dire financial situation of the telecom could be the reason bidders are not showing interest. States have been asking for more funds for this second phase and lamenting a lack of labour resources due to the migrant exodus.
- c. Also, there aren’t many private players utilising the already-laid fibre to provide services from the gram panchayats onwards, even as rural internet penetration is growing independently through private telecom players. Further, the quality of BSNL’s existing fibre is subpar. “We couldn’t even find OFC in some of the locations where they supposedly existed. In some other places, the fibre was cut and they were not repairing it,” a BSNL official pointed out last year.
- d. Initiated by the UPA government in October 2011, BharatNet was originally named National Optical Fibre Network or NOFN. It’s being financed by the Universal Service Obligation Fund of the Department of Telecommunications, through a 5 per cent levy on the revenues of private telecom service providers. The project’s primary objective is to extend fibre connectivity — available at the state capital, district headquarters and blocks — to every panchayat, thereby providing access to broadband internet services to 69 per cent of India’s rural population.
- e. Phase I of BharatNet, which commenced in June 2014 after the Narendra Modi-led government took over, was completed in December 2017. It, in fact, over-achieved the 1 lakh target for this phase by covering 1,22,908 panchayats with an investment of around \$1.64 billion (Rs 11,200 crore). In the second phase, the remaining 1,29,827 gram panchayats are to be covered through 5 km of new fibre per gram panchayats. This phase incorporates a mix of both underground and aerial fibre as well as radio and satellite connectivity to reach more inaccessible locations such as Jammu and Kashmir, Northeast, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

3. National Digital Health Mission

- a. The genesis of the new digital health infrastructure in India came about in the 2017 National Health Policy, which proposed a new National Digital Health Authority. Then, a committee headed by former UIDAI chairman Satyanarayana released the National Digital Health Blueprint in July 2019.
- b. On August 7 this year, National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) released their latest strategic document, outlining the envisioned digital registries of doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, and insurance companies, digital personal health records, and digital clinical decision systems.
- c. Patients can create a Health ID, allowing them to share their data between hospitals and doctors digitally. They can choose for how long or what specific documents they would like to share with whom. If individuals are looking to benefit from government schemes, then they will be required to connect their ID to their Aadhaar.

- d. One copy of a patient's records are stored in their doctor's files and one is stored in their own individual locker (which can be owned by a company or by the government). Other than the registry of doctors, professionals, and institutions, this allows for decentralised storing.
- e. In early July, NDHM began a series of consultations with major hospitals, insurance companies, licensing authorities, and labs. The NDHM is implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA) under the Health Ministry. In July, NDHM sources told The Indian Express that they had also begun consulting state governments and have found that the architecture's standardisation across the country will need to find ways to accommodate state-specific rules such as accreditation.
- f. The vision is often compared to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), a government-owned highway that private players can hook into to provide their applications to consumers. In the same way that a user can use PayTM or Google Pay on the UPI highway, the NDHM team envisions being able to choose from several private applications on their government-owned interface. Other features will include data analytics tools, telemedicine, and e-pharmacy.
- g. NDHM is overseen by a Mission Steering Group with Ministers from IT, AYUSH, Women's and Child Development, as well as Niti Aayog Member, NHA CEO, and others. The policy-level decisions are taken by an empowered committee with Secretaries and others.

4. Cybersecurity Policy 2020

- a. As tensions with China play out in a technological battleground, a new cybersecurity policy to be rolled in 2020 would replace the present one. This existing policy, India's first, was released in 2013 in the context of leaks by US National Security Advisor whistleblower Edward Snowden that alleged NSA surveillance was also tracking India's domestic issues.
- b. The National Cyber Security Strategy 2020 (NCSS 2020), overseen by the National Security Council Secretariat, collected public comments till January this year. These frameworks will have a bearing on incidents similar to the hacking of 121 Indians' WhatsApps in 2019 by the Israeli cyber firm NSO Group.
- c. "Cyber intrusions and attacks have increased in scope and sophistication targeting sensitive personal and business data, and critical information infrastructure, with impact on national economy and security. The present cyber threat landscape poses significant challenges due to rapid technological developments such as Cloud Computing, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, 5G, etc. New challenges include data protection/privacy, law enforcement in evolving cyberspace, access to data stored overseas, misuse of social media platforms, international cooperation on cybercrime & cyber terrorism, and so on. Threats from organised cybercriminal groups, technological cold wars, and increasing state sponsored cyber-attacks have also emerged. Further, existing structures may need to be revamped or revitalised.
- d. Thus, a need exists for the formulation of a National Cyber Security Strategy 2020," the call for comments states.
- e. It may also have a bearing on a pending data protection legislation being seen by a Joint Select Committee in Parliament and which mandates some amount of data localisation in its present form.

TOPIC 21. POVERTY ALLEVIATION

1. Our freedom fighters did not look at the fight against poverty and inequality as being separate from the struggle against British colonialism. The idea of economic emancipation as a precondition for a vibrant democracy was echoed by all streams of the freedom struggle with Babasaheb Ambedkar being its most vocal champion.
2. The poor state of the economy in the early decades meant that growth was seen as the primary objective rather than efforts at redistribution and poverty alleviation. It was only during the late Sixties and early Seventies, following the call of “Garibi Hatao” by Indira Gandhi, that poverty became an issue of political mobilisation and a priority for economic policy-making.
3. Today, the average per capita income of Indians is 7.5 times that in 1950. India has moved from the so-called “Hindu rate of growth” of 3-4 per cent to an average growth rate of 7 per cent per annum and higher in recent decades.
4. “The experience with poverty reduction, however, has been mixed,” writes Himanshu, associate professor at JNU.
5. The last official estimate of poverty corresponds to 2011-12, according to which 22 per cent of the population was below the poverty line, suggesting a sharp reduction compared to the 2004-05 estimates. During this period, 110 million rural poor and 27 million urban poor moved out of poverty.
6. “The success in poverty reduction was as much due to faster growth of per capita income as it was due to several policies implemented during this period. Notable among them were the NREGA, Forest Rights Act, Right to Education, National Health Mission and the expansion in food programmes, which shifted the discourse from poverty alleviation to capability issues through a rights-based approach,” writes Himanshu.
7. India’s experience, however, pales in comparison to most other countries that became independent around same time or started at similar levels of per capita income such as China, Vietnam or Bangladesh. Also concerning is that we have no official estimates of poverty and inequality after 2011-12.
8. The last consumption survey was conducted in 2017-18 whose report was leaked, but not released. It showed a decline in consumption expenditure in rural areas while it barely increased in urban areas. The net result was a rise in overall poverty.
9. “This is the first time in four decades that consumption expenditure has declined and poverty risen between two quinquennial rounds. The government’s decision to junk the survey does not erase the fact that this decade seems to have seen a setback in the fight against poverty,” he states. Other indicators such as unemployment, wages and incomes vindicate this.

TOPIC 22. ISRAEL-UAE-US DEAL

1. Israel and the United Arab Emirates, helped by the US, have arrived at an important peace agreement that has the potential to change the geopolitics of West Asia and beyond.

2. What is the big deal?

- a. The announcement by the White House on Thursday took the world by surprise, Palestinians included. The deal: the UAE will establish diplomatic relations with Israel in return for President Binyamin Netanyahu committing to give up a stated plan to annex the West Bank, the main territory of a state that the Palestinians want. The UAE becomes the third Arab nation to recognise Israel after Egypt (in 1979) and Jordan (1994).
- b. In the coming week, according to the White House statement, delegations from the two countries will meet to set in motion bilateral ties in investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications, tech, energy, healthcare, culture, the environment, etc. On priority, Israel and UAE will work together to find a treatment and a vaccine for Covid-19.
- c. The agreement, hailed by President Donald Trump, Netanyahu, and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE, as a breakthrough, has been cast as the coming together of two nations with strong economies for the good of the region.

3. What about the Palestinians?

- a. President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, which seeks a two-state solution, lashed out against the deal as a “betrayal” by the UAE. He has been disengaged from the Trump administration for the last two years for its pro-Israel stand. “The Palestinian leadership rejects and denounces the UAE, Israeli and US trilateral, surprising, announcement,” a senior adviser to Abbas said. It was a “betrayal of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the Palestinian cause,” he said.
- b. The Hamas, a Palestinian Islamist militant group that de facto runs the Gaza strip, and views the relationship with Israel as a fight to the finish, called it a “stabbing in the back of our people” by the UAE.
- c. For the Palestinians, the Israeli commitment that it will not pursue its plan to annex the West Bank, is an empty concession – the deal does not address the Palestinian demand for statehood. Netanyahu floated the annexation plan recently – it means Israel will claim sovereignty of all land in the West Bank on which Jewish settlements have come up, literally cutting up the dream of a Palestinian state.
- d. It was not certain if Netanyahu would have gone ahead with it even without the UAE deal. Now, by agreeing not to, he has enabled the UAE to talk it up to its Arab allies as a major concession extracted from Israel, while Netanyahu himself can project it elsewhere abroad as a big give on his part, without compromising on the core issues of the conflict.
- e. An extreme pro-annexation section of the settler lobby in Israel is angry, but he has mollified domestic audiences that this is a “temporary” hold on the plan.

