

15 Oct 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.GS1 Related

B.GS2 Related

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [‘FASTags will work as Aadhaar to track vehicles’](#)
2. [SC seeks reply from Centre on RTI portals](#)

HEALTH

1. [‘Cataract major cause of blindness above 50’](#)

EDUCATION

1. [Mother tongue for preschool: NCERT](#)

C.GS3 Related

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Govt. yet to decide on exempting 2-wheelers from odd-even](#)

D.GS4 Related

E. Editorials

ECONOMY

1. [Economics Nobel for Abhijit \(Economics of poverty\)](#)

DEFENCE

1. [Looking beyond the Rafale](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Deepening of Nepal-China cooperation](#)

F. Tidbits

1. [Delhi Cabinet gives nod for skills university](#)
2. [High quality fake notes back: NIA](#)
3. [Gujarat brings out new port policy](#)

G. Prelims Fact

1. [‘India’s Got Colour’ - celebrating diversity through shades of skin tones](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [‘FASTags will work as Aadhaar to track vehicles’](#)

Context:

The government has announced that **FASTags will be mandatory** for all vehicles on all National Highways from December 1, 2019.

“One Nation-One FASTag conference” had been covered in 13th October 2019 PIB Summary and Analysis. [Click Here](#) to read.

Details:

- Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways has appealed to all the States to adopt the technology so that the entire system could come under the **National Electronic Toll Collection programme** of the Ministry.
- **National Highway Authority of India** operates FASTags on **Electronic Toll Collection System**.

How does FASTag work?

- A FASTag uses **Radio Frequency Identification** technology to make **cashless** payments through a prepaid account linked to it.
- The tag is fixed to the windscreen of a vehicle and an RFID antenna in the canopy of the toll gate scans the QR code and the tag identification number, following which the boom barrier lifts to allow a vehicle to pass through it without the need for a vehicle to stop.
- A FASTag is **linked to a bank account**.
- When a vehicle passes through a toll, an SMS with date, time and place of transaction will be sent to the owner of the vehicle.
- The **master data of all transactions** will be with the **concessionaire of the toll booth** concerned, along with the **bank with which the owner has registered** the FASTag and the **National Payments Corporation of India**.

RFID:

Radio-frequency identification (**RFID**) is the use of a wireless non-contact system that uses radio-frequency electromagnetic fields to transfer data from a tag attached to an object, for the purposes of automatic identification and tracking.

Benefits of FASTags:

- FASTags facilitate **seamless travel**.
- They facilitate **quick checkout of the vehicles** from the toll lanes.
- They help in **avoiding long queues** at toll booths and hence reduce waiting time.
- Cameras at toll booths will take photos of passengers in a vehicle, which will be useful for the Ministry of Home Affairs as there will be a **record of a vehicle's movement**.
- It is likely to **reduce the nation's GDP loss** by **bringing down loss of fuel** while waiting at toll plazas.

2. SC seeks reply from Centre on RTI portals

Context:

The Supreme Court has given the Centre and 25 States a month's time to respond to a writ petition seeking a **direction to establish Right to Information (RTI) web portals across all States to enable citizens, especially those living abroad, to file RTI applications online**.

Background:

- In August, the NGO - Pravasi Legal Cell, had said that **none of the States**, except Delhi and Maharashtra, **has set up RTI portals**.
- The Central government has an online RTI portal whereby any Indian citizen, including Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), can apply for information under the RTI Act with the desired Ministry or Department under the Central government.
- An applicant can also pay the requisite fee through online payment in this portal and submit the RTI

application.

- The **Centre had requested**, via a letter dated December 13, 2013, the **various State governments to explore the feasibility of implementing online RTI portals**.
- It had even **offered to provide technical support** for this purpose through the National Informatics Centre (NIC) to the States.
- At present, only states - **Delhi and Maharashtra have the online filing facilities** of RTI applications.

Issue:

- According to the plea, the **RTI Act is a Central Act** was for all the citizens residing in India and also outside the country.
- The **Indians who live outside the country and want information from different state governments have no means to apply online for information**.
- The NRIs have to **file physically the applications** for any information they required from governments.
- The plea says "**Right to Information Act provides a legal mechanism to enforce and implement the citizen's right to information guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 21 of the Constitution of India**."
- The present system of submitting RTI applications and the corresponding reply from the concerned information officer in **physical form takes more time** which in turn **reduces the efficiency of the entire RTI mechanism** thus defeating the very purpose of the legislation.

Details:

- Under the RTI Act, **any citizen** of India may request information from a public authority which is required to **reply within 30 days**.
- **Section 7(1) of the 2005 RTI Act**, provides for **disclosure of information** if it **concerns the life or liberty of a person**.
- Such dissemination of the information would be easier sought through **an online application**.
- The provision of an **online web portal** will help the Indian citizens, including **the Non-Resident Indians by speedy dissemination of information**
- It would in turn help in achieving the aim of the RTI laws of **bringing transparency in administration**.

