

# 01 July 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### A. GS1 Related

### B. GS2 Related

#### **POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

1. [Nagaland to initiate its own version of NRC from July 10](#)
2. [Most see free legal aid as last-ditch option: report](#)

#### **HEALTH**

1. [WHO brings in norms on self-care interventions](#)

#### **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

1. [After surprise Trump-Kim meeting, n-talks to resume](#)

### C. GS3 Related

#### **ECONOMY**

1. [From baby steps to giant strides, GST gains momentum](#)

#### **ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

1. [Rhino protection force deployed in Kaziranga](#)
2. [Commercial whaling is back in Japan](#)

#### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

1. [Why nuclear when India has an 'ocean' of energy](#)

### D. GS4 Related

### E. Editorials

#### **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

1. [Among Members - On G 20 Summit](#)

#### **EDUCATION**

1. [It's time to act, not do more research - On transformation of Higher Education in India](#)

#### **ECONOMY**

1. [A thumbs down to unilateralism - On India- U.S.A trade relations](#)

### F. Tidbits

1. [Cooperative help takes tribal crafts to Amazon's global marketplace](#)

### G. Prelims Facts

### H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

### I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

## A. GS1 Related

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### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Nagaland to initiate its own version of NRC from July 10

##### Context:

A notification issued by home commissioner has said that the Nagaland government is set to prepare a list of all indigenous inhabitants of the state.

### Details:

- The State government, has directed all Deputy Commissioners (DCs) to ensure that the teams are constituted by name within a week of the publication of the notification, make the information about the teams public, and communicate to the village council chairmen, Village Development Board secretaries, ward authorities, tribal hohos, church authorities, and NGOs.
  - Hoho is the apex body of each Naga group.
- The exercise to prepare the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) would begin on July 10 and would be completed within 60 days.
- The list will be published in the respective villages and wards which will then be authenticated by village and ward authorities under the supervision of the district administration. Each list will then be signed by the team concerned as also the village and ward authorities.
- Once the process is complete, all indigenous inhabitants will be issued indigenous inhabitant certificates (IICs).
- No fresh IICs will be issued once the process is over and only newborns of indigenous inhabitants will be given the said certificate and their names updated in the RIIN.
- The exercise aims at stopping issuance of the Indigenous Inhabitant Certificate (IIC) to ineligible persons.

### National Register of Citizens:

- NRC is a document by the Government which contains the names of bona fide Indian citizens
- This process is undertaken by Registrar General of India and monitored by Supreme Court.
- In Assam, the process to identify and weed out illegal immigrants is being done by updating the NRC, which was first prepared in 1951.
- Only those people who were included in the 1951 NRC or were part of subsequent voter lists till March 1971 and their direct descendants are being included in the list.
- The final draft of the NRC released in July last year had excluded 40 lakh of the total 3.23 crore applicants. Another 1 lakh names were excluded this month after inaccuracies were found in their records.
- The final list, which is being monitored by the Supreme Court, will be published on July 31 this year.

## 2. Most see free legal aid as last-ditch option: report

### Context:

A report has revealed that people look at free legal aid as the last option.

### NALSA:

- Article 39A of the Constitution of India provides for free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society and ensures justice for all.
- Article 14 and 22(1) of the constitution also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law and a legal system which promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity to all,
- In 1987, the Legal Services Authorities (LSA) Act was enacted to give free and competent legal services to the poor.
- The Act paved the way for the constitution of National Legal Service Authority (NALSA) and other legal service institutions at the State, district and taluka level.
- The NALSA has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to monitor and evaluate implementation of legal services available under the Act.

### Background

- Last year, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) had come out with a report stating that India's per capita lawyer ratio is better than most countries in the world.
  - There are about 1.8 million lawyers in India which mean there is one lawyer for every 736 people.
  - It had also stated there are 61,593 panel lawyers in the country, which translates to just one legal aid lawyer per 18,609 population or five legal aid lawyers per 1,00,000 population.
- Free legal services under LSA Act are available to a person belonging to Schedule Tribe and Schedule Caste, woman, child, victim of human trafficking, differently abled person, industrial workman, and person in custody in a protective home and the poor.
- According to the statistics provided by NALSA, about 8.22 lakh people across India benefited through legal aid services from April 2017 to June 2018.

