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GS1
Social Issues

Rajiv Gauba headed Panel on Lynching

Context
- GoMs on lynchings, harassment on hold
- A panel headed by Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba, which deliberated on measures to check incidents of lynching, had submitted its report to a Group of Ministers headed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

Recommendations
- Social media platforms needed **to act in a "time bound" manner**.
    - Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter — **would be made accountable for not blocking such malicious posts/videos** when brought to their notice
    - **FIR could be lodged against their country heads for non-compliance** of government orders and they could be prosecuted under law.
- It suggested for tightening of law by inserting clauses in the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure through parliamentary approval.

GS2
Polity

Right to Self-Defense

Introduction
- Self-defense is defined as act of protecting self, to prevent force or violence perpetuated by opposite forces to cause harm, by applying sufficient level of counteracting force or violence
- In the words of Bentham, "The Right of Private Defence is absolutely necessary for the protection of ones life, liberty and property
- Section 96 to 106 of Indian Penal Code, states the law relating to the right of Private Defence of person and property
- The law of private defence is based on two main principles-
    - Everyone has right to defend his own body and property and another's body and property
    - The Right of Private Defence is not applicable in those cases where accused himself is an aggressive party
- The State is duty bound to protect public property. It implies that it is the fundamental duty of the state to protect its citizens and their property from any harm, and
    - In case the aid or help of state is not available and the danger is overhanging and is unavoidable at the moment then the person is authorized to use his force to protect himself from any harm or injury.

Context
- Supreme Court in its recent judgement has said "The right to self-defense extends not only to one's own body but to protecting the person and property of another"

What did SC say?
- The right embraces the protection of property, whether one's own or another person's, against certain specified offences, namely, theft, robbery, mischief and criminal trespass".
- The court explained that the **right does not arise if there is time to have recourse to the protection of the public authorities**. Nor does it extend to the infliction of more harm than is necessary.

Background
- Tamil Nadu forest ranger had shot dead a sandalwood "smuggler" in the Dharmapuri forest area in 1988.
- The trial court sentenced ranger Sukumaran to life in prison for murder.

- The Madras High Court reduced the term to five years.
- In appeal, the apex court concluded that Sukumaran had shot the "smuggler" Basha under threat to his own life and that of his driver, Chinnakolandai.

GS3

Disaster Management

Cyclone Idai: India reaches out to Mozambique

- According to United Nations officials, cyclone Idai is a category 4 tropical storm, which hit southern Africa
- The region has been hit by widespread flooding and devastation affecting Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi.
- Idai originated from a tropical depression that formed off the eastern coast of Mozambique

India's helping Hand

- The Indian Navy had launched a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operation in coordination with local officials to evacuate about 5,000 people stranded at Buzi near Port Beira in Mozambique
  - o The Navy has made HADR assistance a major tool of its foreign cooperation initiative in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) which has a high incidence of natural disasters.
- Helicopter operations were also planned to assist the rescue efforts.
- Navy ships provided food, clothes, medicine and potable water to the affected people.

Economy

RBI to inject liquidity via forex swaps

Context

- Forex swap for liquidity has been received well, says RBI Governor
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to inject rupee liquidity into the system through long-term foreign exchange buy/sell swap — a first-of-its-kind instrument used for liquidity management.

Details

- The swap is in the nature of a simple Buy/Sell foreign exchange swap with the RBI.
- Reserve Bank of India is using a new tool to enhance liquidity in the system through which it would **buy as much as $5 billion from the banks in a swap deal** that could inject nearly 35,000 crores into the system.
  - o Banks would be **required to park dollar funds with RBI** with a deal to buy it back from the RBI after three years.
- **A similar kind of swap was used in 2013** for banks to swap their dollars received in the FCNR (B) scheme but that was at a fixed rate.
- This scheme is through an auction and is **open to all banks** which want to swap their dollars for rupees.
- Minimum bid size for the auction is set at $25 million and banks will be allowed to submit multiple bids. However, the aggregate amount of bids submitted by single eligible entity should not exceed the notified amount of auction.

Significance

- According to bankers, the move is seen to lower the dependence on open market operations which have been a significant amount of the overall borrowing.
  - o Higher OMOs can **distort the rates curve**
- The move would boost **RBI's foreign exchange reserves**

GS4

Editorials

GS 2

INDIAN POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Disempowering gram sabhas

Note to the Students:

The larger issue concerning the Forest Rights Act has been in the news for some time now. Keeping this in mind, the following editorial analysis takes into account some of the previous articles as well that have been featured in the Hindu newspaper. Here we take two articles into account- namely, "A fight for the forest", and "Disempowering gram sabhas".

