

27 June 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Centre set to roll out 'Jal Shakti' scheme for water-starved areas

Context:

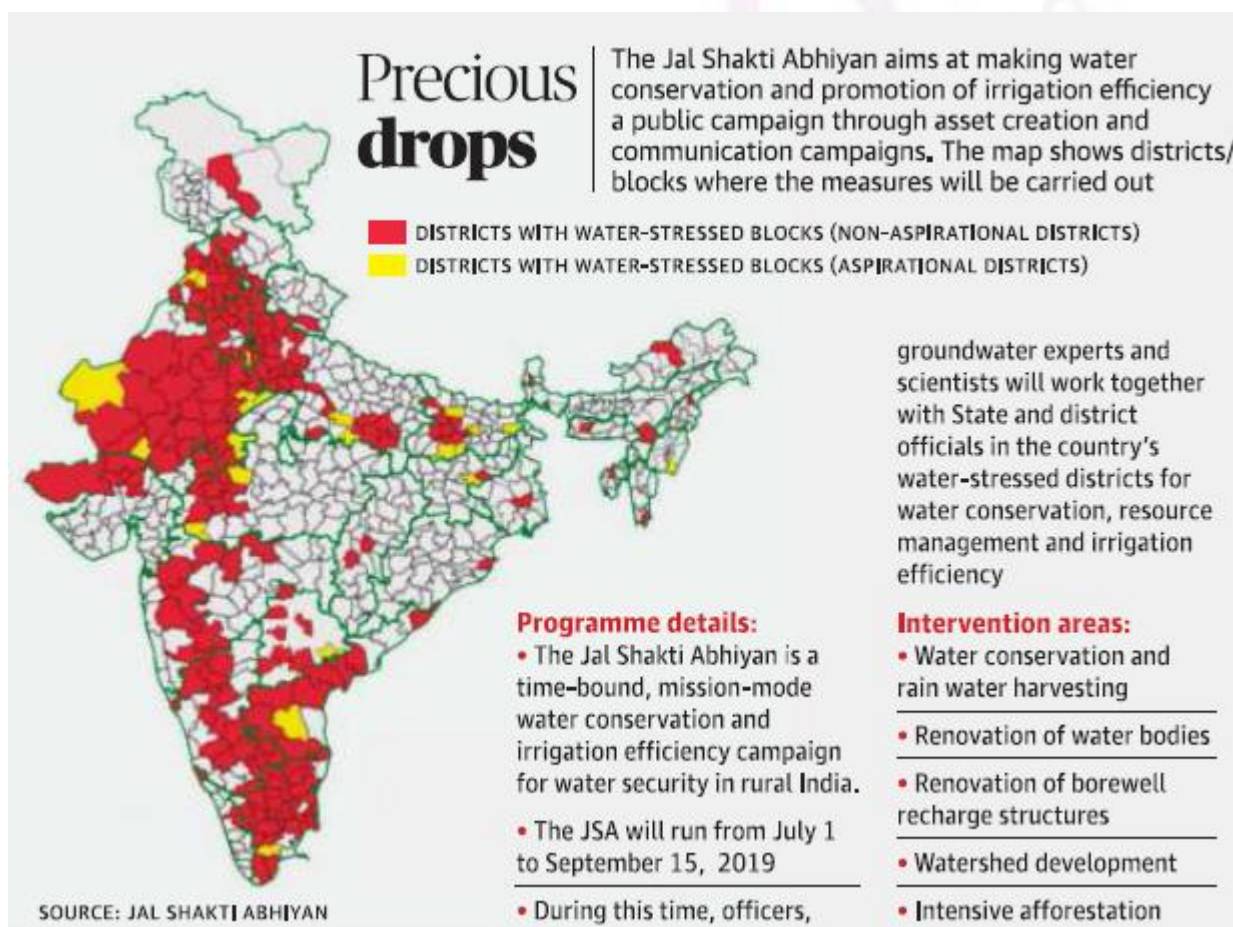
The Centre is set to initiate the Jal Shakti Abhiyan to ramp up rainwater harvesting and conservation efforts in 255 water-stressed districts, in line with the government's promise to focus on water.

Details:

- The Jal Shakti Abhiyan would aim to accelerate water harvesting, conservation and borewell recharge activities already being carried out under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme and the Integrated Watershed Management Programme of the Rural Development Ministry, along with existing water body restoration and afforestation schemes being undertaken by the Jal Shakti and Environment Ministries.
- Progress would be monitored in real time through mobile applications and an online dashboard.
- A major communications campaign on TV, radio, print, local and social media would be carried out, with celebrities mobilised to generate awareness for the campaign.