4. How have the Arab states reacted?

- a. Saudi Arabia has said nothing so far, although the ruling family’s Prince Turki al-Faisal had strongly rejected the proposals for Israel-Palestine peace unveiled by the US in January this year, which included a plan to hand over Jerusalem to Israel and permit it to extend its sovereignty to all Jewish settlements in the West Bank.
- b. But Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) has been hailed as an ally by the Trump administration. He has formed a solid friendship with Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, the President’s pointman in the Middle East, tasked with finding a solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict.
- c. There is bound to be speculation that the UAE could not have taken its extraordinary decision on Israel without the backing and support of the House of Saud. Over the years, the Saudis have seen both the US and Israel as insurance against Shia Iran. But as the leader of the Arab world,

and the custodian of Islam's holiest shrines, it might have preferred someone else to take the revolutionary first step on this.

- d. The smaller Gulf states of Oman and Bahrain have quickly fallen in line behind UAE, and it could be a matter of time before the others, including Saudi, do as well. That is the hope Trump expressed on Thursday.

5. How does the region's geopolitics change?

- a. If the Arab states do fall in line, it would dramatically bring all Sunni nations in the region in an anti-Iran alliance with Israel that they have secretly wished for all these years. Iran and its proxies and allies – in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, the Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen – have been weakened and broken by war, the ISIS and al-Qaeda. Hezbollah, which Israel has treated as enemy number 1 after Iran, faces a domestic backlash in Lebanon after the explosion that has destroyed Beirut. Russia, a staunch ally of Syria, has not yet reacted; neither has China.
- b. The deal will send ripples through other parts of the world. In South Asia, it will put Pakistan in a bind. Despite having toyed with the idea of establishing diplomatic ties with Israel for nearly two decades, Pakistan could never take the plunge for fear of a domestic backlash. The weak government of Imran Khan — who knows what it is to be accused of being part of a Jewish conspiracy after his first marriage to London socialite Jemima Goldsmith, the daughter of a Jewish millionaire — is already facing criticism at home for not being able to take on India over its 2019 decisions in Kashmir. Imran is unlikely to be seen as joining an Arab alliance that has effectively abandoned another “Islamic” cause dear to Pakistan, that of Palestine.
- c. But then, UAE is a good friend. Pakistan has already annoyed Saudi Arabia, another “biradar country”, by showing its teeth at the OIC because it did not agree to hold a special session on Kashmir. The kingdom responded by asking for immediate repayment of a \$3 bn loan given in 2018, and it has frozen a \$3.2 bn line of credit for oil purchases. Even if Pakistan does not join the Arab stampede towards Israel, it cannot rail against them for it.
- d. In Kashmir too, where pro-independence lobbies have compared stone pelting agitations of the last 10 years with the intifada, the isolation of Palestine is certain to mirror the isolation of Kashmir today.

6. And how does Trump gain?

- a. The deal has salvaged something resembling an achievement for Trump from the ruins of his foreign policy. His attempts to create a lasting legacy in the Koreas bombed, while the Afghanistan peace process is still struggling to get on its feet. US-China relations are on the rocks. Traditional NATO allies in Europe have been sidelined. Even if the UAE-Israel agreement does not bring Israel-Palestine peace, the new equations that it will give rise to, including the isolation of Iran, are already being heralded in the US as an achievement.
- b. Joe Biden, who is hoping to win the presidential race against a post-Covid weakened Trump, had no choice but to praise the deal as “a historic step”.

TOPIC 23. NORTH VS SOUTH DIVIDE

MINT GRAPHITI

Chart 1
Southern states will see their share in the population falling, while northern ones will grow faster

Share of India's population in 2011 census and 2036 census projections (in %)

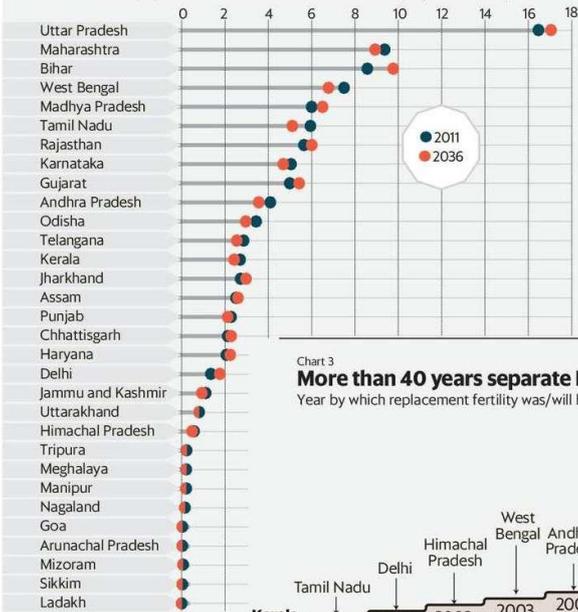


Chart 2
By 2036, India will be distinctly more middle-aged

Age-wise breakdown of the population in 2011 and 2036

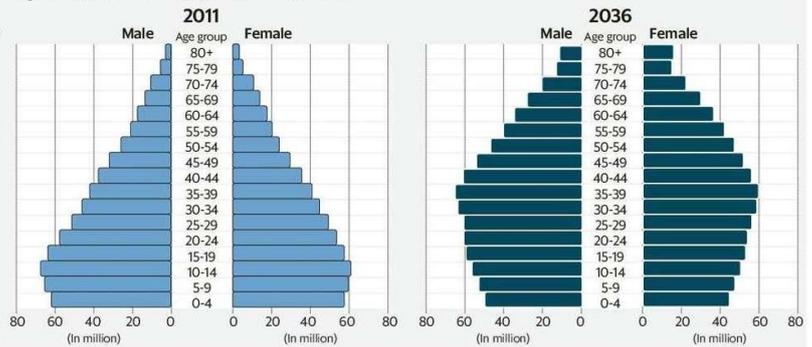


Chart 3
More than 40 years separate Bihar from Kerala in achieving replacement fertility

Year by which replacement fertility was/will be achieved



Source: Census population projections

1. Fifteen years from now, there will be something of a generational divide between India's north and south, new official population estimates show. As the developed southern states age rapidly, the average Tamil man will be more than 12 years older than the average Bihari man. Meanwhile, even as fertility falls slowly in the north, the average Bihari woman will still have more children than women from Kerala did 40 years earlier.
2. India is growing slower than before and women are having fewer children, but there are still very much two speeds at which these processes are going on. More than one-third of the total increase in India's population between 2011 and 2036 will come from two states alone, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, census population projections show, while all of the southern states will see their share in the population decline (*see chart 1*).
3. Bihar will surpass Maharashtra to become India's second-most populous state after Uttar Pradesh within the next four years, and Rajasthan will grow bigger than Tamil Nadu. People from the four most populous southern states will account for fewer people than from Uttar Pradesh alone.
4. At the same time, India will move from being a very young country, to increasingly resembling something closer to a middle-aged country (*see chart 2*).
5. However, here again, there will be two speeds. By 2036, Tamil Nadu will be India's oldest state, with a median age of over 40, older than Kerala, which, with a median age of 31.9 years, was oldest state in 2011. Bihar was and will remain India's youngest state, only state where the median individual will be under 30 even in 2036, the projections show. The median age in country will be 34.7 years that year.
6. By 2036, Bihar will be the only state that has not achieved replacement fertility, the projections say. In demographic terms, a group is said to have achieved replacement fertility when the average woman will have no more than 2.1 children in her lifetime, enough only to 'replace' that group, and marks the beginning of the end of population growth.
7. More than four decades separate the country's most developed states from its least developed states in terms of this fertility transition. Kerala achieved replacement fertility in 1998, while Bihar will get there only in 2039 (*see chart 3*).
8. These numbers come from a Technical Group on Population Projections that was set up in office of Registrar General of India to provide country with population estimates for 2011-35. The projections

are made using data on fertility, mortality, migration and urbanization. However, the estimates assume that current demographic trends will hold, an assumption that has been challenged of late.