Larger Background:

- India's forests are home to lakhs of people, including the many Scheduled Tribes, who live in or near forest areas of the country.
- In 2006, the Forest Rights Act was passed to give legal rights to these forest dwellers, their homes, lands and livelihoods.
- The Act is crucial to the rights of millions of tribals and other forest dwellers spread across multiple states of our country, as it provides for the restitution of deprived forest rights.
- But several wildlife groups say the Act has encouraged further encroachment on the already battered forest lands.
- Challenging the constitutional validity of the Forest Rights Act, they filed several petitions in the apex court in 2008.
- In the long drawn case, the Supreme Court on February 13th, 2019 directed 21 states to evict illegal forest dwellers whose claims over the land have been rejected by the authorities.
- The eviction order could have affected 11.8 lakh forest dwellers residing in different parts of the country.
- However, following the Centre's appeal, the apex court has put on hold the eviction order passed on 13th February, 2019. This has proven to be a major reprieve for around 12 lakh forest dwellers and tribals. A two-judge bench comprising of Justices Arun Mishra and Naveen Sinha, had directed state Governments to file an affidavit, giving details about the process adopted in rejecting the claims of forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

Action taken by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs:

- On 27th February, 2019, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs moved the Supreme Court, seeking an urgent hearing. In its plea, the Ministry sought a modification of the previous order.
- The Ministry also urged the Supreme Court to direct states to file detailed affidavits on procedure followed while examining claims and details regarding rejection.
- Until this was done, the eviction of forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers, was to be put on hold.
- The Ministry also said that after examining the affidavits filed by the state governments, it could not ascertain if the rejection orders were passed after following due process and whether appeal mechanisms had been exhausted.
- The Centre further added that it has been periodically monitoring the implementation of the Forest Rights Act by state governments.
- Experts opine that the high rate of rejection of claims is mostly due to a wrong interpretation of the Forest Rights Act.
- The Ministry also underlined the lack of awareness about filing claims among the Gram Sabhas.
- In many cases, the reasons for rejection were not communicated to the claimants.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs contended that as Forest Dwellers are poor and illiterate, it was difficult to

substantiate their claims before competent authorities.
- The apex court order on the 13th of February, 2019, came in a case challenging the constitutional validity of the Forest Rights Act of 2006.
- A number of petitions were filed by an NGO named, Wildlife First, and a few retried forest officials, who argued that the Forest Rights Act has led to deforestation and encroachments of forest lands.
- The petitioners sought recovery of forest land from the possession of forest dwellers.
- The case has been going on in the Supreme Court since March 2008, and the next hearing will take place on the 10th of July, 2019.

A Brief Note on the Forest Rights Act:

- The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, was passed on the 18th of December, 2006. This Act is also known as the Forest Rights Act.
- This is act was enacted to recognize and vest forest rights and occupation of forest land for scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- These people have been residing in forests for generations, but whose rights have not been recorded.
- The Act provides the right to hold and live in forest land for habitation or for self-cultivation for livelihood by a member or members of a Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribe (FDSTs) or Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs).
- It gives the right of ownership, access to collect, use and dispose of minor forest produce which has been traditionally collected within or outside village boundaries.
- The act also provides for community rights and rights of entitlement such as fish and other products of water bodies, etc.
- Habitat rights for primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities.
- Right to Protect, regenerate or conserve any community forest resource, which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.
- Right to in situ rehabilitation in cases of illegal eviction or displacement
- Rights of settlement and conversion of all forest villages, old habitation, etc. into revenue villages.
- However, conversion of forest villages into revenue villages is to be adjudicated by the Gram Sabha Sub-divisional level committee and the District Level Committee as per the procedure.

A Closer Perspective:

- On February 28, 2019, the Supreme Court stayed its order on the eviction of lakhs of Adivasis and other forest dwellers whose claims were rejected under the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA).
- The Supreme Court of India has asked State governments for a detailed report on whether due process was followed by gram sabhas and authorities under the FRA before claims were rejected.
- For millions of Adivasis and forest dwellers, the stay offers only a temporary relief. But it provides an opportunity to figure out how conservation movements can advocate both nature and social justice in India.
- The petitioners had expressed concern over reports that showed deforestation and fragmentation of land after the FRA implementation began.
- But there is a lack of peer-reviewed studies that quantify the extent of deforestation caused by marginalised communities in comparison to large industrial and infrastructural projects.
- It is vital that scientists and conservationists take up this task, as it is well known that the state is bestowing large companies with kindness and second chances despite severe legal violations during the planning, construction and operation stages of projects.

Ignoring the bigger players:

- Objections to the FRA are often framed as an issue of wildlife conservation versus people's rights, with no mention of these bigger players who might benefit from this framing.
- In a 2013 study, professor Prakash Kashwan noted how political this framing can be. He wrote that in 2006, well before the FRA implementation started, the Environment Ministry directed State governments to declare all existing Protected Areas as critical tiger habitats, so that they would not be controlled under this Act.
- It is important to note that in 2012, the Ministry tried to remove critical tiger habitats from the purview of the National Board for Wildlife, purportedly to make diversion of forest land easier.
- A question thus arises: Who gets access to forests when forest dwellers are evicted?

- Recently, the Environment Ministry "cancelled" community forest rights given to Adivasi communities in Chhattisgarh's Hasdeo Arand forest and handed over 2,000 acres of this forest to a coal mining company.
- It is important to note that we have seen instances of forest dwellers protecting these lands from destructive industries and negligent state forces. This is not to claim that forest dwellers have no impact on forests, but the FRA provides for that through critical wildlife habitats (CWH), spaces that can be demarcated to be inviolate as long as people's rights are settled elsewhere.
- The petitioners in the FRA case are right where they express concern about the lack of progress in demarcating CWHs.
- It is crucial for forest departments to initiate this process in a time-bound manner in the interest of conservation.