#### **Details:**

- First-of-its-kind pan-India research by a Professor of National Law University, Delhi (NLUD) has found that people don't have faith over the services of legal aid counsel (LAC) under the free legal aid services due to a variety of factors.
- Though the services offered by LAC are absolutely free, a majority of potential beneficiaries are disinclined towards the option of availing these services.
- The study demonstrated that beneficiaries opt for free legal aid service due to the dearth of resources to engage a private lawyer.
- They would never have approached for the legal aid services if they had resources to engage private legal practitioners," the study found. 22.6% of the beneficiaries responded that they won't opt for free legal aid services for the second time.
- The study also found that 60% of women, who were aware of the free legal aid services, chose to opt for private legal practitioner because they could have better control over their lawyer. In addition, they had no faith over the quality of services.
- 30% of beneficiaries claimed their LAC often demand money before or after every court hearing.

#### **Way forward:**

- Currently, the engagement of LAC is usually on an ad-hoc basis. Around 45% of the regulators opined that making them full time will definitely improve the level of commitment.
- The study recommended that making honorarium for a legal aided case at par with private cases, will compel LAC to not withdraw or desert aided cases in middle.
- The selection process must ensure selection and empanelment of committed lawyers.

### **Category: HEALTH**

#### **1. WHO brings in norms on self-care interventions**

##### **Context:**

The World Health Organisation has launched its first guidelines on self-care interventions for health.

##### **What are Self-care interventions?**

- According to WHO, Self-care means the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider.
- Self-care interventions bring health services to people. SELF-CARE REQUIRES:

(1) Acknowledging people as active participants in informed health decision-making (2) A holistic approach to health and well-being across the life course

(3) Respecting human rights, ethical considerations and gender equality

(4) Quality, evidence-based products and interventions

- Self care is a new approach to primary healthcare
- Access to self-care interventions improve people's autonomy. Self-care can be accessed through: Health facilities; Pharmacy; Primary care and community service; Caregivers; Shops; Digital platforms and mobile technologies; Family, friends and communities
- Self-care interventions are a complementary approach to health care that forms an important part of the health system. Self care is also a means for people who are negatively affected by gender, political, cultural and power dynamics including those who are forcibly displaced, to have access to sexual and reproductive health services, as many people are unable to make decisions around sexuality and reproduction.
- Promoting a safe and supportive enabling environment in which they can access and use health interventions when and where they choose to, improves autonomy and helps improve the health and well-being of these vulnerable and marginalized people.

#### **Details:**

- In response to an estimate that by 2035 the world will face a shortage of nearly 13 million healthcare workers and the fact that currently at least 400 million people worldwide lack access to the most essential health services, WHO has launched the guidelines for Self-care interventions.
- First volume of the guidelines focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Self-sampling for human papillomavirus (HPV) and sexually transmitted infections, self-injectable contraceptives, home-based ovulation predictor kits, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) self-testing and self-management of medical abortion have been included.

#### **Conclusion:**

- The guidelines do not replace high-quality health services.
- These self-care interventions represent a significant push towards new and greater self-efficacy, autonomy and engagement in health for self-carers and caregivers.
- The guidelines, will be expanded to include other self-care interventions, including for prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases.

### **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

#### **1. After surprise Trump-Kim meeting, n-talks to resume**

##### **Context:**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump agreed at their meeting to push forward dialogue for making a new breakthrough in the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

##### **Background:**

- North Korea has pursued nuclear and missile programmes for years in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions, and easing tensions with North Korea is one of the U.S. president's top foreign policy priorities.

- Trump and Kim met for the first time in Singapore in June last year, and agreed to improve relations and work towards the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.
- But the second summit in Hanoi broke down after the two sides failed to narrow differences between a US demand for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons and a North Korean demand for sanctions relief.

#### **Details:**

- Trump became the first sitting US president to set foot in North Korea. He met Kim in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between the two Koreas and agreed to resume stalled nuclear talks.
- The DMZ was set up after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armistice, not a truce, leaving North Korea and the United States still technically at war.
- While North Korea has not recently tested a long-range missile that could reach the U.S., last month it fired off a series of short-range missiles. Trump has brushed off the significance of those tests, even as his own national security adviser said that they violated U.N. Security Council resolutions.
- The meeting, initiated by a tweet by Trump displayed the rapport between the two, but analysts opine that they are no closer to narrowing the gap between their positions since they walked away from their summit in February in Vietnam.

## **C. GS3 Related**

### **Category: ECONOMY**

#### **1. From baby steps to giant strides, GST gains momentum**

#### **Context:**

Government along with partners from the trade and industry is celebrating the 2nd Anniversary of GST on 1st July 2019.

#### **Details:**

- The historical goods and services tax (GST) was implemented across India from July 1, 2017.
- India was not new to indirect tax levies, but consolidating Central and State levies and achieving uniformity was not easy.