9. These changes could come faster than has been estimated, experts say. Most high-fertility groups, such as poorer women and women in poorer states, have consistently exceeded expectations by lowering their fertility faster than what the demographers had predicted.

10. "I expect all of these changes to take place faster than has been anticipated," said P. Arokiasamy, head of the department of development studies at the International Institute for Population Sciences in Mumbai. "There is a strong diffusion effect. Once changes are established in some demographic groups and states, and the advantages of lowered fertility such as better incomes and health outcomes are visible, there is an aspiration in other groups too to reduce family sizes. It will happen in states such as Bihar that are lagging behind now."

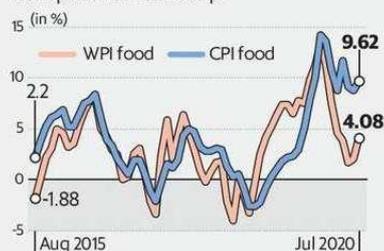
11. The aspiration to give their children a better future could be driving a big part of this change, research by Alaka Basu, professor of development sociology at Cornell University; and Sonalde Desai, professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, has shown. Using data from the 2004-05 India Human Development Survey, they found that smaller families were able to invest significantly more in children's education. Expenditure on children's education was 40% higher in one-child families than in families with three or more children. Children without siblings were more than one-and-a-half times as likely to be in a private school as children from families with more than three children, their research showed

12. "The change (in the country's population growth) is happening on its own. What needs attention now is ageing," Arokiasamy said.

TOPIC 24. FOOD PRICE

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

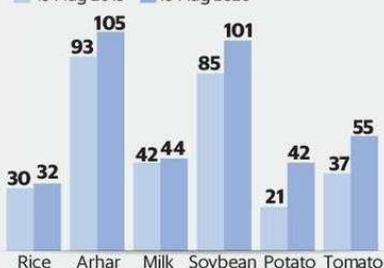
Chart 1: While wholesale prices, a proxy for farmer incomes, have remained muted, retail prices have shot up



WPI: Wholesale Price Index; CPI: Consumer Price Index

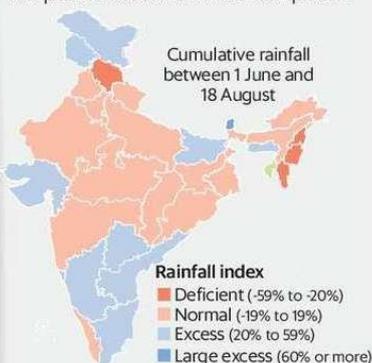
Chart 2: Food costs can burn a serious hole in the monthly budgets of those who've already lost incomes or jobs

Retail prices in Mumbai (in ₹ per kg or litre)



Source: CMIE, IMD, Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture

Chart 3: While the direction of food prices is notoriously hard to predict, the monsoon has poured excess rain in several parts...



...and area under kharif crops is significantly higher

	Area (million hectares)	% increase Y-o-Y
Rice	35.2	14
Pulses	12.4	2
Oilseeds	18.7	14.4
Sugarcane	5.2	1.2
Cotton	12.5	3.2

*Data as on 14 August



1. Ramesh Pangal calls it a season of miseries: Farmers running around with vegetables to find a buyer; leaving tomatoes to rot in the field; dumping white pumpkins by the roadside. Between April and July, as the covid-19 pandemic worsened across India, farmers in Haryana's Bhiwani district, where Pangal lives, incurred heavy losses as most vegetables sold for less than ₹5 per kg.
2. Wholesale markets were open only intermittently and the cost of transporting produce to cities shot up. "Prices were so low that it did not even cover the cost of plucking and transport," said Pangal.
3. Strangely, at the consumer end of the food supply pipeline, prices have been soaring. Take Tilak Mahato, who migrated from Bihar a few years ago to settle down in Ludhiana, Punjab. He and his wife Sangeeta have slashed food expenses to the bare minimum. The greens are expensive and shrink when cooked, so soybean nuggets thrown in with pieces of potatoes in a spicy curry is the staple diet along with rotis (wheat flatbread). The last grand meal was an egg curry prepared a month back. Pulses are rare; fruits are a luxury.
4. Mahato's day job at a steel factory has been erratic. The factory was shut for three months; then, it resumed operations in June but Mahato gets to go to work only for 2-3 days in a week. With falling income and rising food costs, stress levels have gone up within the family.
5. "My children keep asking for milk but we cannot afford it anymore," Sangeeta said over the phone (even though farmers are selling cow milk at around ₹20 per litre, consumer prices have stayed firm at ₹45 per litre). To make matters worse, the family is not enrolled under the federal food security scheme—an estimate suggests that over 100 million eligible Indians are excluded—which would have entitled them to 20kg of grains every month (for a four-member household) at a subsidized rate and another 20 kg for free in the form of pandemic-specific assistance.
6. Headline consumer price inflation (CPI) shot up to 6.9% in July driven by higher food prices, which rose 9.6% year-on-year, stalling hopes of further interest rate cuts by India's central bank.
7. While a divergence between farm gate and end consumer price has always existed in India's food economy, the pandemic has widened the gap to chronic levels. The question is: How long will this last?

Protein inflation

8. According to Manik Kadam, a farmer from Parbhani district of Maharashtra, farmers stocked pigeon peas, a pulse variety, hoping for a better price. But even months after the harvest, wholesale rates are substantially lower than government announced crop support prices. "From vegetables to poultry, growers incurred heavy losses, but at the same time, consumers were paying a steep price," Kadam said, blaming the proverbial middlemen in the supply chain.
9. Testimonies of farmers like Kadam and Pangal show that the soaring retail food price of the past few months have resulted in almost no benefit to growers. The price crash at the farm level has in fact been sweeping, except perhaps for potatoes (and wheat, which is procured at minimum support prices). The tuber has witnessed an unusual spike since fewer farmers grew the crop last season following successive years of heavy losses. In the coming months, retail prices of vegetables are likely to spike further as excess rains in several states result in production losses.
10. A closer look at the CPI food basket shows that the increase in retail prices is on account of the rising price of cereals (7%), meat and fish (19%), pulses (16%), vegetables (11%) and edible oils (12%).
11. The high protein inflation, reflecting in higher prices of meat, eggs and pulses, at a time when the pandemic has led to a sharp fall in household incomes is indicative of continuing supply disruptions and intermediaries using the pandemic as an excuse to jack up consumer prices.
12. Despite India being in 'unlock' mode, supply chains are far from normal—frequent shutdown of local wholesale and retail markets are taking a toll on primary producers. Consumers, particularly from lower-income groups, are already struggling to put food on the plate.
13. A continuing rise in retail food prices—especially for nutritious items like fresh greens, pulses and eggs—is likely to force the poor to restrict their consumption to calorie-rich and subsidized cereals. A recent survey of over 25,000 rural households by the news portal *Gaon Connection* and the Delhi-based Centre for Study of Developing Societies showed that 38% of families were skipping a meal, while 46% have already slashed a few items from their diet.
14. A *Mint* ground report from Uttar Pradesh's Bundelkhand region in May also found landless families surviving on a subsistence diet of salt and boiled rice.

Uncertain future

15. Wholesale food price inflation (WPI-food) numbers, which tracks producer prices, shows a significant gap between wholesale (4%) and retail food inflation (9.6%). Wholesale Inflation in cereals was just 0.8% in July; corresponding numbers for vegetables were 8%, largely driven by higher year-on-year prices of potatoes (69%). Wholesale prices of eggs, meat, fish and dairy (5%) grew at a slower clip compared to retail prices, while fruit prices witnessed a deflation in the wholesale market (-3%).
16. The gap between retail and wholesale prices shows the extent of disruption between the farm and consumer plates, but this could be a temporary phenomenon, said Himanshu, associate professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. "In July, there were localized lockdowns in (many) states. As the covid fatigue sets in, and as restrictions are lifted, supply disruptions could normalize in the next three months."
17. Himanshu added that rising inflation in cereals is largely due to higher public stockholdings. Central stocks of rice and wheat were at a record 94 million tonnes in July, more than double the requirement for the public distribution system and buffer stocks.
18. According to Dharmakirti Joshi, chief economist at Crisil, the wedge between retail and wholesale prices is usually due to intermediaries in the supply chain but "this time around, it could be due to genuine supply disruptions." Transport costs have increased due to rising fuel costs and coupled with excess rains and floods in parts of India, growers of perishables are more at risk. But on the brighter side, the export of rice and other horticulture produce has picked up over the past month, Joshi said.
19. He added that an upside risk to food inflation could emerge from any further rise in the incidence of covid-19 infections in rural India. "There are no production risks to the (ongoing) kharif season but since the pandemic's spread is in uncertain territory, any inflation forecast will be unreliable. The synergies between parts of the supply chain could snap easily."