Implementation:

- Though water is a State issue, the campaign would be coordinated by 255 central IAS officers of Joint or Additional Secretary-rank, drawn from ministries as varied as Space, Petroleum and Defence
- The campaign seems to follow the model of Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, where central officials monitored the implementation of seven flagship development schemes in 117 aspirational districts across the country.
- The campaign would run from July 1 to September 15 in States receiving rainfall during the south-west monsoon, while States receiving rainfall in the retreating or north-east monsoon would be covered from October 1 to November 30.
- All officers would also participate in a preparatory workshop led by the Cabinet Secretary. Scientists and IITs would provide technical support, while national NGOs would aid in community mobilisation. State- and district-level officials would also join these teams on the ground.



1. Police station in Satara tops SMART survey

Context:

Rahimatpur police station in Satara district in western Maharashtra has emerged as the State topper in a survey based on the 'SMART' policing concept

Details:

- The Quality Council of India (QCI), which executed the survey, assessed 87 shortlisted police stations across the country on a number of parameters like performance in controlling crime, infrastructure of the police building, mess and optimal use of technology, and citizen feedback.
- The other vital parameters included approachability and discipline of the police personnel, storage of manual records in the police station as well as the station head officer's (SHO's) declaration of the budgetary process.

SMART Police:

(S-Sensitive and Strict; M-Modern with mobility; A- Alert and Accountable; R- Reliable and Responsive; T-Trained and Techno-savvy)

- The Prime Minister of India had introduced the concept of SMART Police during the 49th Directors General/ Inspectors General Annual Conference at Guwahati in 2014.
- A SMART Police Station should be citizen friendly and clean.

Some suggested features of a SMART Police Station are:

- Basic amenities for visitors, waiting area, toilets, drinking water, Receptionist whom the visitors can meet.
- Rest room for constables, including separate room for women constables.
- Natural lighting and ventilation, solar lighting, energy saving features.
- CCTV, Safe & secure Armoury, Record Room, Communication Room for wireless, computers etc.
- Automated kiosks for filing of complaints by public (with a back-end system for tracking follow up action).

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. 54 Nations back India for UNSC non-permanent seat

Context:

The 55-member Asia-Pacific Group has unanimously supported India at the bid for non-permanent seat at UNSC for a two-year term (2021-22).

Details:

- The Asia-Pacific Group gets to nominate one of its members for the June 2020 elections to a non-permanent seat on the UNSC.
- Estonia, Niger, Tunisia, Vietnam and St. Vincent and the Grenadines were elected earlier this month.
- Vote of two-thirds of the UN General Assembly's 193 members will be needed for India to win a non-permanent seat on the UNSC.
- India has already held a non-permanent seat on the UNSC for seven terms.

Significance:

The development is significant for two major reasons:

- In 2013, when India announced its candidature for the 2021-22 UNSC non-permanent seat, Afghanistan, a potential contender, had withdrawn its nomination to accommodate India's candidacy. The gesture was based on the long-standing, close and friendly relations between the two countries.
- Pakistan and China have supported this move. This is particularly significant as India has had diplomatic challenges with both countries at the UN.
- The 55 countries that have supported India's candidature, include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Turkey, UAE and Vietnam.

Issues:

- Majority of the UN members support the need for expansion of the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council.
- Also, India is at the forefront of efforts at the UN to push for the long-pending reform of the Security Council, emphasising that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high table as a permanent member.
- The Asia Pacific group faces daunting challenges in seeking to be represented equitably. Asia-Pacific group is vying for 2 non-permanent seats, while in the West European & Other Group states there are 25 members in the pool vying for 2 seats.

United Nations Security Council:

- UNSC is a 15-nation Council with 5 Permanent Members and 10 Non-permanent Members.
- The five permanent members of the Council are China, France, Russia, UK and the US.
- The 10 non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis: five for African and Asian States; one for Eastern European States; two for the Latin American and Caribbean States; and two for Western European and other States.
- Each year the 193-member General Assembly elects five non-permanent members for a two-year term at the UN high-table.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. SEZ Bill cleared amid protests

Context:

The Lok Sabha passed the Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Bill, 2019. The bill amends the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005 and replaces an Ordinance that was promulgated on March 2, 2019.

Details:

- The Act provides for the establishment, development and management of Special Economic Zones for the promotion of exports.
- Definition of person: Under the Act, the definition of a person includes an individual, a Hindu undivided family, a company, a co-operative society, a firm, or an association of persons.
 - The Bill adds two more categories to this definition by including a trust, or any other entity which may be notified by the central government.
- The amendment seeks to provide flexibility to the central government to include trusts in the

definition of a 'person' in a bid to facilitate investments in these zones.