Conservation rooted in justice:

- However, for conservation to truly be effective in the long run, it must also be rooted in justice.
- In a paper published in Biological Conservation, John A. Vucetich and others explore how to make conservation not just effective but also just.
- To do this, they argue, ***conservation actions must be based on the same principles as social justice.*** Interestingly, the authors, all of whom are wildlife biologists, do not argue for an anthropocentric view of conservation.
- They rightly argue that if conservation calls for restriction of human activities in some way, that sacrifice must be made, except where doing so would result in injustice, especially to the most marginalised communities.

A Critical View of the Court's Original Eviction Order:

- It is important to note that the court's original eviction order had the potential to perpetrate such injustice.
- There are serious concerns about the rejection process, unfamiliarity with the language of the FRA, and outdated forest maps.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been urging district administrations to assist the process of granting rights by making maps and other data available to protect applicants from exploitation.
- Further, the eviction order would not only have alienated marginalised people from their lands, but made wildlife conservation a symbol of an oppressive state.
- It is important to note that large animals share areas with people outside Protected Areas too. Will people accept wildlife in their backyards without retaliation?
- We are not ready to handle the failure of shared spaces as a country, when only 5% of area is protected for wildlife and there is rampant land reallocation for non-forestry uses in other areas.

Editorial Analysis:

- Some experts point out that since 1980, through the Forest Conservation Act (FCA), the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF) has "diverted for non-forest use" over 1.5 million hectares of forest.
- As a matter of fact, critics have raised questions: How many Adivasis and forest-dwellers have been evicted by this 'lawful' forest destruction?
- Experts have pointed out that stripping these forests have yielded thousands of crores of rupees for corporations to which a bulk of these forestlands were diverted, and for forest departments via compensatory funds.
- An important question arises: How have the original inhabitants of these forests, already among the most marginalised, coped with the loss of homes and livelihoods?
- On February 13, 2019, the Supreme Court of India ordered the eviction of 1.8 million Adivasi and forest-dwelling claimants under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, to stem supposed forest destruction. On February 28, 2019 it stayed the order until a July, 2019 hearing.
- Shouldn't the destruction of over 1.5 million hectares of forest, and the misuse of the FCA, seize the court and petitioners? And how would the FRA perform on forest stewardship, where the FCA is failing?

Shredding a reform to bits:

It is important to note that the FRA was enacted to recognise the pre-existing rights of forest-dwellers. Recognising them as "integral to the survival and sustainability of the forest ecosystem," **the FRA gives their gram sabhas "the responsibilities and authority for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance."**

- A key 2009 regulation actualised gram sabha powers by mandating that all forest diversion proposals and compensatory and ameliorative schemes be presented in detail to the relevant gram sabhas to award or withhold its free, prior, informed consent, and also be preceded by the settlement of all rights under the FRA.
- This long overdue move created for the first time a space for forest communities to participate in decision-making around diversion proposals, making forest governance more accountable, ecologically informed and resource just.

- Experts opine that a decade afterwards, the state and corporations are shredding this reform to bits

Findings from a recent study:

- In 2016, for instance, some experts studied a proposal whereby the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) sought 1,400 acres of forestland across seven Adivasi villages of Keonjhar in the ecologically sensitive Gandhamardan mountains, for an iron ore mine.
- The diversion proposal sent by the OMC and the Odisha government to the MoEF included seven copycat gram sabha resolutions, supposedly representing the seven villages.
- Each identical resolution depicted villagers, over 2,000 in all, as saying they were not using the forests for cultivation, house-building or any livelihood, had no individual or community claims to it, and that they "request" the government to implement the forest diversion.
- In the villages, these resolutions evoked shock and rage. Residents told the group of experts that the resolutions were fake.
- After the news report on the case in 2016, the MoEF asked the State government to probe the matter. What followed is a telling comment on forest governance. The probe report, neither shared with villagers nor made public, glossed over testimonies it gathered of 11 villagers.
- On how all seven gram sabha resolutions could be identical, officials said, "This may have been done as the same officials conducted the meetings in all villages, and the agenda of the meetings was also the same."
- Critics allege that effectively, the OMC, abetted by officials, created resolutions tailored for forest diversion, thus emptying the gram sabhas' free informed consent powers of any substantive meaning.
- Further, critics point out that in October 2018, despite letters by villages about the forgery and pending FRA claims, the MoEF issued permission to the OMC to destroy this stretch of forest.

Concluding Remarks:

Critics allege that the government has effectively ensured that forest diversion is a given, and the only sanctioned role for Adivasis and forest-dwellers is that of mute rubber stamps.

Critics point out that on February 26, 2019, the MoEF tried to formalise this travesty by writing to all States that FRA compliance is not needed for 'in-principle' approval for diversions. They assert that this violates the FRA, and that this move eliminates gram sabhas from decision-making, and makes diversion a violent fait accompli for forest-dwellers.