20. In Maharashtra's Nashik district, a major hub of horticulture produce ranging from onions to pomegranates, rising number of covid-19 infections has impacted purchases in the wholesale markets due to fewer buyers, said a procurement officer of a Delhi-based retail chain. "There have been substantial losses to farmers due to excess rains and the produce which is arriving in the markets is of poor quality."
21. "A major part of the vegetable produce (in West Bengal) was destroyed by the Amphan cyclone even before harvests. But even then, we did not receive even half of what consumers are currently paying," said Hamidul, a farmer from South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, who lost over ₹200,000 on his mango harvest due to adverse weather.
22. The share of new covid infections in rural areas increased from 23% in April to 54% in August and any economic recovery will be contingent on the urban sector as rural India will not be able to sustain a recovery, Soumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economist at the State Bank of India told *Mint* in an interview this week.
23. "While we are talking about a bumper crop, the arrival at the *mandis* have been lower than last year, indicating supply disruptions. Farmers will also not get the desired prices. This is exactly what will happen if covid-19 cases continue to surge for another one or two months," Ghosh said.

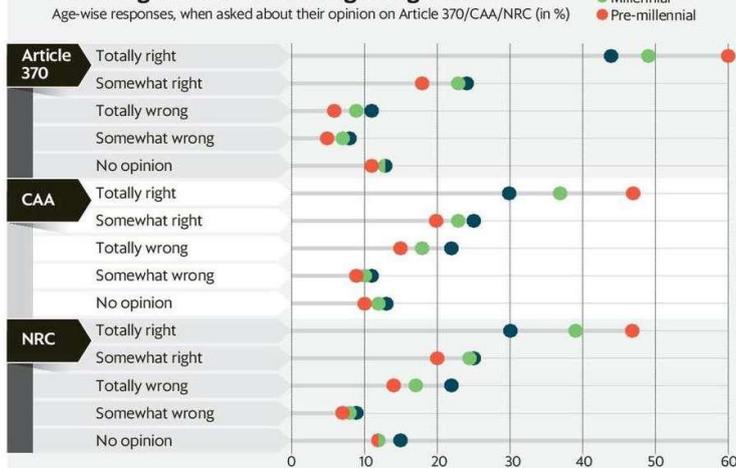
A silver lining

24. The sole silver lining on the food inflation front is the robust kharif season cropping pattern on the back of ample rains. The annual south-west monsoon which irrigates more than half of India's crop area has seen 4% excess rains so far compared to the 50-year-average.
25. Data from the agriculture ministry shows that till 14 August, planting of rain-fed kharif crops was 8.5% higher year-on-year—which is likely to result in a record harvest. The higher plantings are largely driven by the increased area under rice (14% higher y-o-y), the main crop for the season, and oilseeds (14.4%).
26. However, these kharif field crops contribute just about a third of the farm gross domestic product (GDP). The rest comes from the horticulture sector and livestock and dairying. Apart from perishables, supply disruptions are most severe in the livestock sector.
27. "We are selling chicken for ₹70-80 per kg, while the same is retailing in the national capital region for over ₹200 per kg," said Jagdeep Aulakh, a poultry farmer from Karnal, Haryana. According to Aulakh, poultry farmers could still survive as feed costs have also plunged (which, in turn, affected growers of coarse grains like maize in states like Bihar and West Bengal). But, he claims, traders are still making a killing.
28. "From rumour and fake news that chicken and vegetables spread covid-19 to difficulties in transporting the harvest, farmers have faced it all this season."

TOPIC 25. AGE DIVIDE IN INDIAN POLITICS

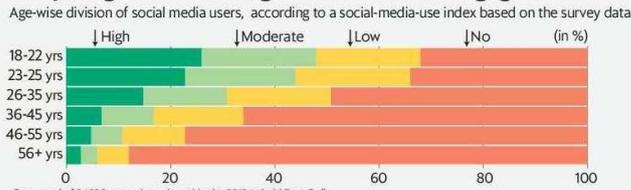
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Chart 1
Post-millennials are most likely to disagree with the government's ideological agenda
 Age-wise responses, when asked about their opinion on Article 370/CAA/NRC (in %)



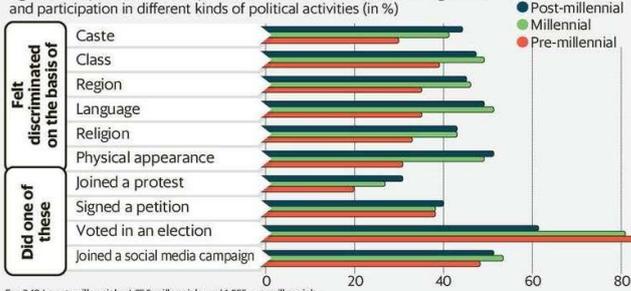
For 2,854 post-millennials, 4,368 millennials and 1,816 pre-millennials. 'Don't understand' responses taken as missing.
 Source: YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey (Mar-Apr 2020), Social Media & Political Behaviour, 2019 Report, Lokniti-CSDS & KAS

Chart 2
The youngest have the highest social media engagement
 Age-wise division of social media users, according to a social-media-use index based on the survey data



For a total of 24,236 voters interviewed in the 2019 Lokniti Post-Poll.

Chart 3
Gen Z is most likely to report discrimination, take part in protests
 Age-wise responses on the experience of discrimination on various grounds, and participation in different kinds of political activities (in %)



For 3,194 post-millennials, 4,856 millennials and 1,955 pre-millennials.

1. For long, India's political parties and their leaders searched for the elusive youth vote without success. Young Indians were less likely to turn out at polling booths and were no more likely to favour one political formation over the other. Political analysts thus concluded that age is not a dividing line in Indian politics. More than age, caste, class, region and religion shape how young Indians engage in the electoral arena, conventional wisdom held. This changed with the arrival of Narendra Modi on the political centre stage.
2. In 2014, the turnout of younger voters (18-25 years) was higher than the rest and this segment overwhelmingly voted for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), post-poll surveys suggest. Data from the 2019 elections indicates a similar trend.
3. As the median age of the Indian voter falls in the coming years, the importance of the vote of the youth will only increase. The age divide in political views is sharpening, with the post-millennial generation aged 23 or below appearing to chart a different path than older age groups (*see chart 1*), suggests data from the YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial survey.
4. Post-millennials or Gen Z were most critical of government action on some of the contentious issues, such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the abrogation of Article 370, the survey shows.
5. This trend holds across different geographies. Young respondents from tier II and tier III towns and cities are closer in their opinions to younger peers from the metros than to older people around them. Age may be acquiring a new salience in politics, the analysis shows.
6. The YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey was conducted online between 12 March and 2 April across 184 towns and cities. The survey covered 10,005 respondents, of which 4,957 were millennials, 2,983 post-millennials and 2,065 pre-millennials. Millennials refer to those who were born between 1981 and 1996. Those born after 1996, aged 23 years or less, are referred to as the post-millennials or Gen Z. The rest, 40 years and above, have been classified as pre-millennials.
7. Arguably, opinions about topical events could be considered fleeting and ill-suited to signal long-term implications. The age-wise differences in responses are, however, not just limited to current events. On the question of party identification as well, the youngest cohort of voters is least likely to identify with any party. This appears counter-intuitive when one recalls the wave of youth support that catapulted the BJP to power in 2014 and 2019 elections. The voting patterns from the Lokniti-CSDS post-poll surveys shows that first-time voters are far more likely to vote for the BJP than any other party.
8. In our view, the declining enthusiasm about the BJP's ideological agenda may not result in immediate and dramatic changes in voting patterns. However, it opens up a new cleavage in India's polity, with

different age cohorts holding distinct political beliefs and opinions. This change is pregnant with many possibilities and could pose a challenge to BJP's electoral dominance over the medium-run.