- The amendment aims at improving and encouraging more investments and introducing features including single-window clearance and to ease imports and exports.

2. Payments data must be saved locally: RBI

Context:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has clarified that payment system providers need to store entire payments data in a system only in India.

Background:

- The RBI had released data-localisation guidelines on April 6, 2018, and gave payments providers six months for complying with the norms.
- Payment providers have been lobbying at various levels for free flow of data across borders in order to ensure that customer benefits and fraud analysis are not affected.

Details:

- RBI has said that the data should be deleted from the systems abroad and brought back to India not later than one business day or 24 hours from the payment processing, whichever is earlier.
- It also said that the data stored in India can be accessed or fetched whenever required for handling customer disputes as well as for any other related processing activity, such as chargeback.
- The data may be shared with the overseas regulator, if so required, depending upon the nature/origin of a transaction with due approval of the RBI.
- The RBI allows a copy to be stored abroad in case of cross-border transactions.
- The clarification comes a week after the government said the RBI would examine concerns around its strict data-localisation guidelines.
- While the government has been pushing for softer data-localisation guidelines by allowing data mirroring, the RBI has held its ground, maintaining that India's payments data can only be stored locally.

3. Centre expands terms of reference of direct tax law body

Context:

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has expanded the terms of reference (ToR) of the task force set up to come up with a new Direct Tax Code.

Details:

- The committee would now have to consider five more areas while drafting their recommendation.
- The expansion of terms of reference shows the tax department's focus to expand the tax base and at the same time make a non-adversarial tax regime for taxpayers.
- These additional aspects are significant in shaping up a better compliance-oriented administration and increasing taxpayers' trust.
- July 31, 2019 is the deadline for the submission of the task force's recommendations.

Recommendations:

- To bring in faceless and anonymized verification, scrutiny and assessments,
- Reduction of litigation and expeditious disposal of appeals from Commissioner of Income tax

(Appeals) stage right upto Supreme Court,

- Sharing of information between different verticals like Goods and Service Tax, Customs, CBDT teams and so on.
- Simplification of procedure to reduce compliance burden on income tax assesses
- System based cross verification of financial transactions.

4. Countervailing Duty (CVD) on radial tyres imported from China

Context:

The government has imposed a countervailing duty (CVD) on large radial tyres imported from China, for a period of five years.

Details:

- The notification said in the case of radial tyres used in buses and lorries/trucks imported from China, the designated authority has come to the conclusion that imposition of definitive countervailing duty is required to offset subsidisation and injury and has recommended the imposition of definitive countervailing duty on the imports of the subject goods from China PR.
- The countervailing duty imposed under this notification shall be levied for a period of five years (unless revoked, superseded or amended earlier).
- The CVD ranges from 9.55-17.57% of the value of the tyres, including costs, insurance and freight.
- The countervailing duty follows the imposition of an anti-dumping duty on cast aluminium alloy wheels or Alloy Road Wheels (ARW), used in motor vehicles, ranging from 12 inches to 24 inches in size and originating from China, South Korea, or Thailand.

Why was this decision take by the Govt?

- The government's decision has come in the wake of a slowdown in the domestic auto industry.
- With auto sales falling sharply, it is bound to impact original equipment sales of tyre firms.
- Given the slowdown in the auto industry globally, it is likely that Chinese firms would resort to more dumping thus aggravating the pain for domestic manufacturers.

Significance:

- It is likely to be incrementally positive for tyre manufacturers, as the replacement market would see higher inflow of tyres from the listed/organised players

It will not make much impact:

- Protection to the industry doesn't necessarily mean these firms will increase their profit manifold.
- It is just that they will not make losses, but will sustain.
- With slowdown in auto sector, the incremental sales will be tough to come by. Therefore, it won't be a game changer for the tyre sector.
- While the government's step is positive, the potential threat of Chinese firms using Thailand and Vietnam for stepping up exports to India continues.

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Negotiating the forks in the road of diplomacy

Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that seldom in the recent past has the impact of one month meant more in Indian foreign policy than the present one.
- And rarely have meetings on the sidelines around one summit carried as much import on India's future policies as the G-20 summit in Osaka (June 28-29, 2019), where Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold bilateral meetings with at least eight world leaders (most notably U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin), and participate in two parallel trilaterals, the Russia-India-China (RIC) and Japan-U.S.-India (JAI).
- Recently, Prime Minister Modi also held a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Bishkek.
- In a few months, he will meet the three world leaders again for more substantive meetings: with a visit to Vladivostok (the Eastern Economic Forum in September), a possible dash to Washington during the UN General Assembly, again in September 2019, and the Wuhan return-visit by Mr. Xi to India in October 2019.
- It is important to note that between these two sets of meetings, Mr. Modi has his work cut out on a number of issues, each of which represents a fork in the road, depending on India's decision on them. Experts point out that this is a fork where the U.S. holds one prong and the Russia-China axis holds the other.