- However, communities are increasingly rejecting such disempowerment, evident from protests like a 30-km march days ago by villagers in Chhattisgarh's Hasdeo Arand against the MoEF's recent decision to divert over 2,000 acres of forests to a mine, despite gram sabha forgery complaints.
- Finally, the Supreme Court should examine this sabotage of the FRA that is damaging our forests and our democracy.
- Conservationists should stand up for the welfare of both wildlife and forest dwellers.
- This is the only way we can build an effective and equitable conservation movement.

GS 2
Indian Polity and Governance
What has changed post-Balakot?

Note to Students:

- Ever since the events on the 14th of February, 2019 where 40 brave CRPF jawans were martyred in a suicide terror attack that was conducted by the Jaish-e-Mohammad, a terror outfit supported by India's western neighbour, Pakistan, and the 'non-military, pre-emptive strikes' that India launched during the early hours of the 26th of February, 2019, which according to an official statement by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "a very large number of JeM terrorists, trainers, senior commanders and groups of jihadis who were being trained for fidayeen action were eliminated", there has been a politicisation of the sacrifices made by the Indian Armed Forces, largely done in view of the upcoming General Elections.

- In this editorial analysis, we present some of the important perspectives on this issue across articles that have been featured in the Hindu and other leading newspapers. The feature editorial being covered would be, "What has changed post-Balakot?" which was published in the Hindu on the 20th of March, 2019.

Perspectives:

I.   The Military Vs. Political Binary

- There is a strongly held belief, often convincingly articulated by leading thought leaders, that national security must be divorced from politics. As a matter of fact, this is so entrenched in popular narratives that any attempt at discussing national security through the lens of politics is immediately discredited: "How can someone politicise something as important as national security?"
- While this is true, some experts have pointed out that 'de-politicisation' comes handy for the government since "do not politicise" also means "do not ask difficult questions", a convenient way out of a tricky situation.
- However, for the general public, this results in weariness over how the political class has managed national security problems.
- The solution is to offer better political reasoning, and not replace political formulations with military ones, which is often seen as the easy way out.

Military solutions over political ones: A Perspective

1. When we privilege military solutions over political ones while dealing with conflict resolution, we find that the former uses a specific set of tools, discourses and methods to resolve conflicts unlike the toolkit politics uses for conflict resolution.

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    - Consider an example. Post-Pulwama, the Government of India began a security crackdown in the Kashmir Valley and airlifted around 100 companies of paramilitary forces to enforce it. This is a typical and time-tested military solution to the unrest in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
    - A political solution would have been what the Government of India adopted to deal with the widespread anger in the Valley in late 2010, wherein it sent a team of interlocutors to talk to the protesting Kashmiris.
    - The interlocutors were able to bring about a sense of normalcy almost immediately, whereas the influx of more armed men into the Valley is unlikely to achieve that.

2. Further, militarised methods and narratives also lead to de-politicisation, or the dismissal of normal politics from the public sphere, ushering in what could be called 'temporary emergencies'.

    - Here's an example. In the immediate aftermath of the Pulwama attack, a leading Indian actress tweeted: "Anyone who lectures about non-violence and peace at this time should be painted black, put on a donkey and slapped by everyone on the streets." Put differently, she advocated that the practice of normal politics be suspended and be replaced by a depoliticised and securitised discourse. And that those who violate such 'emergency' should be punished.
    - It is important to note that when such short spells of emergency are normalised, it opens the door for more permanent securitised spaces and narratives.
    - Kashmir, which has more or less been reeling under spells of temporary emergencies for close to three decades now, is a perfect example.

3. Privileging militarisation over politicisation for conflict resolution is indeed unwise and counter-productive. As a matter of fact, when divorced from their underlying political intent, militarised approaches can lead to mindless violence — something democratic societies should unconditionally resist.
4. Military means to deal with conflicts do have their limited utility, but they must be politically guided.

'Freedom to the military':

- Another reflection of depoliticising security matters is the tendency to argue that the armed forces should be given complete autonomy to deal with security problems.
- In the immediate aftermath of Pulwama, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for instance, declared that the "armed

forces have been given complete freedom to take action", a statement that was well received by the general public.

- However, giving complete freedom to the military is replete with several complications. Critics opine that telling the armed forces that they are free to deal with the problem as they wish is a dangerous abdication of political responsibility which was entrusted to them through a democratic process.
- Secondly, 'giving complete freedom to the military' is an open invitation to use military solutions to deal with what are essentially political problems.
- Thirdly, and even more important, 'complete freedom' flies in the face of political control that should be the hallmark of a mature democracy.
- It is one thing for the general public to nurture romantic notions about military solutions, but it is dangerous for the political class to actually enshrine that in policy guidance. ***Popular fetishes about military force are the stuff for feel-good fiction, not policy making.***
- One direct implication of de-politicised conflict resolution is that it typically leads to more violence. When men in uniform die, their loss becomes a rallying cry for more violence which then leads to even more casualties — the cycle goes on until political solutions are brought in. We observe this when we take any militarised conflict as an example.
- The fact is that every death due to violence must be avoidable, and that can only happen if statesmen and women are willing to climb down from the cycle of violence. But for that to happen, there must be a decidedly political approach to conflict resolution.