All the Public Authorities come under the RTI Act, making it one of the most powerful laws in the country. To know more about the Right To Information Act, [Click Here](#).

Category: HEALTH

1. 'Cataract major cause of blindness above 50'

Context:

The **summary report of the National Blindness and Visual Impairment Survey India 2015-2019** has been released by the Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh at the **13th Conference of Central Council of Health and Family Welfare**.

Details:

- The survey was conducted in **31 districts of 24 States**.
- The survey was conducted by Dr Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, All India Institute

of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, at the behest of Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

- **Cataract is the leading cause of blindness** in people above 50 years, according to the National Blindness and Visual Impairment Survey India 2015-19.
- Cataract-related surgical complications was the second-highest causable factor for blindness with 7.2 per cent cases in people above 50 years, showed the survey.
- Other causes included infectious and non-infectious corneal opacity (scarring of cornea), glaucoma and aphakia (absence of lens in the eye).
- India was the first country to launch the National Programme for Control of Blindness in 1976 to reduce blindness prevalence to 0.3 per cent by 2020.
- But, the estimated prevalence of blindness still stands at 1.99 per cent, severe visual impairment at 1.96 per cent, moderate visual impairment at 9.81 per cent and moderate-severe visual impairment at 11.77 per cent, according to the survey released on October 10, 2019.

Findings of the survey:

- **Cataract is the cause for 66.2% cases of blindness, 80.7% cases of severe visual impairment, and 70.2% cases of moderate visual impairment in the age group above 50.**
- Blindness is more pronounced among illiterate (3.23%) than literates (0.43%) and more prevalent in the rural population (2.14%) than urban (1.80%).
- **Barriers to accessing treatment** include:
 - No one to accompany [the patient]
 - Seasonal preferences
 - Financial constraints.
- **Financial constraint was found to be the biggest barrier in accessing a cataract surgery** with this being a reason for 22.1% blindness cases and **lack of awareness** was behind 18.4% cases, who did not feel any need of the surgery.
- The **World Vision Report** released by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** also pointed out that high costs involved in accessing eye care, especially, for rural populations was a major driver of visual impairment. It called for **expansion of Universal Healthcare Coverage and including eye care services in it.**
- What makes this worse for India is the fact that **approximately 93% of cases of blindness** and 96.2% visual impairment cases in this age group are avoidable. Of all the avoidable causes, more than half were treatable.
- **India has successfully met the WHO target of 25 per cent reduction from 2014-19** in visual impairment from the baseline level of 2010, the survey found.

National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI):

- National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI) was launched in the year **1976** as a **100% centrally sponsored scheme (now 60:40 in all states and 90:10 in NE States).**
- It was launched with the **goal of reducing the prevalence of blindness to 0.3% by 2020.**

Category: EDUCATION

1. Mother tongue for preschool: NCERT

Context:

NCERT's **first-ever pre-school curriculum** states that **children between the ages of three and six** years should **begin** their **educational journey in their own mother tongues**, learn through play and **not be**

subjected to tests of any kind.

Background:

- The **draft National Education Policy** has recommended that the **Right to Education Act** be **extended to students in the three years of preschool before Class I**.
- It also proposed that the NCERT develop a **curricular and pedagogical framework for early childhood education**.

Read more about the Draft National Education Policy 2019. [Click Here](#).

Details:

- The NCERT's new curriculum is aimed at all **pre-school education**, defined as the **education of 3 to 6-year-olds**, whether at anganwadis, nursery schools, kindergartens, playschools or Montessori schools.
- The aim is to **lay focus on strengthening emotional and social stability**.
- Teaching through a child's mother tongue or home language is internationally recognised as most appropriate in the early years.
- However, the challenges remain due to **language diversity in India**.
- It is said that the children need a **bilingual or multilingual environment for smooth transition**.
- NCERT added that **all children should also be exposed to sign language**.
- The guidelines emphasise that **pre-schools must avoid early formal instruction**. "Rote-based, teacher-directed learning, which is devoid of meaningful context with undue pressure on the child to perform is harmful".
- It stipulates that **children should be assessed individually** through informal and systematic observations of their play and activities.
- It has emphasised that **assessment should provide direction for learning new skills and focus on the child's strengths rather than deficits**.
- None of this is binding right now. It is flexible, but the basic principles must not be compromised.

Article 350 A:

- Article 350 A talks about the **facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at the primary stage**.
- It states that **"It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups"**.
- The **President may issue such directions to any State** as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Govt. yet to decide on exempting 2-wheelers from odd-even

Context:

- Stringent pollution control measures will be imposed across Delhi and NCR towns to fight pollution.
- The measures under "very poor" and "severe" categories of the **GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan)** will be in place.
- GRAP was notified in 2017 and it includes a **set of guidelines to be followed when air quality**

deteriorates.

GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan) has been covered in detail in **14th October 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis**. [Click Here](#) to read.

Issue:

- Delhi government continues to **work out the modalities of the scheme** such as deciding on the quantum of fine for violators as well as putting arrangements in place to hire private buses to temporarily augment the public transport infrastructure in the Capital.
- The fate of over 70 lakh two-wheelers, which constitute close to two-thirds of the Capital's vehicular population, hangs in the balance as the Delhi government continues to deliberate on whether or not to exempt them from the provisions of the **odd-even road rationing scheme**.
- As the road rationing measure returns to the Capital for the **third time**, government's decision regarding two-wheelers, which were exempt from the provisions of the scheme during its past renditions **in January and April 2016**, would have a significant impact on whether it would be able to fulfil its stated objective of improving the **Delhi's air quality**.

Details:

- Announced as part of a **seven-point 'Parali Pradushan' Action Plan**, the other aspects of the drive, which mainly **seeks to combat the detrimental effect of stubble burning in neighbouring States on Delhi's air quality**, includes related measures.
- It will consist of **mass distribution of anti-pollution masks to citizens, mechanised sweeping and water sprinkling on roads, tree plantation and special measures** to be put in place at 12 pollution hotspots in the city.

VEHICLE RATIONING SCHEME

WHAT IS DIFFERENT FROM LAST TIME:

- Private CNG-run vehicles, which were exempt from odd-even I (January 1 to January 15, 2016) and odd-even II (April 15 to April 30, 2016), will not be exempted this time
- Government yet to decide on whether or not to exempt two-wheelers this time

WHEN:
The scheme will be enforced from **November 4 to November 15** (both days inclusive)

WHAT: Enforcement of the scheme over **12 days** will allow only vehicles with even last digits on their registration number plates to ply in Delhi on even dates and those with odd last digits permitted to ply only on odd dates

FINE FOR VIOLATION: Yet to be decided



NUMBER OF PRIVATE CNG-RUN VEHICLES IN THE CITY AS PER THE DELHI GOVERNMENT:

Approximately **5 lakh**



32,46,637

TOTAL NUMBER OF FOUR-WHEELERS*



70,78,428

TOTAL NUMBER OF TWO-WHEELERS*

PROBABLE EXEMPTION LIST:

- Emergency vehicles i.e. ambulance, fire brigade, hospital, prison, hearse vehicles
- Enforcement vehicles i.e. vehicles of police, vehicles of transport department GNCTD, vehicles authorised by the Divisional Commissioner GNCTD, paramilitary forces etc
- Vehicles being used for medical emergencies (will be trust-based)
- Women only vehicles with children of age up to 12 years travelling with them
- Vehicles driven/occupied by handicapped persons
- Vehicles bearing Ministry of Defence number plates
- Vehicles which are having a pilot/escort



■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

*FIGURES AS PER ECONOMIC SURVEY OF DELHI 2018-19; SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT, ECONOMIC SURVEY OF DELHI

Conclusion:

The government is currently engaged in multi-level discussions regarding the decision on exempting two-wheelers. Several departments, including Delhi Police, have been requested to share their views on the issue.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

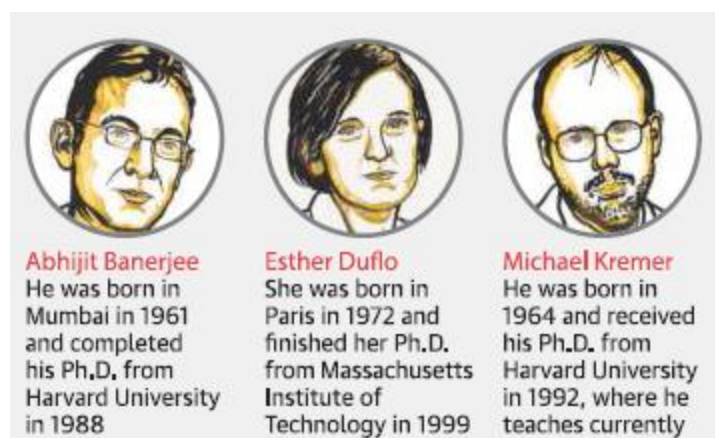
1. Economics Nobel for Abhijit (Economics of poverty)

Context

- The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has decided to award the 2019 Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, popularly called the Nobel Prize in Economics, to Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, and Michael Kremer “for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty”.

- This is only the **second time a woman has bagged the prestigious award** and it is a first for a husband-wife duo to win in this discipline — Mr. Banerjee is married to Ms. Duflo.