A Look at Trade concerns:

- On trade, experts point out that the tussle is evident.
- As a matter of fact, many in India had rejoiced when the U.S. first declared a trade war on China, given India's long-standing concerns about China's unfair trade practices.
- However, as Mr. Trump trained his guns on India next, the joy evaporated, and choices for the Modi government changed.
- Opportunity in Osaka:
- At Osaka, Mr. Modi will meet Mr. Trump in an effort to give trade issues another try, but he also plans to attend the RIC trilateral as well as a meeting with leaders of BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa), both of which will focus on countering the U.S.'s "unilateralism" on trade.
- Furthermore, in the months ahead, New Delhi must make another choice, on whether to sign up for the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**.
- As a matter of fact, the RCEP is a trade grouping that has taken centre stage after the U.S. walked out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- It is important to note that if trade issues with the U.S., (which is also India's largest trading partner) remain intractable, it is not hard to see that the RCEP bloc, with China in it, will become more prominent in India's trade book.
- Looking at Energy and communications:

- The choice on energy, and in particular on Iran, comes next.

- It is important to note that when the Trump administration pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear agreement in May 2018, but granted India and a few other countries a waiver to continue oil imports (as well as one for Chabahar trade), the government had assumed it could

muddle through the Iran-U.S. confrontation.

- Instead, experts opine that it has lost on both principle and profit.
- After accepting U.S. sanctions on oil imports, India's intake of cheaper, better Iranian crude will dip from about 23.5 million tonnes in 2018-19 to zero in 2019-20.
- Furthermore, the waiver for Chabahar turned out to be a red herring as banks, shipping and insurance companies have declined to support India-Afghan trade through the Iranian port for fear of sanctions affecting their other businesses.
- What follows now will be more difficult for New Delhi, as the U.S. has sanctioned the top rungs of Iran's government and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.
- Critics ask an important question. They ask:
 - Having meekly submitted to U.S. sanctions, will India now also abjure contact with the Iranian leadership or reject the U.S.'s demand?
 - And where will India's investments and its dreams of larger connectivity via Chabahar and the Russian-led International North-South Transport Corridor go, in the event of a full-scale confrontation between the U.S. and Iran?
 - As a matter of fact, willy-nilly, the forks in the road are presenting themselves and choices must be made.
 - Choices to be made in Telecommunications and 5G networks:
 - Another choice New Delhi will be forced to make in the next few months is on telecommunications and building its 5G network, for which trials are due to begin in the month of September 2019.
 - The U.S. has made it clear that it expects the Modi government to exclude the Chinese telecom company, Huawei, over security concerns, and threatens to withhold intelligence and security cooperation if India allows this company to control its 5G networks.
 - Furthermore, China has made it equally clear that India must make an "unbiased" choice and will oppose any move to cut Huawei out of the trials.
 - On the Russian S-400 missile system deal too, it's a black-or-white decision for the government to make as the U.S. makes it clear that going ahead with the deal won't just invoke sanctions but will close the door to American high-tech and advanced aircraft deals.

Contestations in the Maritime Sphere:

- Experts point out that the next contestations will come from the maritime sphere.
- As a matter of fact, the U.S. and China are pitted against each other in the South China Sea, which is now spilling over into South Asia through the Indo-Pacific.
- While India has focussed on China's encroachment in subcontinental waters, it is clear that the U.S. too is seeking a role here.
- The signing of an updated **Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)** which was put off, along with the recent cancellation of U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to Colombo at the last minute, will be one of many such **military and security upgradation plans for the U.S. in the region.** Having strenuously

objected to one, will India continue to be complacent about the other's military build-up in South Asia?