II.   Losing the Information War (A Perspective)

- India is used to a negative international media. After the 1998 nuclear tests, the American media echoed the sentiment that "the Indian government has not shot itself in the foot. Most likely it has shot itself in the head." As events unfolded, its dire predictions turned out to be completely inaccurate.
- The difference between then and now, when the global media has cast doubts about India's "non-military and preemptive" response to the Pulwama terrorist attack, is that the Indian version of events is hardly getting a credible hearing.
- Some experts believe that this is because the Indian government no longer has viable channels to put across its point of view to the Western media.
- By acts of commission and omission, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which should be in the driving seat for such publicity, has, over the last few years, discontinued the practice of having foreign correspondents based in India, attend briefings by MEA spokespersons.
- Had this been followed, some experts point out, the Indian position might have been persuasively argued.
- The earlier practice for many decades was that following the daily briefing by the MEA spokesperson, Indian and foreign correspondents would gather at 4.30 p.m. for discussions over tea. It gave an opportunity for the spokesperson, who was sometimes joined by heads of MEA's territorial divisions, to informally put across what he or she could not say on record about India's stake in diplomatic jugglery. Inevitably, some of this would be published in reports.
- That did not happen with events post-Pulwama. The daily briefing by the MEA spokesperson seems to have faded in importance.
- Towards the end of Manmohan Singh's tenure as Prime Minister, the daily briefing was scrapped in favour of weekly briefings.
- Some experts opine that with the current practice, the government is unable to disseminate information that could have produced a more sympathetic global media on the current play in India-Pakistan relations.

III.   Recent Directive Issued by the Election Commission of India:

- Ahead of the ensuing Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission of India has issued an advisory to all political parties asking them to desist from using photographs of defence personnel in political advertisements or poll campaigning.
- In the general advisory addressed to all "recognized national/state political parties", the ECI pointed out that it had been brought to the notice of the commission that some political parties were using defence personnel photographs in advertisements as part of their political campaigns.
- Citing its December 2013 letter to all political parties, the commission reminded them of the instructions issued

therein and told them to ensure strict compliance.

- "The Ministry of Defence has brought to the notice of the Commission that the photographs of the Defence personnel are being used by the Political Parties, their leaders and candidates in advertisements as part of their election propaganda and requested the Commission to issue suitable instruction in this regard," the letter dated 4 December 2013 had communicated to the parties.
- The advisory that was recently issued, added: "…the Armed Forces of a nation are the guardian of its frontiers, security and the political system. They are apolitical and neutral stakeholders in a modern democracy. It is therefore necessary that the political parties and leaders exercise great caution while making any reference to the Armed Forces in their political campaigns."
- The ECI said it was of the view that photographs of the Chief of Army Staff or any other defence personnel and that of functions of defence forces "should not be associated with or used in any manner in advertisement/ propaganda/campaigning or in any other manner in connection with elections by political parties and candidates".
- The commission called upon all political parties to advise their candidates and leaders to desist from displaying photographs of defence personnel or functions involving them in advertisements, or as part of their campaigning for elections.
- "You are, therefore, requested to issue appropriate instructions to your candidates/leaders/cadres in this regard to ensure compliance in the matter," the ECI said.

Editorial Analysis:

- The situation between India and Pakistan seems to have returned to the pre-Pulwama position.
- The High Commissioners, withdrawn in February for 'consultations', have returned to Islamabad and Delhi. Talks on Kartarpur are proceeding.
- The UN Security Council 1267 Committee failed to designate Masood Azhar as a terrorist because China faithfully put a technical hold on the proposal.
- It had done so in 2009 and 2017, following it up with a veto. Perhaps it is time to dispassionately assess if something has changed post-Balakot and if so, what?

A Look at the facts:

- First, the bare facts. On February 14, Adil Ahmed Dar drove his vehicle into a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) convoy crossing Pulwama, killing 40 personnel and becoming the first Indian fedayeen. Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), a terrorist organisation based in Pakistan, claimed responsibility. Facing elections in two months, the Narendra Modi government promised strong retaliation.
- At a diplomatic level, it called for Pakistan's isolation.
- Pakistan's most favoured nation trade status was withdrawn and punitive tariffs imposed, though this impacted Indian exporters more as the balance is heavily in India's favour.
- This was followed by an announcement that India would stop water flows into Pakistan; it was later clarified that the reference was to the waters of the three rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej) that India was in any case entitled to, and further, to build storage and irrigation facilities would take five years. Clearly, this was inadequate.
- After the September 2016 terrorist strike, also by the JeM, at an Indian Army base at Uri, the government had launched pre-emptive 'surgical strikes' across the Line of Control (LoC), and said it had destroyed launch pads and attacked terrorists assembled there.
- Similar shallow cross-border retaliatory actions had been undertaken earlier too but without publicity or the label of 'surgical strikes'.
- Pakistan, however, denied the 'surgical strike' of September 29. India declared it had conveyed a signal to Pakistan that it was no longer business as usual and the Modi government would not shy away from raising the ante.
- Given looming elections now, clearly, ***Pulwama demanded a stronger response***.
- On February 26, 2019, a dozen Mirage-2000 entered Pakistani airspace, targeting a JeM training facility in Balakot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province about 60 km from the LoC.
- In an attempt to downplay the provocation, Indian authorities described it as a 'non-military' and 'pre-emptive' strike in which a large number of terrorists were killed.