Educational Profiles



- He previously studied at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Presidency College, which was then affiliated with the University of Calcutta.
- He is currently the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Why have Banerjee, Duflo, and Kremer won the Nobel Prize?

- In Poor Economics, Banerjee and Duflo bemoaned how the debates on poverty “tend to be fixated on the ‘big questions’: What is the ultimate cause of poverty? How much faith should we place in free markets? Is democracy good for the poor? Does foreign aid have a role to play? And so on”.
- Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer, who have been working together since the mid-1990s, are different in that **they do not get stuck with the “big questions”. Instead, they break down a problem, study its different aspects**, conduct various experiments and, based on such “evidence”, decide what needs to be done.
- Thus, instead of looking for the silver bullet to prop up the 700 million people globally who still live in extreme poverty, they look at the **various dimensions of poverty — poor health, inadequate education**,
 - They then drill down further on each of these components.
 - Within poor health, for instance, they look at nutrition, provisioning of medicines, and vaccination, etc.
 - Within vaccinations, they try to ascertain “what works” and “why”.

How does this approach work in practice?

“The lack of a grand universal answer might sound vaguely disappointing, but in fact it is exactly what a policy maker should want to know — not that there are a million ways that the poor are trapped but that there are a few key factors that create the trap, and that alleviating those particular problems could set them free and point them toward a virtuous cycle of increasing wealth and investment,” Banerjee and Duflo said in Poor Economics.

Breaking down the poverty problem and focussing on the smaller issues such as “how best to fix diarrhoea or dengue” yielded some very surprising results.

- For instance, it is often believed that many poor countries (like **India**) **do not have the resources to adequately provide education**, and that this resource crunch is the reason why school-going

children do not learn more. But their field experiments showed that lack of resources is not the primary problem.

- In fact, studies showed that **neither providing more textbooks nor free school meals** improved learning outcomes.
- Instead, as was brought out in schools in Mumbai and Vadodara, the biggest problem is that **teaching is not sufficiently adapted to the pupils' needs**.
 - In other words, providing **teaching assistants to the weakest students** was a far more effective way of improving education in the short to medium term.
- Similarly, on tackling **teacher absenteeism**, what worked better was to employ them on **short-term contracts** (which could be extended if they showed good results) instead of having fewer students per “permanent” teacher, in order to reduce the burden on teachers and incentivise them to teach.

They then showed that these smaller questions could be best answered through carefully designed experiments among the people who are most affected. This thought process has resulted in what are called **Randomised Control Trials (RCT)**

And what is their “new experiment-based” approach?

So if one wanted to understand whether providing a **mobile vaccination van and/or a sack of grains** would incentivise villagers to vaccinate their kids, then under an **RCT**, village households would be divided into four groups.

- Group A would be provided with a mobile vaccination van facility,
- Group B would be given a sack of foodgrains,
- Group C would get both, and
- Group D would get neither.

Households would be **chosen at random to ensure there was no bias**, and that any difference in vaccination levels was essentially because of the “intervention”.

Group D is called the “control” group while others are called “treatment” groups.

Significance of such approach

- Such an experiment **would not only show whether a policy initiative works, but would also provide a measure of the difference it brings about**.
- It would also show what happens when more than one initiatives are combined.
- This would help policymakers to have the evidence before they choose a policy.

Is there a flip side to RCTs?

- The use of RCTs as the provider of “hard” and incontrovertible evidence has been questioned by many leading economists — none more so than **Angus Deaton, the winner of the Economics Nobel in 2015**, who said “randomisation does not equalise two groups”, and **warned against over-reliance on RCTs to frame policies**.
- While randomly assigning people or households makes it likely that the groups are equivalent, randomisation “cannot guarantee” it. That’s because **one group may perform differently from the other, not because of the “treatment” that it has been given, but because it has more women or more educated people in it**.
- More fundamentally, RCTs do not guarantee if something that worked in Kerala will work in Bihar, or if something that worked for a small group will also work at scale.

Other Findings

- One of the major discoveries by Dr. Banerjee and Dr. Duflo was that, in **developing countries**, there is often a stark difference between the technology and practices used by companies within the same economy and sector. That is, in developing economies, some companies use the latest technology and practices, while others in the same country and sector use outdated production methods.
- These within-sector differences are less stark in **developed economies**, they found.
- Banerjee and Duflo further argued that these **misallocations can be traced back to various market imperfections and government failures**
- Hence, a core step in understanding, and ultimately alleviating poverty is to **identify sources of the observed inefficiencies as well as policies** that could address them

Way forward

- Governments across the world, including in India, spend big money on social schemes **without the vaguest of ideas on whether their objectives have been met.**
- The **Field-Work Based Approach** that these economists have perfected has revolutionized the field of development economics and made it **more relevant in policymaking.**
- The government would do well to **borrow from the research of these laureates to understand the impact of its several schemes**, and where necessary, tweak them to derive maximum benefit for the thousands of crores of rupees that it spends.