9. What is the reason behind the recent divergence in political opinions across age-groups? Two related factors may be driving this change. First is the ever-increasing reach of digital and social media. Estimates from a 2019 report by Kantar, a data consulting firm, suggest that half of the Indian population will have access to the internet in the next few months. Two-thirds of these users are less than 30 years old. The country also has the highest data usage per smartphone per month globally, according to a June report by telecom giant Ericsson (*see chart 2*).
10. The Lokniti-CSDS data presented in the accompanying chart suggests that young Indians are the most avid users of various social media platforms. Taken together with 24x7 media, this means a never-ending news cycle for voters. The impact of the digital news explosion is likely to be felt more by a young audience that has not yet committed firmly to any particular political party or ideology and has little memory of previous governments. The current controversy over Facebook action on hate posts signals a growing recognition of the influence digital mediums wield in shaping political discourse in the country.
11. The second catalyst of the age divide is the growing assertiveness of the youth. We find that Gen Z is most likely to report discriminatory experiences they might have faced because of various identity markers such as caste, religion, region, language, and class. This does not imply an increase in discriminatory practices, but rather a greater self-confidence that recognizes such practices and does not condone them (*see chart 3*).
12. The same assertiveness is visible in political actions. Gen Z is more active in online campaigns and protests than any other age group. This assertiveness suggests that the youngest age group is searching for a distinct political vision that is different from what older generations subscribed to. The surge in joblessness and anxieties in the post-pandemic world may only accentuate the generational divide.
13. If the age cleavage in Indian politics sharpens, younger Indians could increasingly make entirely different choices than their older counterparts, in politics as well as in social and cultural life. The age divide in Indian politics would then end up sharpening the ideological polarization in our society.
14. The big question then would be whether India will begin to look like the US in the coming years, where a higher share of the old support the Republicans and many youth support the Democrats, and where friendships and romance rarely cross partisan lines.

1. Wikipedia is the first port of call for many internet users globally when they want to dig up information. In India, an increasing number of people are turning to Wikipedia's Indian-language editions, Wikipedia data shows. So far this year, Indian internet users have browsed the pages of Wikipedia more than 500 million times in their local languages.
2. The range of topics varies widely. Marathi readers read a lot about historical icons from Maharashtra. Punjabi and Urdu readers read more about religion. Tamil, Assamese, Odia, and Kannada readers read more on their own languages and literature. Bhojpuri readers read more about sex and sexuality.
3. These are the findings of a *Mint* analysis of Wikipedia data for 14 of its Indian-language editions. In July alone, articles on these 14 Wikipedia editions were viewed 135 million times—49% of which came from India-based users. Hindi led the way with 51 million page views globally, followed by Bangla with 22 million (**see chart 1a and chart 1b**).
4. Top languages, such as English (9.7 billion page views in July) and Japanese (1.1 billion), have much higher readership, but Indian Wikipedias are picking up. Eleven of the 14 languages in the study have seen big jumps in readership this year. The numbers for Malayalam were the highest ever in July.
5. All 14 languages with more than 10 million native speakers in India, and having their own Wikipedia edition, were considered in the analysis. The analysis was based on Wikipedia lists of each month's top 1,000 articles in each language. Using these lists, covering 98,000 articles across seven months, we listed the top 50 articles for each language for the entire period. We then put these 700 articles into broad interest buckets such as "religion", "history", "India", "coronavirus" and "culture".
6. Wikipedia provides country-level data for aggregate readership, but not for separate articles. So, the analysis of interest areas of Bangla readers was heavily influenced by those in Bangladesh and Urdu's by readers in Pakistan. The two countries contribute more than three times as much readership in these languages than India does (**see chart 2**).
7. For other Indian language wikis, most traffic comes from India. The US and Canada also account for a significant share of traffic in Indian language wikis. Across the Wikipedia editions, interest in coronavirus peaked in March and April and has declined since then. In three languages, Kannada, Maithili and Bhojpuri, the topic got little attention even during those months.
8. Wikipedia pages relating to Hindu mythology got greater traction than the coronavirus during the lockdown months. Users turned to vernacular-language Wikipedias more than 760,000 times in April to bring themselves up to speed on the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, as the epics returned to TV.
9. For a similar reason, Urdu Wikipedia readers showed an unusual interest in medieval Turk kings. A 2014 Netflix historical series from Turkey was telecast in Pakistan during Ramzan on Prime Minister Imran Khan's request. This made history the second-most popular topic in the language, getting 16% of all page views of the top 50 articles (**see chart 3**).
10. Religion's appeal is not just limited to these episodes though. Punjabi readers browsed articles about Sikhism, most often on the Guru Granth Sahib and the 10 gurus. In April and May, during the holy month of Ramzan, users in Bangla, Urdu and Malayalam read a lot about Islam, though this could mainly be because of readership outside India. The interest in Hindu mythology was very high for Gujarati, Hindi and Kannada readers.
11. Indians across languages read a lot of Wikipedia pages about country's history, geography and civics. Articles about the Indian Constitution were among the top write-ups in several languages month after month. So were articles about states. "Karnataka" for Kannada, "Punjabi culture" for Punjab, and "List of districts of Kerala" for Malayalam also figured in the top 50 lists (**see chart 4**).
12. In Marathi, 39% of all page views among the top 50 articles in the January–July period were for historical topics. The wiki page on Chhatrapati Shivaji got nearly 575,000 page views during the period, followed by Savitribai Phule (276,000), and Sambhaji Bhonsle (213,000).
13. Language, grammar and literature were popular topics in several editions. Bangla users read about Rabindranath Tagore more than 208,000 times between January and July. On the Kannada Wikipedia, articles about local literature and the Jnanpith Award got 126,000 page views.
14. In a culture where sex is taboo, the topic gets sizeable interest online. It is no different on Wikipedia, but only in a handful of languages. Bhojpuri led the way with high levels of readership: wiki pages on female genitals and sex positions topped the list each month.
15. English rules the internet and Wikipedia, but is understood by just 10% of Indians. For years, the language barrier held back many Indians from making full use of online resources. That is changing now, even if slowly. English readership on Wikipedia is still 10 times that of Indian language readership, but if the trends so far this year hold, this ratio is likely to decline.

TOPIC 27. ISRAEL-UAE PACT

1. The story so far:

- a. On Thursday, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had reached a peace agreement. He tweeted a joint statement issued by the UAE, Israel and the U.S., and called the deal a “historic breakthrough” in Arab-Israeli relations. Many countries, including the European powers and India, have welcomed it, while the Palestinian leadership as well as Turkey and Iran have lashed out at the UAE.

2. What does the deal say?

- a. According to the joint statement, the UAE and Israel would establish formal diplomatic relations and in exchange, Israel would suspend its plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had earlier vowed to annex the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The Trump administration, as part of the President’s peace plan announced in January, had backed the annexation plan despite international criticism. But now, as part of the agreement, Israel “will suspend declaring sovereignty over areas” of the West Bank and “focus its efforts on expanding ties with other countries in the Arab and Muslim world”. The statement also said delegations from Israel and the UAE would meet in the coming weeks to sign bilateral agreements regarding “investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications, technology, energy, healthcare, culture, the environment, the establishment of reciprocal embassies, and other areas of mutual benefit”.

3. How significant is the deal for Arab-Israeli relations?

- a. It’s a landmark agreement given that the UAE is only the third Arab country and the first in the Gulf region to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Arab-Israeli ties have historically been conflict-ridden. Arab countries, including Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and Iraq, fought their first war with Israel in 1948 after the formation of the state of Israel was announced. The war ended with Israel capturing more territories, including West Jerusalem, than what the UN Partition Plan originally proposed for a Jewish state. After that, Israel and Arab states fought three more major wars — the 1956 Suez conflict, the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War. After the 1967 war in which Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria, Arab countries convened in Khartoum and declared their famous three “Nos’ — no peace with Israel, no talks with Israel and no recognition of Israel”. But it did not last long. After the death of Egypt President Gamal Abdel Nasser, his successor Anwar Sadat started making plans to get Sinai back from Israel. His efforts, coupled with American pressure on Israel, led to the Camp David Accords of 1978. A year later, Israel and Egypt concluded their peace treaty, as part of which Israel withdrew from Sinai in return for Egyptian recognition.
- b. In 1994, Jordan became the second Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel. In 1988, after an initial agreement reached between the two countries collapsed, Jordan abandoned its claims to the West Bank and said it would accept a deal between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel. Following the Oslo Accords, under which the PLO recognised Israel and was allowed to form the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza, time was ripe for an Israel-Jordan deal. The enmity between the two countries came to an end in July 1994 with the Washington Declaration on the White House lawn by Jordan’s King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin under the watch of U.S. President Bill Clinton. The UAE-Israel agreement comes after 26 years. If more countries in the Gulf follow the UAE’s lead, it would open a new chapter in Arab-Israeli ties.

4. Why did the UAE sign the agreement?

- a. The old enmity between Arab countries and Israel has dissipated. The Sunni Arab kingdoms in the Gulf region such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE had developed backroom contacts with Israel over the past several years. One of the major factors that brought them closer has been their shared antipathy towards Iran. Both these blocs were wary of U.S. President Barack Obama’s

Iran outreach. When Mr. Trump became the President, his administration brought these two blocs of West Asia, both American allies, together. In February 2019, the U.S. brokered a security conference in Warsaw to build a global strategy against Iran. The meeting brought leaders from Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and several other countries. Following this conference, in August 2019, the U.S. arranged secret talks between the UAE and Israel. These meetings laid the foundations for the agreement.

