

24 Feb 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. No country is doing enough to protect children's health, finds study

Context

- The report titled 'A Future for the World's Children' was released.
- It is a report on child health and well-being by an independent WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission.
 - It had more than 40 child and adolescent health experts from around the world who worked on the report.

Details

- According to the report, no single country is adequately protecting children's health, their environment and their future.
- It says that the health and future of every child and adolescent worldwide is under immediate threat from ecological degradation, climate change and exploitative marketing practices that push heavily processed fast food, sugary drinks, alcohol and tobacco at them.
- According to the report, while the poorest countries need to do more to support their children's ability to live healthy lives, excessive carbon emissions — disproportionately from wealthier countries — threaten the future of all children.
- If global warming exceeds 4°C by 2100 in line with current projections, this would lead to devastating health consequences for children, due to rising ocean levels, heatwaves, proliferation of diseases like malaria and dengue and malnutrition.

Stats

- The report says globally, the number of children and adolescents who are obese has increased from 11 million in 1975 to 124 million in 2016 — an 11-fold increase.

Global Picture

- The index shows that children in Norway, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands have the best chance at survival and well-being.
- Children in the Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, Niger and Mali face the worst odds.
- The only countries on track to beat the CO2 emission per capita targets by 2030, while also performing fairly (within the top 70) on child flourishing measures are Albania, Armenia, Grenada, Jordan, Moldova, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uruguay and Vietnam.

On India

- In the report assessing the capacity of 180 countries, India stands 77th (**sustainability index**) and is at the 131st position on a ranking that measures the **best chance at survival and well-being for children**.
- The report says although India has improved in health and sanitation, it has to **increase its spending on health**.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. Waiting to exhale

Context

- Economic effects of the [coronavirus](#).

Details

India is dependent on China for:

- The import of finished goods for re-distribution.

- Raw materials for production purposes.
- The import of spare parts used in assembling goods.

Supply-Chains: India's Import Dependence on China

Commodity/product	Import dependence	China's share in imports	Indian sectors likely to be affected	Risk assessment
APIs	High	High	Pharmaceuticals	Moderate: Indian players have around one to two months of API inventory available and have in the past diversified away from China.
Antibiotics	Moderate	Very high	Pharmaceuticals	
Electronic goods	High	High	Capital goods, telecom, electronics	Moderate: Various critical components used in a vast array of industries are largely supplied by Chinese vendors.
Capital goods	Moderate	Moderate		
Fertilizers	Moderate	Moderate	Fertilizers, agro-commodities	Moderate: Although the share in overall fertilizer imports remains limited, yet 77% of India's total phosphatic and potassium based fertilizers are imported from China. China accounts for 30% of world's phosphatic fertilizer production.
Auto & auto components	Overall: Low Electrical & Engine Components: High	Moderate	Auto	High: Certain engine components and electrical components used in automobiles are imported from China. In certain cases, Chinese supplies account for over 70% of the total demand. The recent closure of Hyundai's manufacturing unit in Korea is a testament to the importance of China in the auto industry's supply chain.
Acrylic & knitted fabrics	Moderate	Moderate	Textiles	Moderate: Indian textile players have also gradually diversified their sources of procurement. However, various players, especially small and medium enterprises remain highly dependent on Chinese imports for sourcing fabrics.

Note: Definitions – Very High: above 75%; High: 50%-75%; Moderate: 25%-50%; Low: below 25%
Source: Ind-Ra, International Trade Centre

To read about the article: Check

[CNA dated Jan 31, 2020](#)

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Highway threatens tiger territory in Arunachal Pradesh

Context

- The State Government of Arunachal Pradesh intends to build a highway through the 862 sq km Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR) in East Kameng district.
- The Government had in the past built a highway through the Namdapha National Park.

Details

- The project is named the East-West Industrial Corridor which is a proposed elevated corridor at the tiger reserve, to be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs.2,550 crore.
- The highway aims to connect Bhairabhunda in West Kameng district and Manmao in Changlang district along Arunachal Pradesh's border with Assam.

- The argument over an elevated corridor at the PTR was that it can **ensure the free movement of wild animals**.
- The state government felt the project would **enhance connectivity and develop the state's foothill areas into economic and industrial zones**.

Issue Area

- Trees may have to be felled and pillars erected from the ground. Petrol, diesel and other materials will be transported, leading to loss of natural habitat.
- This corridor will be a threat to the adjoining Nameri Tiger Reserve in Assam too.

What should the Govt. do?

- The Government, while building such a mega project, should consult renowned conservation organizations in the area and also bring all stakeholders who will be impacted by the project on to the negotiating table.

Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR)

- It lies in the foothills of the Eastern Himalaya in the East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It falls within the Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot.
- Pakke is also the only Hornbill sanctuary in India.
- The vegetation is predominantly tropical semi-evergreen forest.
- What makes PTR special are the brilliant efforts of the Forest Department and local communities like that of the Nyishi Tribe who inhabit the area around the park to protect the wildlife here.