Category: DEFENCE

1. Looking beyond the Rafale

Context

- In October 2019, the first Rafale fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF) was handed over to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in France.
- This milestone is the latest in a series of much-needed yet perennially delayed steps to bolster the IAF's combat capabilities.

What was the need of Rafale for India?

- The IAF has historically been one of the best-equipped forces in the region, but has seen its advantage, particularly quantitative, against China and Pakistan narrow dramatically over the past two-odd decades.
- The IAF is today faced with the **twin tasks of having to acquire technological superiority** over its two adversaries, as well as mustering **enough aircraft to head off any collusive misadventures.**
- So to withstand the pressure from Pakistan and China in case of breakout of war and to increase the number of Jets in operation this was a necessity.

Origin of Rafale

- Rafale is a French word meaning "gust of wind" and is a **French-origin Delta winged, twin-engine multirole fighter aircraft** manufactured and designed by Dassault Aviation.
- Rafale is a **Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA)** that is said to boost India's air dominance exponentially, currently safeguarded by fighter jets like Russia made Sukhoi Su-30MKI and MiG 29, along with French Mirage-2000 and indigenously built HAL Tejas
- The initial bidders were Lockheed Martin's F-16s, Boeing's F/A-18s, Eurofighter Typhoon, Russia's MiG-35, Sweden's Saab's Gripen and Dassault's Rafale.

- All aircraft were tested by the IAF and after careful analysis on the bids, two of them — Eurofighter and Rafale — were shortlisted.
- Dassault bagged the contract to provide 126 fighter jets as it was the lowest bidder and the aircraft was said to be easy to maintain. After Rafale won the contract, the Indian side and Dassault started negotiations in 2012.

Specifications

- The Rafale is a modern fighter jet known for its agility, speed, weapon holding capacity and attack capability. The Dassault Rafale has a **delta wing design and is capable of g-forces** as high as 11g (in case of emergency). The Rafale is available in both single and dual seating cabin (India ordered 28 single and 8 dual seater Rafale).
- The Rafale is powered by two SNECMA M88 engines, each capable of providing up to 50 kilonewtons (11,000 pounds-force) of dry thrust and 75 kN (17,000 pounds-force) with afterburners. The engines push the Rafale to attain a high speed of 1.8 Mach (1912 kmph) and a range of more than 3700 km with 3 drop tanks.
- Dassault has also loaded the Rafale with a Martin-Baker Mark 16F **"zero-zero" ejection seat**, capable of operation at zero speed and zero altitude.
- In terms of weapons, the Rafale can be equipped with air-to-air missiles, air-to-ground missiles, and air-to-surface missiles along with Nuclear weapons. For avionics, the Rafale is also equipped with AESA radar, SPECTRA Electronic Warfare System and IRST System.
- The Rafale jets will come with various India-specific modifications, including Israeli helmet-mounted displays, radar warning receivers, low band jammers, 10-hour flight data recording, infra-red search and tracking systems among others.
- The Indian government is paying top dollar to Dassault to not only modify and certify the aircraft to an exacting specification but also to **stand by its reliability in service — something that has never been done with a fighter aircraft in Indian service to date.**

Countries that are operating Rafale

- The French Air Force first operational Rafale squadron, EC 1/7 "Provence", was stationed at Saint-Dizier airbase in 2006.
- Along with the French Military including Air Force and Navy, countries like **Egypt and Qatar** are the current operators of the Rafale MMRCAs.

Where will they be deployed?

- The aircraft is capable of carrying a range of potent weapons and missiles and the first squadron of the aircraft will be positioned at **Ambala air force station**, considered one of the most strategically located bases of the IAF. The Indo-Pak border is around 220 km from there.
- The second squadron of Rafale will be stationed at **Hasimara base in West Bengal**.

Key Challenges

- Unfortunately, air power is an expensive business, and in a scenario **where manpower and running costs consume the lion's share of the budget**, the principal impediment to a comprehensive renewal of the IAF is a financial one.
- As such, lower capital costs and lower sustainment costs have to go hand in hand — it is **simply not enough to argue that expensive western aircraft make up for their high upfront costs over lifetime sustainment.**
- Enter the **indigenous option — HAL's Tejas Light Combat Aircraft**. Domestically produced and paid for mostly in rupees, it is not only fiscally attractive but also certainly good enough to replace the IAF's ageing MiG-21 and MiG-27 fleet as it stands.