- b. Arab countries have signalled that they are ready to live with Israel's occupation of Palestine. What they do not want is a major change in the status quo which would put them under political and diplomatic pressure. Mr. Netanyahu's plan to annex the West Bank would have drastically changed the status quo, further putting in peril the two-state solution. The UAE-Israel agreement has averted that outcome. It also allows Mr. Netanyahu to label the suspension of the annexation to his right-wing religious allies in the government as a victory. Further, this is an election year in the U.S. If a Democratic President comes to power and restores the Iran deal, both the Israeli and the Arab blocs in West Asia would come under pressure to live with an empowered Iran in what President Obama called "cold peace". A formal agreement and enhanced security and economic ties make the Arab and Israeli sides better prepared to face such a situation. So there is a convergence of interests for the UAE, Israel and the U.S. to come together in the region.

5. Where does it leave the Palestinians?

- a. Unlike the past two Arab-Israeli peace agreements, Palestinians do not figure prominently in the current one. When Egypt and Israel made peace, the latter agreed to return the Sinai back to Egypt and signed "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East" agreement, which promised the establishment of an autonomous self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza and called for the full implementation of the UNSC Resolution 242 that demanded Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. The Jordanian-Israeli treaty came after Israel agreed to the formation of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza. But in the UAE-Israel deal, Israel has not made any actual concession to the Palestinians. The annexation plan was a threat. The withdrawal of the threat was packaged as a concession, which the Emiratis accepted. That is why Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said, "Who would have ever dreamed there would be a peace agreement with an Arab country without our returning to the 1967 borders?" The Palestinians are understandably upset. They called the UAE's decision "treason".

6. What are the geopolitical implications of the deal?

- a. The agreement could fast-track the changes that are already under way in the region. The Saudi bloc, consisting of Egypt, the UAE, Bahrain and others, see their interests being aligned with that of the U.S. and Israel and their support for Palestine, which Arab powers had historically upheld, is dwindling, while Turkey and Iran emerge as the strongest supporters of the Palestinians in the Muslim world. This tripolar contest is already at work in West Asia. The UAE-Israel thaw could sharpen it further.

TOPIC 28. NAGA PEACE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

1. The story so far:

- a. Fresh hurdles have emerged in the road to peace in Nagaland. After a framework agreement was signed in 2015 between the Centre and the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, or the NSCN (I-M), the largest of the extremist groups in the peace process since 1997, there have been more than 100 rounds of talks and several twists and turns. The latest involves the demand by the NSCN (I-M) to remove Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi as the Centre's interlocutor for the 23-year-old peace process and his alleged tweaking of the original framework agreement.

2. What has made the peace process wobble?

- a. Talks, fatigue and growing impatience across the Naga domain gave way to optimism when Mr. Ravi was made Nagaland's Governor in July 2019. His appointment was seen as a message from New Delhi that the solution would be found soon. As the Centre's interlocutor, Mr. Ravi had signed the framework agreement in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. But in October 2019, he issued a statement blaming the "procrastinating attitude" of the NSCN (I-M) for the delay in a mutually-agreed draft comprehensive settlement. He also said the NSCN (I-M) imputed "imaginary contents" to the framework agreement while referring to the government's purported acceptance of a 'Naga national flag' and 'Naga Yezhabo (constitution)' as part of the deal. In June this year, the NSCN (I-M) took offence to Mr. Ravi's letter to Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio in which he referred to them as "armed gangs" running parallel governments. The NSCN (I-M) reacted by demanding Mr. Ravi's removal from the peace process but the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs), a conglomerate of seven rival groups, and some social organisations want him to stay.

3. What is the 'framework agreement'?

- a. On August 3, 2015, the Centre signed a framework agreement with the NSCN (I-M) to resolve the Naga issue, but both sides maintained secrecy about its contents. The optimism among some Naga groups eroded a bit when the NNPGs were brought on board the peace process on November 17, 2017. This agreement ostensibly made the peace process inclusive but it created suspicion about Delhi exploiting divisions within the Nagas on tribal and geopolitical lines. It was also a throwback to the first peace deal, the Shillong Accord of 1975 that Naga hardliners rejected. That had led to the birth of the NSCN in January 1980. Differences surfaced within the outfit a few years later over initiating a dialogue process with the Indian government. It split into the NSCN (I-M) and NSCN (Khaplang) in April 1988 who often engaged in fratricidal battles.

4. Why is the 'agreement' in the news?

- a. A few days ago, the NSCN (I-M) released the contents of the framework agreement. The outfit said Mr. Ravi had "craftily deleted the word 'new' from the original" line that referred to "shared sovereignty" between India and the Naga homeland and provided for an "enduring inclusive new relationship of peaceful co-existence". The NSCN (I-M) claimed "new" was a politically sensitive word that defined the meaning of peaceful co-existence of the two entities (sovereign powers) and strongly indicated a settlement outside the purview of the Constitution of India. The group said it had refrained from publishing the contents of the framework agreement respecting the "tacit understanding reached between the two sides not to release to the public domain for security reasons". But, it claimed, Mr. Ravi took undue advantage and started manipulating the framework agreement to mislead the Nagas and the Centre. The Governor said the framework agreement was an "acceptance of the Indian Constitution" by the outfit.

5. What are the other hurdles?

- a. In his 'Naga Independence Day' speech on August 14, NSCN (I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah insisted the Nagas "will never merge with India". But States adjoining Nagaland, where the peace headquarters of NSCN (I-M) is located, are apprehensive of the sovereignty issue.

This is because of the NSCN (I-M)'s idea of Greater Nagalim — a homeland encompassing all Naga-inhabited areas in Nagaland and beyond. Apart from Myanmar, where many of more than 50 Naga tribes live, the Greater Nagalim map includes large swathes of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur. The Assam government has vowed not to part with “even an inch of land”, the All Arunachal Pradesh Students’ Union warned against any “territorial changes” while finding a solution. Manipur Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh said he has received the Centre’s assurance that the peace deal with the NSCN (I-M) will not affect the territorial integrity of Manipur. But non-Naga groups are suspicious since the Tangkhul community, forming the core of the NSCN (I-M), is from Manipur and the outfit may not accept any agreement that excludes areas inhabited by them. The NNPGs, whose members are primarily from Nagaland, are also a factor; their inputs for a final solution could be at variance with those of the NSCN (I-M).

ROCKY ROAD TO PEACE

NAGA NATIONAL COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

1953 | NNC headed by Phizo banned after it boycotted 1952 elections and established contacts with China

1955 | Centre declares Naga Hills ‘disturbed area’

1956 | NNC establishes Naga federal govt

1957 | After meeting with Nehru, Naga administration formed under the Centre. Naga Hills and Tiesang Area declared separate administrative units in 1959

1963 | Nagaland becomes the 16th state of India

December 5, 1975 | Shillong Accord signed. Muivah and Isaac Chishi Swu reject accord



Rajnath Singh, Narendra Modi and T Muivah at 7RCR on Monday

and form National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in Jan 1980

1988 | It splits into NSCN-K (led by **SS Khaplang**) and NSCN-IM

1990 | NSCN-IM banned

1995 April | Centre declares entire Nagaland disturbed area



1997 and 2001 | NSCN-IM and NSCN-K respectively sign ceasefire deals with the Centre

2010 | NSCN-K splits after Khaplang is impeached and Khole Konyak is appointed acting chairman, forming NSCN-KK

2012 | NSCN-K signs



ceasefire agreement with Myanmar

2015 | NSCN-K abrogates truce deal with the Centre

➤ NSCN-K expels moderate pro-ceasefire leaders Wangtin Konyak and P Tikhak

April 6, 2015 | These two form NSCN/Reformation and enter into a ceasefire agreement with the Centre on April 27, 2015

➤ Two months later, Khaplang and other hardcore leaders like Nikki Sumi unleash violence on Indian security forces

Thuingaleng Muivah (GEN SECY, NSCN-IM)

- Joined NNC in 1964 as general secretary and established a number of NNC councils