- Looking at the transformed alignments:
 - It is important to note that the tussle between the U.S. and Russia-China is not new and India has negotiated these in the past few decades with considerable success.
 - However, there are several reasons why this does not hold in the present, and why New Delhi will need more than nimble footwork to navigate the choices that their contestations present.
 - To begin with, the Russia-China bond today is firmer than it has been at any point since the 1950s, cemented by the Xi-Putin friendship.
 - As a matter of fact, the Trump administration has crystallised that bond by marking out “revisionist” Russia and China as the U.S.’s “central challenge” in its National Defense Strategy published in 2018.
 - As a result, both sides are imposing an “either/or” choice on countries that are not already strategically or economically riveted to one side or the other.
 - It is important to note that in a world where the rhetoric is increasingly about interoperability and there is a ‘buffet’ of options, a la carte choices that New Delhi had hoped it could make may no longer be on the menu.
 - Thus, India’s pivot within this period, away from “non-alignment” to “multi-alignment” or “issue-based alignment”, therefore, is unsustainable.

The Way Forward:

- India needs a substantive, more clearly defined account of its own objectives to steer its strategic course in these stormy times.
- Experts opine that it is necessary to stay rooted in India’s own geographical moorings within Asia and within South Asia in particular.
- Furthermore, an India that carries its neighbourhood is a formidable force at any international forum, compared to one mired in sub-regional conflicts.
- Secondly, India needs its own list of “asks” from its relationships with big powers.
- The recent success with listing Masood Azhar as a globally designated terrorist is an example of how focussed persistence and quiet diplomacy pays off.
- However, experts opine that India needs to move beyond asking for punitive measures against Pakistan or its constant demand for more visas for Indians to live and work abroad and think in terms of long-term strategic needs instead.
- Thirdly, India needs to re-embrace non-alignment as it was envisioned, not as the Non-Aligned Movement grouping, which is now in disarray.
- As a matter of fact, former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao wrote in 1989 that “Standing on our own feet and not being a plaything of others was the essence of the policy of non-alignment... a means of safeguarding India’s own national self-interests, that also constituted an earnest attempt to democratise international relations.”
- In order to do this, it is necessary to reject the “tactical transactionalism” that has currency today for a more idealistic view of the world that India wishes to shape in the future.
- It would be a mistake, as Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said recently, if we become “nothing more than the sum of our deals”.
- It would be a greater misfortune, however, to be trapped in the ‘zero sum’ of our deals.

2. RCEP next steps

What's in the news?

- In a recent development, the leaders of the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have resoundingly committed to conclude negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership free trade agreement by the end of 2019.

Editorial Analysis:

- As a matter of fact, some like the Malaysian Prime Minister went a step further, suggesting that countries not ready to join the RCEP, notably India but also Australia and New Zealand, could join at a later date, allowing a truncated 13-member RCEP to go ahead.
- Others insist that all 16 members must agree on the final RCEP document.
- It is also clear that ASEAN, which first promoted the RCEP idea in 2012, is putting pressure on all stakeholders to complete the last-mile negotiations.
- As a matter of fact, the recently concluded ASEAN summit, which ended in Bangkok, agreed to send a three-member delegation to New Delhi to take forward the talks.
- It is important to note that the **RCEP includes ASEAN's FTA partners — India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand — and the FTA would encompass 40% of all global trade among economies that make up a third of global GDP.**

Perspective on India:

- India has been keen to join. However, six years into negotiations, its concerns remain. These concerns include: a) India having to open up its markets for cheaper goods from countries like China and South Korea; and b) India's demand of ensuring that RCEP countries open their markets for Indian manpower (services).
- It is important to note that India has a trade deficit with as many as 11 of the RCEP countries, and it is the only one among them that isn't negotiating a bilateral or multilateral free trade agreement with China at present.
- As a result, although negotiators have agreed to New Delhi's demand for differential tariffs for its trade with China vis-à-vis the others, **India has also made tagging the "Country of Origin" on all products a sticking point in RCEP negotiations.**
- Despite its misgivings, however, the government has reiterated that it is committed to making RCEP work, and any attempt to cut India out of the agreement was "extremely premature".

Concluding Remarks: The Way Forward

- In the next few months, experts opine that India will be expected to keep up intense negotiations, and most important, give a clear indication both internally and to the world that it is joining the RCEP.
- To that end, **the Commerce Ministry has begun consultations with stakeholders from industries that are most worried about RCEP, including steel and aluminium, copper, textile and pharmaceuticals, and has engaged think tanks and management institutes to develop a consensus in favour of signing the regional agreement.**
- Finally, giving up the chance to join the RCEP would mean that India would not just miss out on regional trade, but also lose the ability to frame the rules as well as investment standards for the grouping.
- Above all, at a time of global uncertainties and challenges to multilateralism and the international economic order, a negative message on the RCEP would undermine India's plans for economic growth.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Scoring on health

What's in the news?

Recently, the Health Index 2019 was released by NITI Aayog. This Health Index raises important question marks which shall be touched upon in the paragraphs that follow.