- However, non-compliance with a 1980s Air Staff Requirement and low production rates continue to raise questions about the type's future.
- As reported by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in May 2015, the Tejas Mark-I has over **53 shortfalls that reduce its operational capability**.
- Tejas failed to meet operational requirements in various areas including the power to weight ratio, sustained turning rate, maximum speeds at low altitudes, AoA range, and weapon delivery profiles.
- Notwithstanding these concerns, the **IAF has committed to a large number of an upgraded evolution of the type incorporating a range of modern improvements** such as an active array radar as well as fixes to problems identified early on, such as lack of a self-protection jammer.
 - If this variant can be delivered cheaply and quickly, it will arrest the dramatic hollowing out of the IAF that is anticipated to take place around 2024-25, by which time some 100 aircraft could be withdrawn from service.

Budgetary support

- In the middle of the French import and the domestic LCA sits a fledgling tender for a third type of fighter — a **foreign design to be made in India under the controversial Chapter 7 of the 2016 Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)**.
- Where the **budgetary support for a programme of 114 modern fighters**, and indeed the ability of the country to establish and **sustain two fighter manufacturers, will come from is not clear**.
- Defence budgets have remained effectively flat for a long time, and with the **economy flagging, an increase in capital outlay is not likely**.
- Procurement funding will also necessarily have to compete with **funding for research and development** for upcoming domestic projects such as the redesigned LCA Mk.2 and fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).
- Finally, even if all near-term procurements proceed to plan, there is still a 'ramp up' period to contend with — the **training of air and ground crew, building of infrastructure and actually operationalising** new types will pose their own challenges that will slow the effective rate of force accretion.

In the neighbourhood

Meanwhile, the **Pakistan Air Force (PAF)** and **China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF)** are not standing still.

- The **PAF** is saddled with a number of legacy issues that are similar to the IAF. However, with the **Sino-Pak JF-17** available cheaply and in numbers, along with access to a wide range of Chinese weaponry developed for the type, Pakistan is well placed to recapitalise a significant proportion of its air force with a relatively modern aircraft.
 - Development and production of the **JF-17 can be extended to replace the PAF's Mirage fleet** at short notice as well, if so required. And as **China ramps up its fifth-generation aircraft programmes** and unit costs drop, there is little doubt these platforms will also find their way to Pakistan.
- The **PLAAF's** growth has been well documented. And **in addition to a fourth and fifth generation** re-equipment programme, the service benefits from a large number of force multipliers, including tankers, surveillance and control aircraft, and long-range bombers.
 - While primarily oriented toward taking on the U.S. military in the Pacific and beyond, China's formidable **aerial arsenal cannot be ignored in New Delhi**.

Conclusion

- So as the IAF gets ready to welcome its new acquisitions, it should be clear about the challenges it

faces at a time when India's strategic and operational environment is undergoing a dramatic transformation.

- Ad hocism should give way to strategic thinking if these challenges are to be effectively met.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Deepening of Nepal-China cooperation

Context

- As Xi Jinping flew from Chennai to Kathmandu, he became the first Chinese President to visit Nepal in 23 years.
- He rounded up the trip by signing as many as 20 agreements with Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, including the building of a road tunnel and a feasibility study of a railway link to Tibet.

What should India look at?

- President Xi Jinping's brief but significant visit to Kathmandu was defined by the determination to accelerate the development of an ambitious **Trans-Himalayan Corridor** between China's Tibet and Nepal.
- While Delhi will debate the issues generated by China Nepal Economic Corridor for some time to come, it also needs to pay attention to an equally important dimension of **China-Nepal relationship** — **the deepening of bilateral security cooperation**.

The point to be noted is that there is a lot of difference between Defence Diplomacy and Security Diplomacy.

Defence Diplomacy

- **Militaries** are traditionally associated with conflict and use of force whereas **Diplomacy** is defined as the art of conducting relationships for gain without conflict. In a lighter vein, military diplomacy like military intelligence may be construed to be an oxymoron.
- In the 18th and 19th centuries the coercive use of militaries (and navies) by colonial powers led to coining of the term '**Gunboat Diplomacy**' which refers to the **pursuit of foreign policy objectives with the aid of conspicuous displays of military power**, implying or constituting a direct threat of warfare.
- As a corollary, there have been numerous instances of peaceful use of military to further a nation's international relations. This peaceful use of the military as a tool of national diplomacy led to the use of the term '**Military Diplomacy**'.
 - Thus 'military diplomacy' could be defined as use of (peaceful) military in diplomacy, as a tool of national foreign policy.
- The **Indian Ministry of Defence** defines Defence Diplomacy as exchange of high-level defence related visits, dialogue on security challenges and port calls; and defence cooperation as those activities covered by training exchanges, combined exercises; sourcing, development, production and marketing of defence equipment and other forms of cooperation.

Security Diplomacy

- This includes **exchange of information between police forces, intelligence agencies, border management organisations and law-enforcement authorities** of the two nations.
- Security diplomacy has emerged as a major element of China's international relations in all geographies.