Events and claims post the Balakot strikes:

- Unlike post-Uri, this time Pakistani authorities acknowledged the airspace intrusion, claiming that Pakistani aircraft had scrambled forcing the Mirages to drop their ordnance and withdraw hastily.
- Pakistan promised retaliation, and the following morning its fighter aircraft intruded into Indian airspace.

- In the dog-fight that ensued, an Indian Air Force (IAF) MiG-21 was downed and Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman ended up in Pakistani custody.
- If India had thought about retaliating further, having a pilot in Pakistani custody made it pause; for Pakistan, its honour having been restored, it provided the opportunity to demonstrate statesmanship. The Indian pilot was returned on March 1, 2019 and the crisis de-escalated.

Claims and Counter-claims:

- Amid the paucity of facts, both resorted to exaggerated claims.
- On the Indian side, there was talk of a doctrinal shift away from strategic restraint, by having struck deep inside Pakistani territory, downing a Pakistan Air Force F-16 (in the dogfight) and having called Pakistan's nuclear bluff.
- Party leaders from the ruling establishment in India and Ministers inflated the casualties from 'a very large number' (stated by the Indian Foreign Secretary) to 250, 300 and then 400!
- Among the ordnance the Mirage carries is *SPICE-2000* (or *Smart Precise Impact and Cost Effective*), a smart bomb with a 60 km glide range that uses GPS/electro-optical guidance, and stand-off air-to-ground missiles with a range of 80 km.
- Since Indian authorities have not been forthcoming with a post-strike damage assessment, it is reasonable to assume that with such weapons, the aircraft hardly needed to go deep into Pakistani airspace. The IAF maintains that it hit the identified targets but did not count the casualties.
- On the diplomatic front, India claimed that most major powers accepted India's right of defence and pre-emption.
- On the other hand, Pakistan maintains that there were no casualties at Balakot. Indian aircraft withdrew having damaged a pine forest in KP.
- Pakistan demonstrated resolve with its counter-strike on the 27th of February, 2019 as well as restraint by not bombing the Indian targets after having locked on to them, signalling to the Indian side their vulnerability. It had initially claimed downing two Indian jets, that later became one.
- Pakistan denied that an F-16 was downed but the Indian authorities did exhibit part of an Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM) missile, normally carried by an F-16. Pakistan demonstrated its good faith by returning the Indian pilot promptly.
- From a Pakistani perspective, its diplomatic clout is evident that its all-weather-friend, China, stood by it in the UN Security Council.

Rhetoric and reality: A Perspective

- Experts opine that clearly, rhetoric exceeded reality.
- It is true that unlike the 'surgical strikes' which were in disputed Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, this time India targeted a location in Pakistani territory.
- Pakistan's intrusion into Jammu and Kashmir the following day did not claim casualties, nor was any military facility on the Indian side attacked.
- Both sides were observing restraint even as armchair gladiators reached fever pitch in the TV studios.
- *The unexpected development of the capture of Wg Cdr Varthaman signalled the entry of the U.S.*
- While National Security Adviser John Bolton kept channels open with his Indian counterpart, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Joseph Votel ensured that the Pakistani Army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa played ball.
- The U.S.'s willingness to overlook the use of an F-16 in violation of end-use assurances helped.
- Moreover, the U.S. needs Gen. Bajwa's cooperation to keep its dialogue with Taliban in Doha on track.
- Hardly surprising that on February 28, 2019 even as he cut short his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, U.S. President Donald Trump was tweeting, "We have, I think, reasonably attractive news from Pakistan and India."
- A new development was the involvement of both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the de-escalation. Both are U.S. allies and have committed generous financial packages to Pakistan.
- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was in India on February 19-20 and witnessed the ratcheting up of tensions.
- On February 28, Saudi State Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir was in Islamabad even as the Crown Prince was on the phone with Mr. Modi.
- A week later, Mr. Jubeir was back in Pakistan and then in Delhi meeting Mr. Modi on March 11, 2019. UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan was tweeting about his telephone conversations with Prime Ministers Modi and Imran Khan on February 28, 2019.

The nuclear bluff?- A Perspective

Pakistan's four nuclear red lines are:

a) capture of a large part of its territory,
b) its military facing unacceptable loss,
c) India attempting economic strangulation, and finally,
d) large-scale political destabilisation.
- Experts opine that none of the red lines was even close to being crossed. Therefore, nobody was calling anybody's nuclear bluff.

Concluding Remarks:

- The military realises that such strikes provide temporary emotional satisfaction but not lasting deterrence, either through denial or punishment. A strike that targets a bunch of terrorists and is 'non-military' and is 'pre-emptive' rather than punitive cannot be expected to change Pakistan army's policy of using jihadi groups.
- And that is why such attacks will happen again. Denying these requires better and timely intelligence, and punitive retaliation requires enhanced kinetic capability. Only then will India ensure deterrence though the emergence of home-grown fedayeen indicates growing radicalisation at home.
- Lack of factual detail may have helped manage the dynamics of de-escalation because the militaries understand the dangers of escalation. Yet there is always the unexpected X-factor, and in the fog of war, risks get amplified. So not much has changed post-Balakot but there are questions that deserve serious consideration.