2. Rushikulya rookery all set to welcome olive ridleys

- The olive ridley turtle is named for the generally greenish color of its skin and shell or carapace.
- They are **the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles** found in the world, inhabiting warm waters of the **Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans**.
- It is closely related to the Kemp's ridley.
- **IUCN: Vulnerable**

Egg Laying

- These turtles are best known for their unique mass nesting called **Arribada**, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- They lay their eggs in conical nests about one and a half feet deep which they laboriously dig with their hind flippers.
- The **coast of Odisha in India is the largest mass nesting site for the Olive-ridley**, followed by the coasts of Mexico and Costa Rica.
- An Olive Ridley usually lays about 120 to 150 eggs from which hatchlings emerge after about 45 to 60 days.
 - It is estimated that approximately 1 hatchling survives to reach adulthood for every 1000 hatchlings that enter the sea waters. This may also be the reason why arribadas happen and a single female can lay 80 to 120 eggs and sometimes even twice in a season; to increase the hatchlings' survival rate.
- But not all eggs remain intact as predators devour it. Besides, eggs are also washed away by sea waves during high tide.

Threats

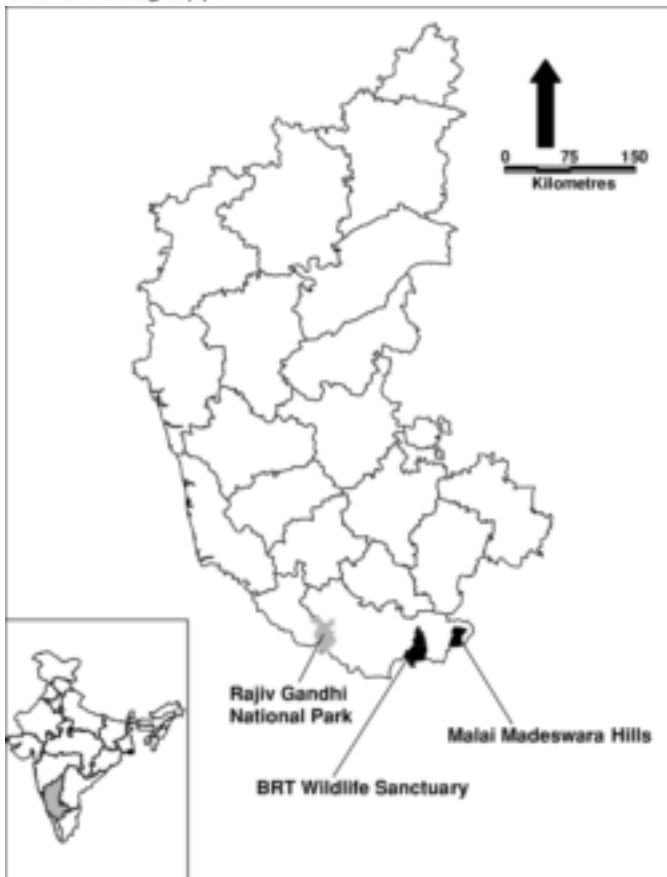
- They get entangled in the nets for a prolonged period and die of asphyxiation.
- The turtles also perish in large numbers after getting hit by the fast-moving propeller of the fishing trawlers.
- They are still extensively poached for their meat, shell and leather, and their eggs.

Steps to protect Olive Ridley turtles

- To provide security to mother turtles as well as the eggs from human and predator intervention, the forest department is erecting an over 5-km-long fence of metal net from Gokharkuda to Bateswar.
- The forest officials have already completed two to three rounds of awareness drive at all villages near the rookery.
- Debris and plastic waste, like pieces of fishing net, are being removed with the help of locals. There will be regular monitoring of the beach.
- The department has set up 11 onshore camps. Personnel at these camps regularly document beach conditions, inform about the debris deposited by the sea, prevent the entry of predators like stray dogs and search for turtle carcasses.
- The Odisha Government has made it mandatory for trawls to use **Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs)**, a net specially designed with an exit cover which allows the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.

3. Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is a protected Wildlife sanctuary in the Eastern Ghats and is located in the state of Karnataka.
- The predominant forest type of the sanctuary is dry and moist deciduous forests.
- The sanctuary is contiguous with both BRT Tiger Reserve on the western side and Satyamangalam Reserve in Tamil Nadu on the southern side.



Context

- M.M. Wildlife Sanctuary will be the new tiger reserve after approval from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

Why is it being granted the tiger reserve status?

- It is because this is a unique geographical zone that acts as a bridge between the Western and Eastern Ghats.

Details

- Once notified, Chamarajanagar district will have the rare distinction in the country of **harbouring three tiger reserves**.
 - It already has Bandipur and Biligiri Ranganatha Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve within its territorial limits.
- Karnataka currently has 5 Tiger Reserves namely, Bandipur, Bhadra, Nagarahole, Dandeli-Anshi and BRT Tiger Reserves.
- The sanctuary will be renamed as Malai Mahadeshwara Hill Tiger Reserve (MMH TR) with a core area of 670.95 sq km spread across Malai Mahadeshwara Reserve Forest, Hanur Reserve Forest and Yediyarahalli Reserve Forest. The buffer will be spread over 235.19 sq km.