- The globalisation and digitalisation of the Chinese economy, the growing movement of people across Chinese borders and expanding capital and human assets beyond borders have made law enforcement cooperation with the rest of the world a major priority for China.
- The range of issues involved in security diplomacy include **tracking down fugitives from Beijing's anti-corruption campaign, criminals seeking safe haven in other countries, countering terrorism, preventing drug trafficking**, assisting Chinese citizens and tourists abroad, and reining in political dissidents active in other countries.
- The importance China attaches to security diplomacy is reflected in the fact that **four of the 20 documents signed in Kathmandu relate to law enforcement**.
 - These agreements touched on border management, supply of border security equipment, mutual legal assistance, and collaboration between Nepal's Attorney General and China's "Supreme People's Procurator" (or the prosecutor general).

Why Security Diplomacy matters for China?

- **Nepal's northern border with China is entirely with Tibet**, and Beijing sees security cooperation with Kathmandu as critical in controlling the movement of people across this frontier.
 - Nepal, which was **once hospitable to Tibetan refugees fleeing China, now extends full support to Beijing's law enforcement agencies** in tracking and deporting them. Nepal's security cooperation has become intense ever since trouble broke out in Tibet in the early years of this century
 - Growing bonhomie between China and Nepal's political leaders has provided a more permissive environment for this cooperation on Tibet.
 - In recent years, Chinese security agencies have apparently gained effective access to border areas on the Nepali side in dealing with Tibetan exiles.

How has this helped Nepal?

- As the joint statement issued after Xi's talks in Kathmandu put it, the two sides agreed to "**respect and accommodate each other's concerns and core interests**".
- **Nepal** "reiterated its firm commitment to One-China policy" and acknowledged that Tibetan matters "are China's internal affairs".
 - Kathmandu also promised not to allow "any anti-China activities on its soil".
 - The statement also signalled satisfaction at the signing of the "Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and expressed hope for an early conclusion of the Treaty on Extradition."
- **China**, in turn, declared, its firm support to Nepal in upholding the **country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity**, and its firm support and respect to Nepal's social system and development path, independently chosen in the light of Nepal's national conditions.
 - China, in turn, has promised to **enhance the capacities of Nepal's law enforcement agencies**.

Conclusion

- Massive modernisation of its internal administrative structures, significant investments in new technologies, and an effective integration of law enforcement into **China's foreign policy have transformed China's pursuit of security diplomacy**.
- It is by no means limited to neighbours and is now spread across all geographies — **from developed countries** in North America and Europe to the **developing world** in Asia and Africa.
- China is also participating in the **development of new international rules on law enforcement**, shaping the discourse on issues at hand, and seeking leadership positions in multilateral organisations dealing with law enforcement.
- Like the other great powers that preceded it, **China sees security diplomacy and law enforcement**

cooperation as important tools of statecraft.

Source: Indian Express

F. Tidbits

1. Delhi Cabinet gives nod for skills university

- Delhi Cabinet has cleared a proposal to start a **Delhi Skills and Entrepreneurial University**.
- The concept of the university, came up as the Delhi government found that **students come out of the formal education system** with a BA, B.Sc or MA degree **and do not find jobs**.
- The aim of the university would be to focus on **imparting the skills and knowledge to the youth that will equip them to find a job**.
- University will focus on **making the students employable**.
- All existing Industrial Training Institutes and Polytechnic Institutes and skill centres, will be merged into this university and it would have collaborations with many foreign countries and universities as well as industry associations and companies.
- The most important feature of the university would be **flexibility** as the **market requirements always keep changing**.

2. High quality fake notes back: NIA

- The **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** has said **high-quality fake currency notes** have **resurfaced**, with **Pakistan** being the **main source**.
- One of the reasons cited by the Government in 2016, when it scrapped the 500 and Rs. 1,000 currency notes, was to **wipe out fake currency notes in circulation**.
- The circulation of high quality **fake Indian currency notes (FICN)** is one of the **six major emerging challenges cited by the NIA**.
- The others listed by the agency are increase in **Khalistani activities**, **collection of evidence from cyberspace and capacity enhancement of cyber forensic labs**.
- High-quality notes are being pushed through the **western border and Nepal**.
- **Bangladesh** has emerged as the source of **low-quality FICNs**.
- The NIA is the nodal agency for FICN related cases and has so far investigated 48 such cases, of which 13 ended in conviction.