Editorial Analysis:

- The **Health Index 2019** released by NITI Aayog makes the important point that some States and Union Territories are doing better on health and well-being even with a lower economic output, while others are not improving upon high standards.
- As a matter of fact, some States are actually slipping in their performance.
- In the assessment during 2017-18, a few large States present a dismal picture, reflecting the low priority their governments have accorded to health and human development since the Aayog produced its first ranking for 2015-16. The disparities are stark.

A Look at the Stark Disparities:

- Populous and politically important Uttar Pradesh brings up the rear on the overall Health Index with a low score of 28.61, while the national leader, Kerala, has scored 74.01.
- Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra join Kerala as the other top performers, with the additional distinction of making incremental progress from the base year.
- It is important to note that **the NITI Aayog Index is a composite based on 23 indicators**. It covers the following:
 1. aspects as neonatal and infant mortality rates,
 2. fertility rate,
 3. low birth weight,
 4. immunisation coverage and
 5. progress in treating tuberculosis and HIV.

It is also important to note that States are assessed on improvements to administrative capability and public health infrastructure.

As a matter of fact, **for a leading State like Tamil Nadu, the order of merit in the report should serve as a sobering reminder to stop resting on its oars. Unfortunately, the State of Tamil Nadu has slipped from third to ninth rank on parameters such as low birth weight, functioning public health centres and community health centre grading.**

Looking Ahead:

- For the Health Index concept to spur States into action, public health must become part of mainstream politics.
- As a matter of fact, while the Centre has devoted greater attention to tertiary care and reduction of out-of-pocket expenses through financial risk protection initiatives such as Ayushman Bharat, **several States remain laggards when it comes to creating a primary health care system with well-equipped PHCs as the unit.**
- This was first recommended in 1946 by the **Bhore Committee**.
- The neglect of such a reliable primary care approach even after so many decades affects States such

as Bihar, where much work needs to be done to reduce infant and neonatal mortality and low birth weight, and create specialist departments at district hospitals.

- Next, special attention is needed to shore up standards of primary care in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Assam and Jharkhand, which are at the bottom of the scale, as per the NITI Aayog assessment.
- The Health Index does not capture other related dimensions, such as non-communicable diseases, infectious diseases and mental health.
- It also does not get uniformly reliable data, especially from the growing private sector.

Concluding Remarks:

In conclusion, what is clear is that State governments now have greater resources at their command under the new scheme of financial devolution, and, in partnership with the Centre, they must use the funds to transform primary health care.

Category: EDUCATION

1. 'The education system needs change, not fine-tuning'

Note to the Students:

- In a recent development, the **K. Kasturirangan Committee**, which submitted the **draft National Education Policy** to the Ministry of Human Resource Development in May, 2019 has invited comments on the document till June 30, 2019.
- The paragraphs that follow showcase the edited excerpts of Mr. Kasturirangan's views on the features of the policy.
- It is important to note that Mr. Kasturirangan is the chairman of the committee and former head of the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Editorial Analysis:

How was the committee constituted?

- The work on the present policy started in Smriti Irani's time [when she was Union Minister of HRD].
- After eliciting opinions from a cross-section of society, **the T.S.R. Subramanian committee** was set up.
- In parallel, there was a report from the MHRD. Mr. Kasturirangan was called by Prakash Javadekar, who was the [HRD] Minister then. There were some issues with the Subramanian report which the two revisited.
- The two were asked to come up with a report which did not have issues and which could withstand the next 20 or even 30 years of India's development.
- However, when the duo studied it, they felt that what was needed was not a fine-tuning of the existing policy but a re-look. So, they started with a clean slate.

While the idea of school complexes sounds good in urban and semi-urban areas, what about areas

where access to schools is a problem?

It is important to note that the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** had put forth [the idea] that within a specified distance there should be a school.

Currently, although schools have come up, there are many schools which have only six students or only one teacher.

This is not the idea of school education. As a matter of fact, there is no playground, there is no idea of a societal interface with the child.

Furthermore, it is important to note that wherever we have a cluster of schools, we can move to this concept of school complexes a little faster.

School complexes will grow fast in some places. And that will give information on how to operate in the more complex systems. One isn't talking about overnight change. As a matter of fact, one can't do that in a country with such diversity. Geographically if the schools are not easily connected, one has to provide facilities like cycles [to students].

There are several iniquities which cannot be ignored. Given this, why does the policy have just half a page on the education of Dalits and OBCs?