#### **How did the industry benefit?**

- The industry embraced and loved the GST for harmonising taxes, elimination of cascading effect of tax, widening the scope of input tax credit and for achieving a uniform tax rate for a product or service across the country.
- Tangible benefits includes faster refunds, less interaction with tax authorities, abolition of checkposts, etc.
- There are other intangible benefits on account of GST.
  - In the past, a manufacturer in State A would lose a customer in State B if he made a CST supply.
  - To prevent the loss, the manufacturer would open a depot in order to effect a local supply in State B.
  - The depot was not a business requirement, but one of tax.
  - Under GST, a supplier can supply goods from any part of India and tax or input tax credit is no longer an arbitrage in competition.
  - The customer is now in a position to source from any supplier and the latter is in a position to



access markets across India.

- Industry gains include elimination or dismantling of structures created under the pre-GST era for tax purposes, supply-chain efficiencies, direct customer access, and a robust transparent trail for the movement of goods.
- However, there are a few concerns:
  - The industry is extremely unhappy with the massive increase in compliance requirements, frequent battles with the GST portal, wastage of man hours in dealing with technical glitches, and facing potential loss of ITC on account of supplier facing similar problems.
  - The industry is also not happy with frequent changes in law, including scenarios where the portal does not permit what the law permits.

### **How has the government benefitted?**

- Monthly revenue from GST has crossed ₹1,00,000 crore, even though the GDP growth is low and the economy is witnessing a slump.
- GST has resulted in the widening of the tax base.
- Excellent data mining has resulted in identification of tax evasion at an early stage.
- E-way bill system has brought in an effective, transparent movement trail.
- Higher tax collections even without intervention indicates compliance.
- With more and more vendors and service providers walking into GST, the formalisation of economy has taken place.
- The walk-in is voluntary and sometimes compelled by the bigger player, who prefers only registered compliant suppliers.
- The natural corollary would be the increase in direct tax collections from these new assesseees.
- Many manufacturing states had anticipated huge losses on account of GST compared to their pre-GST collections.
- This has not happened probably due to significant consumption of services in such manufacturing States.
- Unlike many other countries which faced massive inflation on account of introduction of GST, India did not face any inflation. This was probably due to an effective rate of tax policy, as well as timely course correction.
- However, there are a few concerns:
  - The government, is extremely unhappy with the fake invoice racket. These players provide a disservice to the economy and also to honest tax payers.
  - While action against fake invoice racket is welcome, the government should pursue the route of adjudication, prosecution and early conviction instead of the threat of non-bailable arrest provisions which have a potential for misuse.
  - The National Anti-Profiteering Authority had also played a role, but has outlived its objective. There was no necessity for a two-year extension.

### **How has the consumer benefitted?**

- The consumer has gained the most in GST.
- From an era of cascading taxes, which had nearly 30% of taxes on goods; dual and multiple levies on services, the consumer is now seeing massive reduction in the rate of tax for goods and services.
- For instance, In a typical restaurant, the customer is enjoying a flat 5% which is lower than the VAT rates applicable in many countries in the European Union.
- Awareness of GST among consumers is at an all-time high.
- Concerns:
  - However, the downside is tax evasion, which is now driven by consumers.
  - In the past, when a customer procured goods or services, he was least bothered about the tax rate since excise duty was invisible. The VAT rate was low and was not a significant deterrent.

- When the overall indirect tax levy was 30%, it was not reflected in the invoice, but when the rate has declined to 12% and 18%, awareness about GST makes the customer assume it is a new levy which affects his pocket, and the consumer opens the cash channel.

#### **Other Concerns:**

- GST law has turned out to be the most complex one on account of design faults and frequent tinkering.
- The distinction between goods and services manifests itself in GST in multiple segments.
- The Advance Ruling mechanism has failed since most rulings are in favour of the revenue and in some cases, against the provisions of the statute.
- The constitution of the AAR is the issue, since it is not presided by a judicial member and comprises sitting officers of the tax department.

#### **Conclusion:**

- The GST Council has played a stellar role in cooperative federalism since 35 meetings have taken place, where resolutions have been passed unanimously despite political differences.
- This kind of unanimity is unseen even in flat association meetings.
- In only two years of existence, 32 amendments to the CGST Act; 31 amendments to the CGST Rules; 87 CGST rate Notifications; 179 CGST non-rate Notifications; 90 IGST rate Notifications; 19 IGST non-rate Notifications; 101 Board Circulars; 10 Removal of Difficulty Orders; matching Notifications from 29 States, do not indicate a simple law.
- In the third year of the GST regime, addressing procedural complexities of the GST portal system, implementation concerns and making compliance easier will further accelerate ease of doing business for industry in India.