GS 2

Indian Polity and Governance (Government Policies and Interventions)

On the learning curve

Brief Background:

- *Transforming of 115 identified Aspirational Districts*:

  To realise the vision of 'SabkaSaath, SabkaVikas', and ensure that India's growth process remains inclusive, the 'Aspirational District Programme (ADP)' was launched by the Prime Minister on January 5, 2018.
- It is a special initiative to rapidly transform 115 identified districts that have shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas and have emerged as pockets of under-development, thereby posing a challenge to ensure balanced regional development.
- Under ADP, 49 key performance indicators (KPIs) have been identified across such sectors with the aim to improving ease of living, as well as enhancing the economic productivity of citizens residing in these districts.
- Health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development and basic infrastructure are main sectors where rapid transformation is envisaged.

  On April 1, 2018, NITI Aayog released the baseline ranking of these districts from which the districts can ascertain their status in these sectors, and work to becoming the best district in the State and eventually the best in the country. To realise this vision, district teams have finalised district action plans, following the principle of convergence of efforts of the State and Central government. In addition, the ADP offers a unique platform for different segments of population as well as institutions like civil service organisations, private sector foundations, philanthropies etc.to come together and work with the State and central government to contribute to this important initiative of inclusive development.

  An Aspirational Districts Dashboard has been developed, called 'Champions of Change', which captures real-time

data and ranking across all indicators. The District Collectors/ Magistrates are providing self-reported data through this dashboard to capture progress.

Editorial Analysis:

- Among the lakhs of employees on the payrolls of State governments in India, the education department, unarguably, has the largest share of employees.
- Besides frontline service providers (teachers), there are a number of other officials and administrators who form an important part of the educational set-up.

The Haryana case study: A Perspective

- Experts opine that given the size of the education department, any effort to introduce education reforms must ensure that the incentives of all stakeholders are aligned throughout the system to ensure their participation.
- It is important to note that education transformation programmes by States run the risk of falling flat, as they are often unaccompanied by a single transformation change road map that all key actors agree upon and work towards.
- A successful example of implementing such a road map can be seen in Haryana, which has created a race among its administrative blocks to be declared as *'Saksham' (Hindi for abled/skilled)*, i.e. have 80% or more students who are grade level competent.
- Under this campaign, State officials nominate their block for the *'Saksham Ghoshna'* once they are reasonably confident that their block has achieved the 80% target — as a result of remedial programmes, teacher training and internal assessments.
- This self-nomination is then followed by rigorous rounds of third party assessments to vet their claims. If a block is found to be 'Saksham', the block officials are recognised by no less than the Chief Minister, and a large-scale 'show and tell' event is organised to honour them.
- **Further, when all blocks in a district are declared as 'Saksham', the entire district is also accorded 'Saksham' status.**
- According to the latest third party assessment in February 2019, 94 blocks out of a total of 119 in Haryana have been declared 'Saksham' and overall grade competence has been assessed at 80%, which is a giant leap in learning outcomes when compared to the overall grade competence of 40% in 2014. Given these early successes, many other States are also embarking on such programmes.

A Lesson one learns:

- The valuable lesson from all this is that inducing competition among administrative units helps invigorate key stakeholders to work in tandem in order to achieve intended outcomes.
- Competition also makes abstract goals such as 'learning outcomes' more real by defining exact 'actionable' metrics on which improvement is desired.
- Further, with encouragement from above, such campaigns lead to a shift in the mindset of a State's education administrators, many of whom otherwise believe that high learning outcomes are almost unachievable.
- Political commitment to improving the quality of education backed by strong review and monitoring mechanisms can spur meaningful activity in States.

States getting scores:

- Since its inception, the *NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India)*, has also been a believer in competitive federalism that puts pressure on policymakers across States to perform better on pre-defined goals and metrics.
- To translate this to education, we have now developed the State-level 'School Education Quality Index' (SEQI), which seeks to make improvements in learning outcomes a focal point of governance.
- It gives scores to States based on their educational performance and puts this data out in the public domain.
- The SEQI uses three data sources, including the National Achievement Survey, to come out with 33 indicators to measure education outcomes, of which the largest weightage (48%) is given to learning outcomes.
- By having a two-fold ranking system — one which recognises well-performing States via an overall performance score, and a delta ranking that measures the level of improvement made by States from their base year — the NITI's Aayog's State ranking not only encourages competition among States but also rewards and motivates other States to consistently improve.

District programme

- The NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts programme, launched in early 2018, also draws from this template.

- Here, 112 under-served districts across the country compete with each other in order to achieve targets in five crucial sectors.
- These districts are monitored real-time and ranked on the basis of their progress.
- The follow-up for each indicator is handled by the respective Ministry in charge of the same, while NITI Aayog handles the data compilation and dissemination.
- Most importantly, there is a constant focus on recognising and disseminating best practices of select districts to other States, which act as a reward for well-performing local administrations while providing impetus to other districts to adopt similar measures.
- This strategy has already shown success; districts that were ranked low in baseline surveys, such as Virudhunagar (Tamil Nadu), Nuapada (Odisha), Gumla (Jharkhand), Siddharthnagar (Uttar Pradesh), and Vizianagaram (Andhra Pradesh), have shown remarkable progress in subsequent rounds of assessment.
- The fact that this programme has huge support and buy-in from the Prime Minister personally ensures that all stakeholders are spurred into action and energised to achieve the stated goals.