- At different places we have touched upon the education of underprivileged classes, including setting up special education scholarships for them and selecting teachers from amongst them for local requirement.
- One must not just read the title of Dalit or underprivileged and see the paragraph under that.
- It is also important to note that the typical problems faced by Dalit children are different from those faced by economically backward children from a different caste.
- As a matter of fact, if one brings solutions for Dalit students into the educational process, it may be a tall order for education to deal with it. This is a societal problem.
- What one has tried to do is make sure that Dalits do not suffer for want of opportunities.
- This includes access to education — one can go to nearby places and study as well as others. Second, **Dalits will get 100% scholarship.**
- Many small concessions given by the government will be retained and, if necessary, upgraded.

The policy suggests several Board exams each semester for eight semesters. Isn't the load a lot more than it is now?

- Students can take the Board exams as soon as they are thorough with a particular subject. In case they are not happy with the outcome of that exam, they can take it again in another six months.
- There is nothing sacrosanct about writing the exam at a particular time and doing well. [It is not as if] their future is ruined if they don't perform well in the exam.
- Once exams are completely digitised, the student can give the exam. And if he finds he has scored well, he has completed the exam.

- Another aspect is that as he gets more and more credits as he passes more exams, these credits can be carried forward.
- So one imagines that this system provides minimal pressure. And one does away with rote learning; it is a formative test.

Can this not be achieved within the existing system?

- The existing system has intrinsic issues.
- There are several thousand schools with merely six or eight students. Or only one teacher. What kind of satisfactory model can you develop around this for school education?
- The school exam system has to be changed.
- The exam system is difficult because youngsters are stressed by the rote learning approach. Teachers have to be retrained or new teachers have to be brought in because the pedagogy is going to be very different.
- The whole system has to undergo a change, so fine-tuning the existing system to achieve the level of aspiration projected here doesn't seem to be feasible.
- The draft policy advocates an extreme degree of centralisation.
- As a matter of fact, even though education is in the Concurrent List now, State autonomy is not really considered in this.
- States have a major responsibility. They have the school. Every State will have its regulatory body set up by the school.
- Furthermore, accreditation will be separated from regulation, but the accreditation process will lead to some aspects of regulation.
- Whereas the national frame-setting will provide the guidelines for framing the curriculum, and a pedagogy for that, **it is up to the State to decide what will be the curriculum and pedagogy.**
- Similarly, like the national accreditation authority, you have the State accreditation authority.
- This policy will enable the State to considerably innovate, bring in new ideas, and try to create dynamic changes.
- There is always a consultation process that is available with the Centre with respect to the four or five bodies which will control education.
- However, that in no way will put direct control on what is happening at the State level.

Note on Teacher Education Institutions:

- Teacher education institutes have mushroomed in the thousands.
- School teachers are going to build the youth of tomorrow.

- School teachers should come from higher education institutions.
- They should be transferred to higher education institutions, given a four-year B.Ed.
- They can be given liberal education for two years followed by areas in which they will be teaching.
- They have to be given comprehensive knowledge, learn pedagogy and communication skills. And make sure that they can frame curriculum.
- Existing Anganwadi teachers can be trained in six months. Those with two-year education degrees can be transformed in a year. And for the future you have a four-year course.
- So, within four years, one should be able to get people.

Centralisation of research in higher education:

- Centralisation and decentralisation have meaning when there is a scale in which they operate.
- In India, research is 0.69% of the GDP.
- Compare this with the U.S. where it is 2.4% or 2.5% of the GDP.
- So, centralisation has no meaning when you are talking about this kind of money.
- There is no question of any “isation”.
- Currently, if you look at the outcome in terms of papers, it is just improving because of the university support being given by the Department of Science and Technology (DST). If you look at the number of patents, it is 30,000 or 40,000 compared to 6,00,000 and 7,00,000 in the U.S. and even more in China.
- Even in this, about 70% of the patents come from NRIs.
- So, if you look at the overall scenario of industrial outcomes, social outcomes, strategic outcomes, and the kind of money that is going into this, and the number of papers, patents and such parameters, India is not at all in a happy situation.
- One of the reasons is that nearly 93% of university students go to state universities which are pathetic in terms of research quality.
- Second, the research itself, though well supported, is mostly given to institutions where there is some capability. So you get more funding for institutions like the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research or a CSIR lab, or a DRDO lab, or ISRO.
- Some of the Central universities and IITs do get some funds, but it is not sufficient.
- **We always talk about the percentage of GDP going into research. When are we going to talk about the research going into GDP?**

The Way Forward:

- There should be a [national] research foundation.