- Opposed the Shillong accord of 1975 and challenged leadership of Phizo

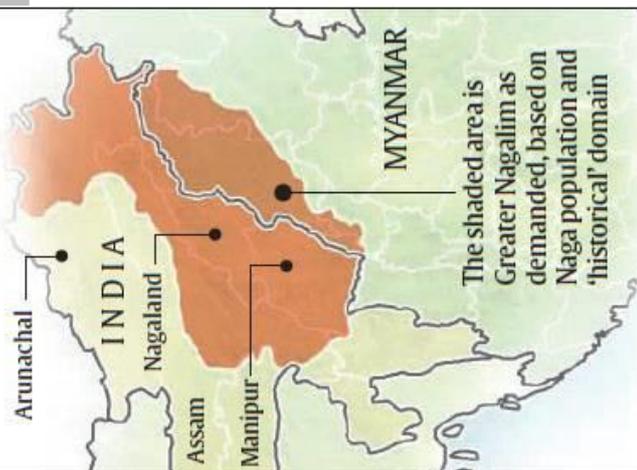
- Formed NSCN in 1980, fled to Myanmar after split in NSCN and formed NSCN-IM

- Arrested by Bangkok police in 2000 while travelling on a forged Korean passport; imprisoned for one year

- Undisputed NSCN-IM leader and chief peace negotiator with the Centre

WHAT NSCN-IM WANTS

Demand for Greater Nagalim includes all of Nagaland and parts of Assam, Arunachal, Manipur — and Myanmar



The shaded area is Greater Nagalim as demanded, based on Naga population and 'historical' domain

TOPIC 29. COPARCENARY PROPERTY

1. The story so far:

- a. On August 11, the Supreme Court of India held that daughters, like sons, have an equal right to inherit ancestral property. The legislation that conferred coparcenary status on women dates back to 2005, when the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 was amended. The verdict answers the question whether the coparcenary right of daughters comes into effect only if the father — through whom the right is claimed — was alive on the day the amendment came into force. The top court ruled that a daughter's right flows from her birth and not by any other factor.

2. What is coparcenary property in Hindu law?

- a. A Hindu joint family consists of lineal descendants of a common ancestor. In other words, a male head and his descendants, including their wives and unmarried daughters. A coparcenary is a smaller unit of the family that jointly owns property. A coparcenary consists of a 'propositus', that is, a person at the top of a line of descent, and his three lineal descendants — sons, grandsons and great-grandsons. Coparcenary property is named thus because the co-ownership is marked by "unity of possession, title and interest".
- b. The English term itself is borrowed from common law, but the concept is found in Hindu law. In the Mitakshara school, which prevails in most parts of India, a male's right to be a coparcener is by birth. But if a newborn male is the fifth lineal descendant — that is a great-great-grandson, while the common ancestor, his son, grandson and great-grandson are alive — the right to be included in the coparcenary will ripen only when the common ancestor dies. In other words, a coparcenary has succession up to four degrees of lineal descent. It is believed that this is based on the Hindu tenet that only males up to three degrees can offer spiritual ministrations to ancestors. And only males can be coparceners.

3. What was the traditional position and how was it changed by codified law?

- a. In Mitakshara law, on the death of a coparcener, his interest became merged with that of the surviving coparceners. Sons inherited property only by virtue of being or becoming coparceners. When the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, was enacted, this position was largely preserved by Section 6. It said that when a male Hindu died after the Act came into force, his interest in a Mitakshara coparcenary shall go to the surviving members of the coparcenary and not in accordance with the Act. However, a proviso was added to preserve the interest of female children. It said if the deceased left behind a Class I female relative (daughter, widow or mother, etc.) or a male relative claiming through such female kin, his interest would go to them by testamentary (by will) or intestate (without a will) succession, and not by survivorship.
- b. This meant that even the codified law did not address the conventional discrimination against women. Although by separate colonial-era laws, some limited rights of inheritance were conferred on daughters (in respect of intestate, non-coparcenary property in the Hindu Law of Inheritance (Amendment) Act, 1929) and widows (whose right to succeed to husband's property was equated to that of the son in the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act, 1937), women were denied coparcenary status. These laws were repealed by the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

4. What changes did the 2005 Amendment bring?

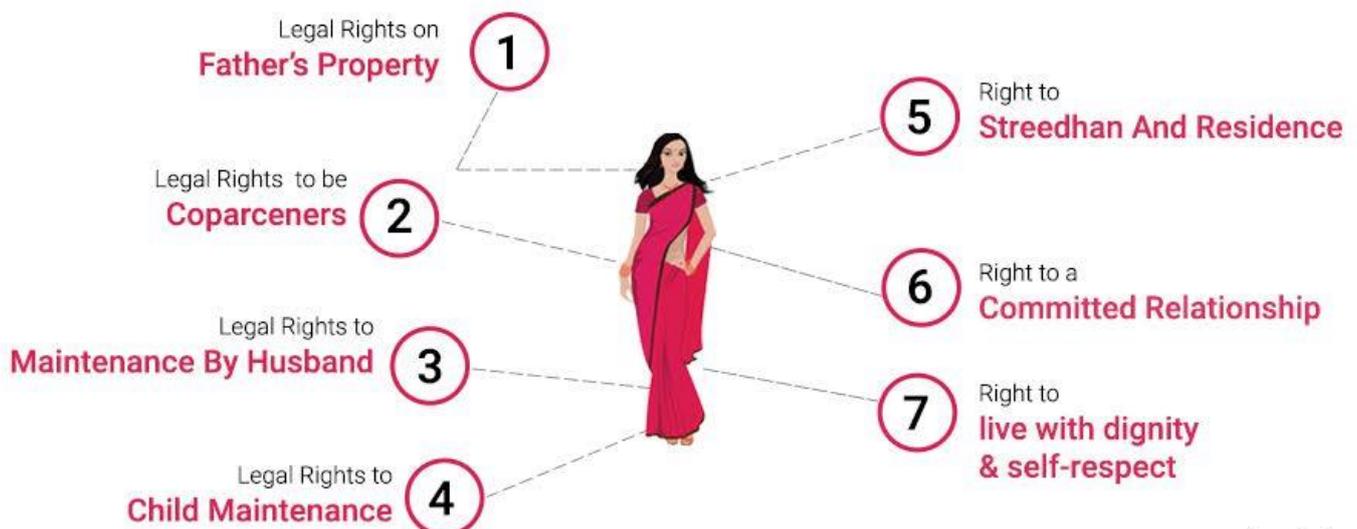
- a. In its statement of objects and reasons for the amendment, the Union government said the recognition given in the 1956 Act to the rule of devolution by survivorship and its retention of the Mitakshara coparcenary property without including women in it meant that women could not inherit ancestral property in the same way as men. It said: "The law by excluding the daughter from participating in the coparcenary ownership not only contributes to her discrimination on the ground of gender but also has led to oppression and negation of her fundamental right of equality guaranteed by the Constitution...."
- b. Therefore, it amended Section 6 to remove the discrimination and confer equal rights on daughters too. It declared that a coparcener's daughter would become a coparcener in her own

right by birth, in the same manner as a son; and would have the same rights that she would have, had she been a son. The amendment came into force on September 9, 2005, but it contained a proviso that it would not invalidate any disposition of property by partition or will that had taken place prior to December 20, 2004 — the day the amendment was introduced in the Rajya Sabha.

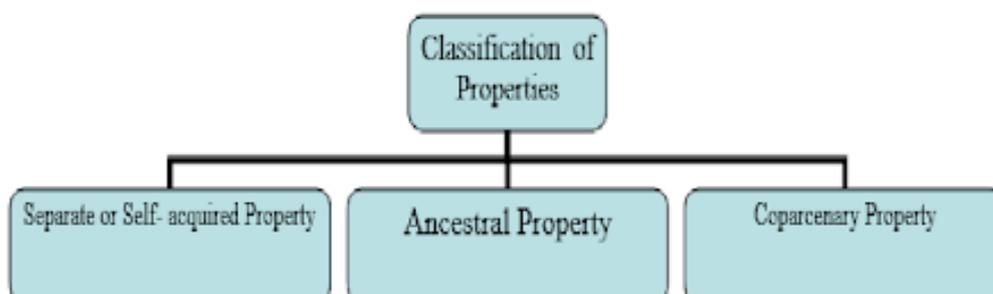
5. What is the verdict's significance?

- As laws are generally deemed prospective, civil cases relating to coparcenary property threw up questions such as whether it would apply only to daughters born after September 9, 2005, or whether, if they were born before that, it would be limited to those whose father — the coparcener through whom they will inherit the status — was also alive on that day.
- Many courts took the view that only a living coparcener's daughter would get the benefit of the new law. It was argued that if a man had died before 2005, his interest would not have passed on to his daughter, as the amendment was yet to come into force. Allowing coparcenary status to such women would imply that the amendment had retrospective effect.
- The Supreme Court in *Prakash and Others vs. Phulavati* (2015) ruled on these lines, holding that it had no retrospective effect, and only living daughters of living coparceners (as on the date of its coming into effect) would get its benefit. As another judgment took a different view, this was posted before a three-judge Bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra.
- Tuesday's verdict has upheld the stand that coparcenary status of daughters is created by birth, and is not dependent on whether the father was alive or not on the date on which it came into force — a daughter has the same status as a son as soon as she is born. The significance of this verdict is that it has put an end to all doubts about when the amendment comes into force, and whether some women could be left out of it on the ground that it can only have prospective application.