### **Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

#### **1. Rhino protection force deployed in Kaziranga**

##### **Context:**

An 82-member special protection force trained to combat poachers and understand animal behaviour has been deployed in the Kaziranga National Park (KNP).

##### **Background:**

- The rhino is killed for its horn which is considered by some people in the South East Asian countries as an aphrodisiac for both males and females.
- The horn, often smuggled through some neighbouring states of Assam, could fetch over Rs.1 crore in the international black market.
- Over the past 19 years, over 200 rhinos have been killed by the poachers in Assam, mostly in the Kaziranga National Park.

##### **Details:**

- Special Rhino Protection Force (SRPF) is basically a tiger protection force named after the rhino since the threat of poaching is more for the one-horned herbivore.
- Their job profile includes protecting the Tiger since Kaziranga is also a tiger reserve.
- The Assam government would be paying the salaries of the SRPF members and the amount would be reimbursed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, which recommended setting up of the

special force.

### **Kaziranga National Park:**

- Kaziranga National Park is a national park in the state of Assam.
- The sanctuary hosts two-thirds of the world's great one-horned rhinoceroses.
- The greater One horned Rhinos are native to Indian Subcontinent and are listed as Vulnerable in IUCN Red List.
- Kaziranga National Park has been declared a World Heritage Site for its unique natural environment.

## **2. Commercial whaling is back in Japan**

### **Context:**

Japanese fishermen have set sail to hunt whales commercially for the first time in more than three decades, following Tokyo's controversial decision to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

### **Background:**

- Introduced by the IWC in 1986 to protect the world's last remaining whales, the ban on commercial whaling allowed Japan an annual whale quota for "scientific reasons."
- Even after the International Court of Justice in 2014 declared the killing of whales in the name of science illegal, Japan continued whaling.
- Travelling as far as the North Atlantic or even to the Antarctic, home to the world's largest populations of whales, Japanese fleets killed about 500 whales last year.
- Japan announced last year that it was leaving the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and would resume commercial whaling.
- The decision had sparked global condemnation and fears for the world's whales.

### **Details:**

- With the resumption of commercial whaling, Japanese boats will not be allowed to venture further than 200 miles (321km) off the country's Pacific coast. But some environmentalists are still concerned because of the low whale stocks in Japan's coastal waters.
- The hunt will be confined to Japan's exclusive economic zone.
- Japan has long maintained that eating whale is an important part of its culture and that most species are not endangered.
- Domestic consumption of whale meat was around 200,000 tons a year in the 1960s, when it was an important source of protein in the postwar years, but has slumped to less than 5,000 tons annually in recent years, according to government data.

### **Conclusion:**

- Some conservationists say the resumption of commercial whaling will likely lead to fewer whales being killed amid the shrinking demand for its meat as the government won't be allowed to fish far beyond its waters.
- By leaving the industry to survive at the whim of market forces, Shinzo Abe has in fact initiated the end of Japanese whaling, according to the director of marine conservation for the International Fund for Animal Welfare.
- It is seen by many as a face-saving way out of whaling, the beginning of the end of Japanese whaling.



### **International Whaling Commission:**

- IWC is an international body set up under International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW).
- IWC aims at providing for proper conservation of whale stocks and facilitate the orderly development of the whaling industry.
- ICRW governs the commercial, scientific, and aboriginal subsistence whaling practices of fifty-nine member nations.
- It was signed in Washington, D.C., United States, in 1946.

## **Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

### **1. Why nuclear when India has an 'ocean' of energy**

#### **Context:**

Nuclear energy is fast becoming an idea whose time has passed, at least in India. And there is something that is waiting to take its place.

#### **Details:**

- Though the highly harmful source i.e, Nuclear Energy is regarded as saviour on certain counts, India has a better option under the seas.
- India's 6,780 MW of nuclear power plants contribute to less than 3% of the country's electricity generation, which will come down as other sources will generate more.
- Perhaps India lost its nuclear game in 1970, when it refused to sign – even if with the best of reasons – the Non Proliferation Treaty, which left the country to bootstrap itself into nuclear energy.