- It should be all encompassing, including science, engineering, social sciences and humanities.
- An important aspect is seed capabilities in a university system so that they can start undertaking research. Seeding can be in any area depending on what the universities' interests are and what the local demands are. There are many scientists who are retired. They can go and mentor the universities.
- They will be given a remuneration, they can research, produce papers, even take students for the first five or 10 years. The place gets operational.
- The research foundation will enable research grants from government institutions.
- Next, there are industrialists. They always say we are ready to give money, but one doesn't get any output. So, one must create a tighter system of monitoring.
- The government can help with this kind of monitoring, evaluation and mid-term correction.
- This can improve the confidence of industry. This will create a new generation of researchers who will teach the next generation of learners.
- With this nexus between teachers and learners, the university will have a different kind of atmosphere.

F. Tidbits

1. U.S.-China trade war may reduce global growth rate

- In its report, Fitch highlighted the repercussions of imposition of 25% tariffs by the U.S. on the remaining \$300 billion of imports from China.
- As per the Fitch ratings, the persistent U.S.-China trade war could have an adverse impact on global growth rate.
- It could drop off 0.4 percentage points from world GDP growth by 2020.
- The effects are expected to spill over to other trading partners not directly targeted by the tariffs.
- For China and the U.S., the tariffs would initially feed through to lower export volumes and higher import prices, with the latter raising firms' costs and reducing real wages.
- The negative growth effects from lower export demand would be magnified on upstream supplier industries and from lower incomes in the export sector.

2. 75 student satellites may fly to space as India turns 75

- Seventy-five by 75: this is the dream project that the Indian Technology Congress Association (ITCA) has conceived to celebrate the India's 75th birthday.
- Up to 75 tiny satellites built by students of Indian universities is to fly by 2022 in batches.
- It is also to be the year of Gaganyaan, the first trip of Indian astronauts to space.
- The ITCA is a technology promotion body based in Bengaluru.
- It is also in the midst of discussing launch contracts with the Indian Space Research Organisation and working out Israeli finance for its '75 Student Satellites Mission 2022'.

G. Prelims Facts

1. UN MSME Day

- The UN General Assembly in its 74th Plenary 2017 has declared 27th June as Micro, Small and

Medium-sized Enterprises Day.

- The move recognizes the importance of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in achieving sustainable development goals and in promoting innovation, creativity and sustainable work for all.
- According to the data provided by the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), formal and informal MSMEs make up over 90% of all firms and account on average for 60-70% of total employment and 50% of GDP.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Which of the following are correctly matched?

1. Kalaripayattu : Kerala
2. Silambam : Tamil Nadu
3. Huyen langlon : Assam

Choose the correct answer:

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: b

Explanation:

Kalaripayattu: Kalaripayattu also known as Kalari is an Indian martial art and fighting system that originated in Kerala and practiced by warriors of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Silambam: Silambam is a weapon-based martial art of India, more specifically from Tamil Nadu, where it originated around 1000 BCE.

Huyen langlon: Huyen langlon is a martial art from Manipur.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Saint Tukaram is known for his devotional poetry called Abhanga
2. He is a poet of Bhakti Movement from Maharashtra
3. His poetry is dedicated to Vithoba

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: d

Explanation:

Saint Tukaram was a 17th-century Hindu poet and sant of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra. He was a

part of the Varkari devotional tradition. The saint is well known for having composed Abhanga and kirtans. His poetry is dedicated to Vithoba, an avatar of lord Vishnu – the presiding deity of Pandhrapur.

Q3. Navegaon National Park is located in

- a. Goa
- b. Maharashtra
- c. Gujarat
- d. Odisha

Answer: b

Explanation:

Navegaon National Park is located in the Arjuni Morgaon subdivision of Gondia district in state of Maharashtra. This area is also known as Navegaon Bandh locally, because of the presence of the water body. Mostly tribal people reside in this area.

Q4. Which of the following is/are not an exception/s for disqualification under the anti-defection law:

1. A complete political party merging with another political party.
2. 2/3rd of the legislators of a party merging into another party.
3. A split in the political party.

Choose the correct answer:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 3 only
- d. 1 and 2 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

Exceptions under the anti-defection law:

- Under the circumstance where 2/3rd of the legislators of a party decide to merge into another party, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.
- A split in a political party won't be considered a defection if a complete political party merges with another political party.
- Any person elected as speaker or chairman could resign from his party, and rejoin the party if he demitted that post.
- The law initially permitted splitting of parties, but that has now been outlawed.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Independence of the judiciary as an institution is different from independence of judges as the fountainheads of justice. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. Explain the concept of El-Nino and its effect on the Indian Monsoon. (10Marks, 150 Words)