TOP 7 LEGAL RIGHTS OF MARRIED DAUGHTERS



www.legodesk.com

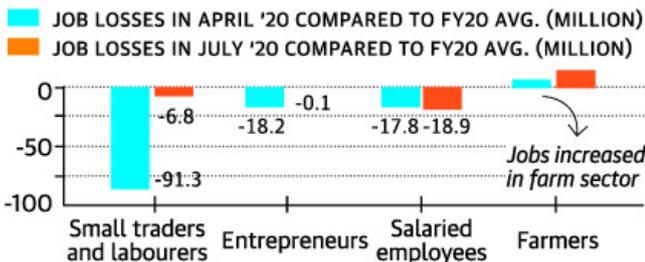


FACT 1. JOBLESS

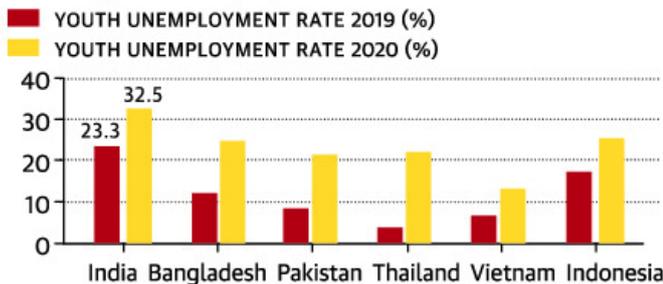
Young and jobless

Most of the jobs lost in April due to the stringent lockdown forced by the COVID-19 crisis were regained by July, except those of the salaried workers, who lost more jobs in July than in April. The lockdown impacted the jobs of young workers more than those of the experienced. Younger women were in particular affected. The data is based on reports from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)

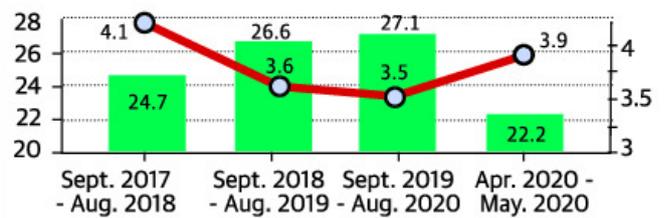
INFORMAL RECOVERY | Initially, in April, job losses among small traders and entrepreneurs were higher than among salaried employees. By July, most of those who lost jobs among the first two regained employment, but, losses persisted among salaried workers. CMIE data infers that salaried employees were less likely to lose jobs but also unlikely to regain lost jobs



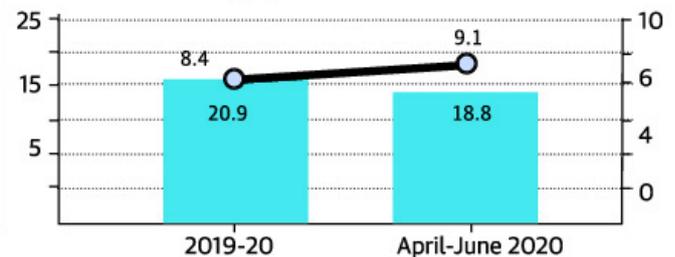
RECORD JOB LOSS | Nearly 6.1 million youth (aged 15-24) may lose their jobs in India if the virus is not contained by September 2020, an Asian Development Bank and International Labour Organisation report estimated. It also said that youth unemployment rate will increase to 32.5%



YOUNG WOMEN IN TROUBLE | In April and May (lockdown months) the share of workers aged <21 among the new Employee Provident Fund registrations fell considerably. At the same time, the ratio of new male to new female registrations increased in April-May after recording consistent decreases in the previous periods. This suggests that the youth and in particular younger women were most affected in terms of job losses during the lockdown



YOUTH ISSUES | CMIE's Consumer Pyramids Household Survey also came to similar conclusions. In the survey, the share of those aged <30 in total employment declined from 20.9% in FY20 to 18.8% during April-June 2020. Also, the male to female ratio increased from 8.4 during 2019-20 to 9.1 during April-June 2020

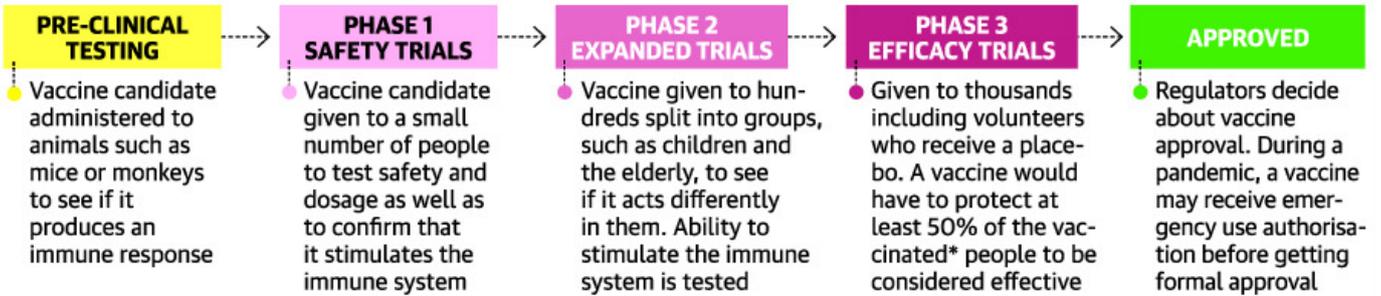


FACT 2. CLINICAL TRIALS

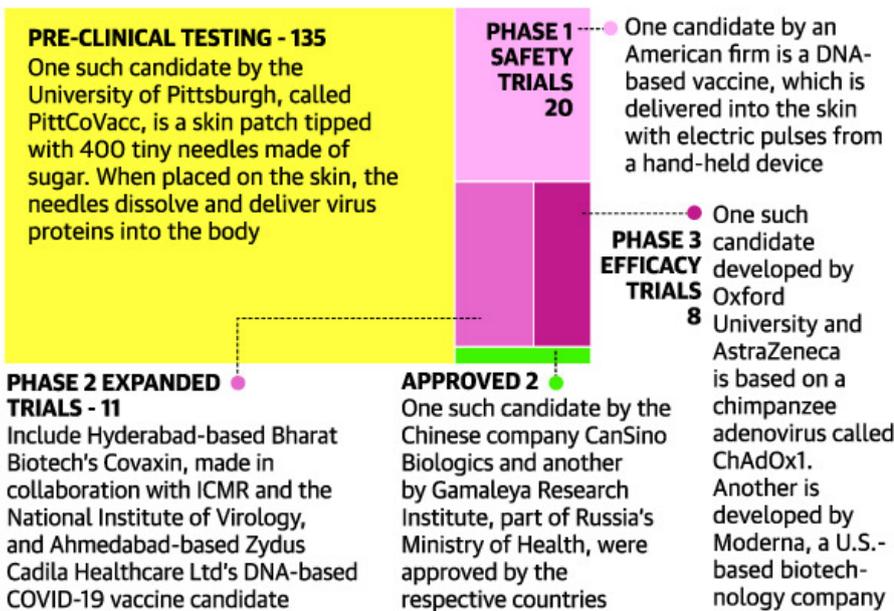
Racing against the clock

More than 165 COVID-19 vaccine candidates are at various stages of development. About 30 of them have progressed to human trials. The number of candidates and the speed at which the trials are progressing are unprecedented. Two candidates from India are in phase 2 trials while one each from Russia and China were approved by respective nations for limited use

Five phases | A vaccine typically requires years of research during which it goes through the following phases



At various stages | The graph shows the split of vaccine candidates in various phases of trials. For instance, 135 candidates are in the pre-clinical testing phase



A long game | There are twice as many COVID-19 vaccine candidates as there are active vaccine candidates to treat malaria. Typically, vaccines take years to get approved. For instance, the study of the earliest active vaccine candidate in the case of Ebola started in 2003

Disease	Total active vaccine candidates	Study start date
COVID-19	165	2020
Malaria	73	2007
HIV	68	2008
TB	62	2007
Dengue	35	2010
Ebola	65	2003
Pneumococcal Infection	15	1995
Zika	16	2016

SOURCE: THE NEW YORK TIMES, WHO, *FDA