3. Gujarat brings out new port policy

- The Gujarat government has revised its **port policy** brought out in **1995** and **removed restrictions on 33 private jetties, allowing them to handle third party cargo**.
- The **New Port Policy** has been unveiled in a bid to **boost infrastructure and attract investment in the port and logistics sector**.
- Gujarat has a **coastline of about 1,600 km**. It has **four private ports** along the coastline and **33 captive jetties**, which handle about 45% of cargos, while private ports handle about 46% of total cargos handled by **Gujarat Maritime Board**.
- The **new policy allows the captive jetties to be full-fledged commercial ports**.
- Emphasis is given to **utilise the in-place capacity of captive jetties which are underutilised**.
- As per the new policy, **existing captive jetty holders will be permitted to handle third party cargo more than 50% of the total cargo** on their captive jetty by paying landing and shipping fees.
- Moreover, the jetty holders will also be allowed to **bring in additional investment for augmenting cargo handling facility and back up areas**.
- **Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB)**, a **nodal agency and port sector regulator in the State**, is aiming at attracting approximately Rs. 4,000 crore of new investments in port-related infrastructure

G. Prelims Facts

1. 'India's Got Colour' - celebrating diversity through shades of skin tones

- UNESCO hosted the launch of the **"India's Got Colour"** campaign in New Delhi, followed by a panel discussion on the issue of colour bias.
- The campaign manages to **bring out the deep-rooted colour bias** and the need to **embrace all skin tones, celebrating the diversity that exists in India**
- The main objective of the campaign is to **spark a conversation around colourism in India**.
- **UNESCO's mandate** includes the **fight against racism and discrimination** anytime, anywhere.
- Standing up against racial discrimination is a key component of UNESCO's work aiming to build peace in the minds of men and women, through education for tolerance, and the rejection of racist stereotypes in our societies or in the media.
- People have joined hands to establish a clear pathway towards peaceful and sustainable societies by endorsing the **17 Sustainable Development Goals**.
- **SDG10 aims to reduce inequalities and its target 10.2 aspires to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status by 2030.**

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to "Red Notice":

1. It is an international arrest warrant issued by the INTERPOL General Secretariat at the request of a member country or an international tribunal.
2. It is a request for law enforcement worldwide in order to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition.

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: b

Explanation:

Red notice is issued by the INTERPOL General Secretariat to seek the arrest or provisional arrest of wanted criminals, with the intention of extradition of the culprits. It is a request to locate and provisionally arrest an individual who is convicted in a criminal case. But just issue of red notice does not mean the person is guilty; he should be proven guilty by the court. It is issued by the General Secretariat at the request of a member country or an international tribunal based on a valid national arrest warrant. A Red Notice is not an International arrest warrant.

Q2. Project "Beehive" is:

- a. It is a project of the Army's Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) connecting all its workshops to an integrated smart network with real-time data analytics capabilities.

- b. It is a project to promote bee keeping under the Mission for Integrated Horticulture (MIDH).
- c. It is a technological research and development centre of Kerala Police Department conceived as a cyber-centre of excellence in cyber security.
- d. It is a project launched for promotion and development of handicrafts sector under National Handicraft Development Programme (NHDP).

Answer: a

Explanation:

The program code named 'Project Beehive' is a centralised and automated system based in Delhi under the army's Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) corps. It will be connected to each of the 2,000 workshops being run by the EME. It is aimed at integrating smart network with real-time data analytics capabilities.

Q3. Which of the following are present within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve?

1. Bandipur National Park
2. Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary
3. Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary
4. Periyar National Park
5. Nagarhole National Park

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- b. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c. 1, 2, 4 and 5 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: a

Explanation:

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was the first biosphere reserve in India established in the year 1986. The Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Mukurthi National Park and Silent Valley are the protected areas present within this reserve.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. A typhoon is a mature tropical cyclone that develops in the Northwestern Pacific Basin
2. Northwestern Pacific Basin is the most active tropical cyclone basin on Earth.
3. Typhoons, hurricanes and cyclones are all tropical cyclones, the only difference being – location of the storm.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

A typhoon is a mature tropical cyclone that develops between 180° and 100°E in the Northern Hemisphere. This region is referred to as the Northwestern Pacific Basin and is the most active tropical cyclone basin on Earth. This region accounts for nearly one-third of the world's annual tropical cyclones. Typhoons, hurricanes and cyclones are the same (all are tropical cyclones); the only difference is the storm's location. Typhoons develop in the northwestern Pacific, hurricanes develop in the North Atlantic, the northeastern Pacific, the Caribbean Sea or the Gulf of Mexico, and cyclones develop in the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea, both in the northern Indian Ocean.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Explain how the experiment-based research that won the Nobel Prize in Economics 2019 would help in reducing global poverty? What is its significance to the Governments world over? (15 Marks, 250 Words).
2. The IAF has historically been one of the best-equipped forces in the region, but has seen its, quantitative advantage, against China and Pakistan narrow dramatically over the past two-odd decades. Comment on the steps taken by the government to address this concern. (15 Marks, 250 Words)