#### **Three-stage programme**

- In the 1950s, the legendary physicist Dr. Homi Bhabha gave the country a roadmap for the development of nuclear energy.
- In the now-famous 'three-stage nuclear programme', the roadmap laid out what needs to be done to eventually use the country's almost inexhaustible Thorium resources.
- The first stage would see the creation of a fleet of 'pressurised heavy water reactors', which use scarce Uranium to produce some Plutonium.
- The second stage would see the setting up of several 'fast breeder reactors' (FBRs). These FBRs would use a mixture of Plutonium and the reprocessed 'spent Uranium from the first stage, to produce energy and more Plutonium (hence 'breeder'), because the Uranium would transmute into Plutonium.
- Alongside, the reactors would convert some of the Thorium into Uranium-233, which can also be used to produce energy.
- After 3-4 decades of operation, the FBRs would have produced enough Plutonium for use in the 'third stage'. In this stage, Uranium-233 would be used in specially-designed reactors to produce energy and convert more Thorium into Uranium-233.

#### **Concerns:**

- Seventy years down the line, India is still stuck in the first stage.
- For the second stage, fast breeder reactors are needed.
- A Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) of 500 MW capacity, construction of which began way back in 2004, is yet to come on stream.

- The problem is about handling liquid Sodium, used as a coolant.
- If Sodium comes in contact with water it will explode; and the PFBR is being built on the humid coast of Tamil Nadu.
- The PFBR has always been a project that would go on stream next year.
- The PFBR has to come online, then more FBRs would need to be built, they should then operate for 30-40 years, and only then would begin the coveted 'Thorium cycle'!
- The 6,700 MW of plants under construction would, some day, add to the existing nuclear capacity of 6,780 MW.
- The government has sanctioned another 9,000 MW and there is no knowing when work on them will begin.
- These are the home-grown plants.
- Thanks to the famous 2005 'Indo-U.S. nuclear deal', there are plans for more projects with imported reactors, but a 2010 Indian 'nuclear liability' legislation has scared the foreigners away.
- With all this, it is difficult to see India's nuclear capacity going beyond 20,000 MW over the next two decades.

### Is nuclear energy worth it all?

- There have been three arguments in favour of nuclear energy: clean, cheap and can provide electricity 24x7 (base load).
- Clean it is, assuming that the ticklish issue of putting away the highly harmful spent fuel is taken care of.
- However, it is no longer cheap. Nuclear power is pricing itself out of the market. A nuclear power plant takes a decade to come up, and it is hard to predict where the cost will end up when it begins generation of electricity.
- Nuclear plants can provide the 'base load' — they give a steady stream of electricity day and night, just like coal or gas plants.
- Wind and solar power plants produce energy much cheaper, but their power supply is irregular.
- With gas not available and coal on its way out due to reasons of cost and global warming concerns, nuclear is sometimes regarded as the saviour.

### Shift to Ocean Energy:

- The Oceans are throbbing with energy. There are at least several sources of energy in the seas.
  - One is the bobbing motion of the waters, or ocean swells — a flat surface can be placed on the waters, with a mechanical arm attached to it, and it becomes a pump that can be used to drive water or compressed air through a turbine to produce electricity.
  - Another way is to tap into tides, which flow during one part of the day and ebb in another. Electricity can be generated by channelling the tide and place a series of turbines in its path.
  - One more way is to keep turbines on the sea bed at places where there is a current — a river within the sea.
  - Yet another way is to get the waves dash against pistons in, say, a pipe, so as to compress air at the other end.
- All these methods have been tried in pilot plants in several parts of the world—Brazil, Denmark, U.K., Korea.
- There are only two commercial plants in the world—in France and Korea—but then ocean energy has engaged the world's attention.
- India's Gujarat State Power Corporation had a tie-up with U.K.'s Atlantic Resources for a 50 MW tidal project in the Gulf of Kutch, but the project was given up after they discovered they could sell the electricity only at ₹13 a kWhr.

### Way forward:

- When technology improves and scale-effect kicks-in, ocean energy will look real friendly.
- Initially, ocean energy would also need to be incentivised, as solar was.
- Also, wind and solar now stand on their own legs and those subsidies could now be shifted to ocean energy.

## D. GS4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Among Members – On G 20 Summit

##### Context:

The 2019 G20 Summit, the fourteenth meeting of the G20 recently concluded in Osaka, Japan.

##### G 20:

- The G20 is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union (EU).
- Founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.
- Membership of the G20 consists of 19 individual countries plus the European Union.
- The G20 economies account for around 90% of the gross world product (GWP), 85% of the world's nominal GDP, 80% of world trade, two-thirds of the world population, and approximately half of the world land area.
- India is a member of G20.