Concluding Remarks:

- Given the success of these initiatives, it is abundantly clear that the right incentive structures for stakeholders lead to administrative efficiency, which then improves the quality of service delivery.
- States therefore need to induce competition and give a boost to put all key actors in education in the driver's seat to improve their learning levels.
- The successes that we are already witnessing in India with the systemic approach to transforming education are inspiring.
- Improvement in learning outcomes is an immediate goal for India to fulfil its aspirations of playing a greater role in the global economy and a systemic transformation is the best solution that we have so far.

Tidbits

Prelims Fact

Abel Prize

- It is a Norwegian prize awarded annually by the King of Norway to one or more outstanding mathematicians
  - The main objective of the Abel Prize is to recognize pioneering scientific achievements in mathematics. The Prize shall also help boost the status of the field of mathematics in society and stimulate children and youth to become interested in mathematics.
- The prize is named after the 19th century Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel.
- The prize comes with a cheque for $7,03,000.
- It was established by the Norwegian government in 2002 on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Niels Henrik Abel's birth.

Context

- The Abel Prize in mathematics was awarded to Karen Uhlenbeck of the U.S. for her work on partial differential equations, the first woman to win the award

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Wagon tragedy is associated with
   a) Mappila rebellion
   b) Naxal Movement
   c) Civil disobedience

d) Quit India Movement

Ans: a
- The 1921 Wagon Tragedy took place during the Mappila rebellion in Malabar against British rulers and Hindu landlords.
- This horrific incident came to be called the Jalian Wallabagh of the South.
- In 1972, the Kerala Government called it the Wagon Tragedy.

Consider the following about CoM
1) The advice tendered by them is binding on president
2) There is a provision for system of legal responsibility of a minister in Indian constitution

Which of the above statements are incorrect?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Ans: b
- In Britain, every order of the King for any public act is countersigned by a minister. If the order is in violation of any law, the minister would be held responsible and would be liable in the court. The legally accepted phrase in Britain is, "The king can do no wrong." Hence, he cannot be sued in any court.
- In India, on the other hand, there is **no provision in the Constitution for the system of legal responsibility of a minister**. It is not required that an order of the President for a public act should be countersigned by a minister. Moreover, the courts are barred from enquiring into the nature of advice rendered by the ministers to the president.

Which of the following sectors come under the Champion Services Sectors?
1) Medical Value Travel
2) Transport and Logistics Services
3) Accounting and Finance Services
4) Audio Visual Services
5) Communication Services

Options:
a) 1, 2 and 3 only
b) 2, 3 and 4 only
c) 3, 4 and 5 only
d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: d
- It is proposal of the Department of Commerce to give focused attention to **12 identified Champion Services Sectors** for promoting their development, and realizing their potential.
- It includes include Information Technology & Information Technology enabled Services (IT & ITeS), Tourism and Hospitality Services, Medical Value Travel, Transport and Logistics Services, Accounting and Finance Services, Audio Visual Services, Legal Services, Communication Services, Construction and Related Engineering Services, Environmental Services, Financial Services and Education Services.
- This initiative is **expected to enhance the competitiveness of India's service sectors** thereby creating more jobs in India, contributing to a higher GDP and export of services to global markets.

National Productivity Council is a

a) Statutory Body
b) Autonomous organization
c) Constitutional Body
d) None of them

Ans: b

- It is a national level **autonomous organization** under the administrative control of the **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion** to promote productivity culture in India.
- Established as a registered society in 1958 by the Government of India, it is a **tri-partite non-profit organization with equal representation from the government, employers and workers' organizations**, apart from technical and professional institutions including members from local productivity councils and chamber of commerce on its Governing Body.
- Besides providing training, consultancy and undertaking research in the area of productivity, NPC also implements the productivity promotion schemes of the Government and carry out the programmes of the Tokyo based Asian Productivity Organization (APO)

Consider the following about Dokdo Islands
1) It is a dispute between Japan and Russia
2) It is Present in Sea of Japan

Which of above statements are correct?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both
d) None

Ans: b

Liancourt Rocks, Dokdo Islands or Takeshima Islands
- Dokdo—meaning 'Solitary Island' in Korean
- They are a group of small islets in the Sea of Japan
- While South Korea controls the islets, its sovereignty over them is contested by Japan.
- According to South Korea, Dokdo was recognized by Japan as Korean territory in 1696 following an altercation between Japanese and Korean fishermen. But, in 1905, despite allegedly being under formal jurisdiction of Korea's Uldo county, the islands were annexed by Japan ahead of its occupation of the peninsula, which lasted for 35 years up until 1945.

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1) The birth, growth and resilience of the far right, which once festered in dark nooks and crannies, has been assisted by the in-group echo chambers of social media. Explain in reference to Christchurch massacre.
2) Political commitment to improving the quality of education backed by strong review and monitoring mechanisms can spur meaningful activity in development of education. Analyze.
3) Examine the ethical issues in international relations. Do you think that International Institutions have played its role well in promoting 'Ethics in International Relations'? Critically Comment.