##### Details:

- As a forum, the G-20 is often watched more closely for the meetings the event affords on its sidelines, than for substantive outcomes.
- The countries that make up the G-20 have pressing issues it wishes to discuss with other members on bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral levels.
  - Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the occasion of the G-20 summit at Osaka for as many as 20 such meetings, including nine bilaterals, eight pull-aside engagements, and of the Russia-India-China, Japan-U.S.-India and Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa groupings.
  - The most anticipated were President Donald Trump's meetings with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping and Mr. Modi, given the escalation in trade tensions.
  - Both ended on a cordial note, but with no breakthrough or "big deals".
- The Indian and U.S. Commerce Ministers will sit down again, as they have on at least three occasions in the past year, to try to resolve the impasse over trade issues, and the U.S. and China have called a halt to raising tariffs until they resolve issues.
- Both come as a relief to India, given the impact of those tensions on the national and global economies.

##### Issues discussed:

- Several Indian concerns were raised at the G-20 deliberations, including the need for cooperation on dealing with serious economic offenders and fugitives, as well as climate change funding, which found its way into the final declaration.
- India sent a tough message by refusing to attend the digital economy summit pushed by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as his plan for “data free flow with trust”, included in the G-20 declaration, runs counter to the Reserve Bank of India’s proposed data localisation guidelines.
- The U.S. wrote in a counter to the paragraph praising the Paris accord, while trade protectionism was not mentioned in the document.
- On issues such as ocean pollution management, gender equality and concerted efforts to fight corruption, the G-20 found consensus more easily.

### Conclusion:

- With Saudi Arabia hosting the next G-20 in 2020, followed by Italy in 2021, all eyes will soon turn to the agenda India plans to highlight when it holds the G-20 summit in 2022.
- Many global challenges, such as climate change and its impact, the balance between the needs for speed and national security with 5G networks being introduced, as well as technology-driven terrorism, will become even more critical for the grouping, and the government must articulate its line.
- India should lead the exercise in making the G-20 more effective in dealing with some of the inequities in its system.
- The G-20 is an important platform to discuss pressing issues.
- It must be ensured that it is not detracted from its original purpose of promoting sustainable growth and financial stability by grandstanding by one or two members.

### Category: EDUCATION

#### 1. It's time to act, not do more research – On transformation of Higher Education in India

The article talks about the need to focus on transforming higher education in India, and channelize the resources for implementing solutions instead of spending on drafting Educational policies.

### Details:

- The government has begun the rethink of higher education policies through the draft NEP (National Education Policy) and EQUIP (Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme).
- This is the latest, and seemingly among the most elaborate, in an endless series of official reports and programmes aimed at improving higher education in independent India.
- The Radhakrishnan Commission of 1949, the National Education Policies of 1968 and 1986, the Yashpal Committee of 2009, the National Knowledge Commission in 2007, and the draft NEP of 2019 have all basically said the same thing.
- While it is always valuable for various government committees to point to the importance of higher education for economy and society, it is not necessary to convene many experts through initiatives such as EQUIP to tell the government and the academic community what they already know.
- Everyone agrees that higher education needs significant improvement, especially as India seeks to join the ranks of the world’s premier economies.
- Perhaps the time, energy and resources that EQUIP will require can be better spent implementing the obvious.

### Inadequate allocation of funds:

- Higher education in India has been chronically underfunded — it spends less than most other BRICS

countries on higher education.

- Other related ministries and departments such as Space, Scientific and Industrial Research, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Science and Technology, Health Research and Agricultural Research have been allocated only modest support.
- The Central government, responsible mostly for the top of the academic system, does not provide sufficient resources.
- Even the Institutions of Eminence scheme falls short of requirements and is dramatically behind similar programmes in China and several European countries.
- Funding for basic research, which is largely a Central government responsibility, lags behind peer countries.
- Apart from Tata Trusts, Infosys Foundation, and Pratiksha Trust, industry provides little support.

### **Other Challenges:**

- A key goal of EQUIP and the NEP is that India must expand the percentage of young people enrolled in post-secondary education significantly.
- It is interesting to note that while the draft NEP aims at increasing the gross enrolment ratio to at least 50% by 2035, EQUIP targets doubling the gross enrolment ratio to 52% by 2024.
- At present, India's gross enrolment ratio is 25.8%, significantly behind China's 51% or much of Europe and North America, where 80% or more young people enrol in higher education.
- India's challenge is even greater because half of the population is under 25 years of age. The challenge is not only to enrol students, but to ensure that they can graduate.
- The challenge is not only to enrol students and improve graduation rates but also to ensure that they are provided with a reasonable standard of quality.
- It is universally recognised that much of Indian higher education is of relatively poor quality.
- There is too much bureaucracy at all levels, and in some places, political and other pressures are immense.
- Professors have little authority. At the same time, accountability for performance is generally lacking.
- Employers often complain that they cannot hire graduates without additional training.

### **Recommendations:**

- India requires substantial additional resources for higher education to improve quality and build a small but important world class sector.
- Massive effort is needed at both State and Central levels — and the private sector must contribute as well.
- India needs:
  - Dramatically increased funding from diverse sources, and the NEP's recommendation for a new National Research Foundation is a welcome step in this direction;
  - Significantly increased access to post-secondary education, but with careful attention to both quality and affordability, and with better rates of degree completion;
  - Longitudinal studies on student outcomes;
  - To develop "world class" research-intensive universities, so that it can compete for the best brains, produce top research, and be fully engaged in the global knowledge economy;
  - To ensure that the private higher education sector works for the public good
  - To develop a differentiated and integrated higher education system, with institutions serving manifold societal and academic needs;
- Reforms in the governance of college and universities to permit autonomy and innovation at the institutional level; and
- Better coordination between the University Grants Commission and ministries and departments involved in higher education, skill development, and research.
- The structure and governance of the higher education system needs major reform.



- India needs a differentiated academic system — institutions with different missions to serve a range of individual and societal needs.
- Some “world class” research-intensive universities are needed. Colleges and universities that focus on quality teaching and serve large numbers of students are crucial. Distance education enters the mix as well.
- The draft NEP’s recommendations for a differentiated system of research universities, teaching universities, and colleges are in tune with this. However, the ways suggested to achieve these objectives are impractical.
- The private sector is a key part of the equation. India has the largest number of students in private higher education in the world. But much of private higher education is of poor quality and commercially oriented.

### **Conclusion:**

The latest draft NEP and EQUIP have reiterated the importance of some of these points. The needs are clear and have been articulated by earlier commissions and committees. The solutions are largely obvious as well. Action is the need of the hour.

## **Category: ECONOMY**

### **1. A thumbs down to unilateralism – On India- U.S.A trade relations**

#### **Context:**

- The United States is acting in defiance of agreed rules to target India’s WTO-consistent policies.
- Tensions are high between India and the United States as the Economic relations are on a knife-edge after the U.S. took a series of unilateral actions against India’s exports.

#### **Details:**

- India recently announced retaliatory move of increasing tariffs on 28 products imported from its largest trade partner- the U.S.
- As a result of these developments, India has become the Trump administration’s most significant target after China.
- It must be taken note of, that over the past few decades, while similar complaints have been made by successive U.S. administrations, the tone and tenor of the Trump administration has distinctly increased the demands.
- The U.S. has questioned India’s trade and other related economic policies, in several instances.
- In the past, U.S. agencies — in particular, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) and the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) — have investigated India’s trade policies, the conclusions of which have been used by the administration to demand changes in policies that would benefit American businesses.
- The latest demands stem from two extensive USITC investigations which were conducted between 2013 and 2015 on India’s trade, investment, and industrial policies.
- The main message that was conveyed by these investigations was that American businesses strongly disapproved several of India’s key policies on trade and investment and that these policies had to be amended.

#### **Issues:**

- The investigations conducted by the U.S. agencies raise several issues of propriety, procedures and

substance.

- These three dimensions need to be understood well for this is the only way in which the Government of India can prepare appropriate responses to the persistent questioning by the U.S. administration of its trade and investment policies.
- The first is the issue of propriety.
  - All of India's trade-related policies (which include intellectual property rights that were investigated and questioned in the two USITC reports were done under the cover of the U.S.'s domestic laws. This is tantamount to unilateralism. The response to this should be an unequivocal "no" in this age of multilateralism, where differences on policy issues between sovereign countries must be resolved in the appropriate multilateral forums.
  - The possibilities of a stronger power using unilateral means should be eliminated.
  - It is in this spirit that the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was established as an integral part of the post-war global economic governance, which was replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995.
  - The areas that were investigated by the USITC during the two investigations were also those that are covered by the WTO.
  - Therefore, propriety and global trade rules demanded that the concerns of American businesses about India's policies had to be addressed within the WTO through consultations among the members.
  - The global community agrees that this would be the best way of preventing countries from getting into trade wars, which had pushed the global economy into the depression of the 1930s.
  - The only country disagreeing with this position is the U.S.; it seems intent on pushing its trade partners into trade wars.
- The second issue is of the Procedure of conducting investigations.
  - The procedure of conducting the investigations was deeply flawed, for it provided a platform for vested interests in the U.S. to make common cause against India's policies.
  - In these investigations, U.S. government agencies have been not only acting as the judge and the jury but also actively engaged in getting the findings of the investigations implemented.
- The third issue is of Substance:
  - The substance of the investigations touched trade-related issues that are covered by the WTO agreements.
  - Since the establishment of the WTO, India's policies have mostly been consistent with its commitments; where they have not been, other WTO members, including the U.S., have approached the dispute settlement body of the organisation to make India fall in line.
  - The fact that the U.S. is not approaching the WTO to challenge India's trade and investment policies that American businesses find detrimental to their interests implies the following: India's largest trade partner is acting in defiance of agreed rules to target India's WTO-consistent policies.
  - For instance, India's high tariffs were agreed to in the Uruguay Round negotiations in consultation with all members of the organisation. Moreover, in the period since, India has lowered tariffs on many agricultural and industrial products.
  - In contrast the U.S. continues to defend its high levels of agricultural subsidies which are used for lowering commodity prices to levels at which no other country can have access to its domestic market.
  - Thus, the U.S. does not need tariffs to protect its agriculture; it uses subsidies, instead.
  - The WTO also informs us that the U.S. also uses very high tariffs on tobacco (350%), peanut (164%) and some dairy products (118%).

### Conclusion:

- The India-U.S. discord over trade stems from a deep-seated desire of U.S. businesses to have a bigger footprint in the Indian economy, and to achieve this goal, the administration is stepping

beyond legitimate means.

- In fact, the basis of the discord lies in the way the U.S. has been targeting India's policies, disregarding the rule of law.
- Early resolution of this discord seems difficult as the U.S. has decided to undermine the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism and walk down the path of unilateralism instead.
- Under these circumstances, the Government of India would have focus on two fronts:
  - To remain engaged with its largest trade partner
  - Also engage actively with the global community to make the U.S. understand the imperatives of a rules-based trading system.

## F. Tidbits

### 1. Cooperative help takes tribal crafts to Amazon's global marketplace

- The Centre's Tribal Cooperative Marketing Federation (TRIFED) has signed an agreement to partner with the e-commerce giant's Global Selling Programme.
- From stunning bomkai, kantha and ikat saris to the geometric shapes of an embroidered Toda shawl, from intricately beaded Bhil jewellery to painstaking Dokra metalwork, the artistic riches of India's Adivasi communities will be showcased on the platform of Amazon's global marketplace.
- It is a significant step in promoting India's tribal communities beyond India's borders and expanding their opportunities for a sustainable livelihood.
- The cooperative federation was started in 1987, but for the first two decades of its existence, it bought tribal products in bulk from the market and sold them in its retail outlets.
- The next step for TRIFED is the ambitious Vandhan programme originally announced by Prime Minister a year ago, and finally ready for roll-out now.
- It aims to transform the ₹50,000 crore market for minor forest produce, ultimately putting control into the hands of Adivasi gatherers.

## G. Prelims Facts

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Betla National Park is located in:

- a. Odisha
- b. Jharkhand
- c. West Bengal
- d. Bihar

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

The Betla National Park is located in Jharkhand. The North Koyal River and its tributaries flow through the northern portion of the park, producing grasslands.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Cirrostratus clouds are High altitude clouds.

2. They are very thin and are made of ice crystals.

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

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

Cirrostratus clouds are High altitude clouds. They are high, very thin, non-convective and are composed of ice-crystals. It is difficult to detect and is capable of forming halos around the Sun resulting in refraction of the sun's rays. They are high, very thin, non-convective and are composed of ice-crystals.

**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

1. Wind Instruments are known as Sushira Vadyas.
2. Oordhwaka is an example of Sushira Vadya.

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

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

Sushira Vadyas are wind instruments. Sound is produced by blowing air into an hollow column. Flutes and reeds are examples of Sushira Vadyas. Oordhwaka is a percussion instrument i.e, Avanaddha Vadya.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. Kaziranga National Park in Assam is a World Heritage Site.
2. It hosts two thirds of the world's great one horned Rhinoceroses.
3. It is also a Tiger Reserve.

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

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

Kaziranga National Park in Assam is a World Heritage Site. The sanctuary hosts two-thirds of the world's great one-horned rhinoceroses. Kaziranga is home to the highest density of tigers among protected areas in the world, and was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2006.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. WHO's first consolidated guideline on self-care interventions for health is a step in placing people at the centre of health care, while maintaining the accountability of the health system. Analyse. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. The Indian model of GST is unique in the world and represents a paradigm of partnership between Central and State governments and between Government and industry. Elucidate. (15 Marks, 250 Words).