Measures that will be taken for their protection

- There are 39 anti-poaching camps in MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary and the plan is to double their number once it is elevated to the status of a tiger reserve.
- Implementation of strict wildlife management and protection measures will enhance the landscape value in increasing the tiger densities.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. Limits of funding: on private sector research funding

Introduction

- The architects of India believed that for India to prosper, investment in science and technology was essential. To provide wings to its future aspirations the government invested heavily in atomic energy, space sector and IIT's. During this period the investment was largely from the Govt. with limited participation from the private sector.
- Publicly-funded research was encouraged to reinvent the wheel and customise technology to Indian realities, whereas private companies and industrial firms have rarely been incentivised to develop their own intellectual property.
- It was only in the 2000s the Govt. decided on persuading the private sector to invest more in R&D.

Stats

- Public institutions contribute the lion's share of R&D investment.
- In 2004-05, the private sector accounted for 28% of research spend; it was 40% in 2016-17.
- In most advanced economies, private R&D accounts for the bulk of investment in R&D.
- Moreover, relative to its income, India underspends on R&D compared to what the U.S. and China did when it had income levels comparable to India's now.

Boost to R&D

- The Department of Science and Technology is mooted a fund that will match the private contributions in R&D.
 - The idea is to pool funds from a group of companies willing to invest in fundamental research, such as quantum computers or artificial intelligence, and whatever is invested government will match that.
 - A ₹40-crore target is on the anvil, Indian firms and foreign companies with Indian subsidiaries — would fund scientists in key academic institutions.

Examples of private participation in the past

- This is not the first time that the government has tried to get private sector money into R&D.
- Steps like 'Startup India' and '[Make in India](#)' were initiated by the government.
- These were attempts to have venture capitalists and government departments involved in scientific research, to pool money and invest in technology start-ups.
- But, unfortunately, this has not resulted in investment in creating intellectual property.

Concerns

- Too much of India's research investment is expended on a **small pool of scientists in a limited number of institutions**.
- The **private sector has an extremely limited capacity to absorb scientists** and a limited risk-appetite to invest in futuristic technology.
- Private research funding is also boosted more by partnerships among companies rather than by centrally-funded research programmes. While private funding is increasing, it **still has not reached a level where major central funding can make a significant impact**.
- Many CSIR laboratories have had a long history of collaborating with companies to develop and transfer technology to industry, but here too, there are restrictions on how intellectual property and licence fees can be shared.

Way forward

- There is a need for greater participation and cooperation at smaller levels among companies and government.

Also read [CNA](#) dated [Jan 30, 2020](#)

Category: POLITY

1. Batting for the downtrodden

Context

- The [Supreme Court](#) has recently ruled that **quotas and reservations for promotions** for government jobs are not a fundamental right.
- The apex court ruled that it was the **discretion of the governments, either at the state or central level, to grant reservation in promotions**.

What does the Constitution say on reservations?

- **Article 14** of the Constitution guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws to everyone.
- **Article 15(1)** generally prohibits any discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, caste, sex or place of birth.
- Similarly, **Article 16(1) and 16(2)** assure citizens equality of opportunity in employment or appointment to any government office.
- However, **Articles 15(4) and 16(4)** state that these equality provisions do not prevent the government from making special provisions in matters of admission to educational institutions or jobs in favour of backward classes, particularly the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- Article 16(4A) was introduced through the Constitution (Seventy-seventh Amendment) Act.
 - Article 16(4A) allowed the **State to provide reservations to an SC/ST in matters of promotion**, as long as the State believes that the SC/ST is not adequately represented in government services.

What do the precedents say?

- In 1962, in the **R. Balaji v. State of Mysore** case, the court had ruled that Article 15(4) is an “enabling provision”, meaning that “**it does not impose an obligation**, but merely leaves it to the discretion of the appropriate government to take suitable action, if necessary”.

- The position went on to be reiterated in several other decisions, including the nine-judge bench ruling in **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)** and the five-judge bench decision in **M Nagaraj v. Union of India (2006)**.

How did the case reach the Supreme Court?

- The controversy in the current case pertained to **reservations to SCs and STs in promotions** for the post of assistant engineer (Civil) in the Uttarakhand government's Public Works Department.
- The **reservation was initially provided** for under the **Uttar Pradesh Public Services (Reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes) Act, 1994**.
 - Section 3(7) of this Act stated that the government orders **providing for reservations in promotions**, which were in force at the time of commencement of the Act in 1994 would continue to operate until modified or revoked.
- After the formation of **Uttarakhand in 2001**, the **Act was made applicable to the new state, with a few modifications**.
- Section 3(7) was, however, subsequently held unconstitutional by the **Uttarakhand High Court** in 2011.
- In 2012, the then state government **decided that all posts in public services will be filled up without any reservations for SCs and STs**.
 - All government orders providing for such reservations were also scrapped.
 - The government had decided against reservations.
 - This was once again challenged in the high court.
- The **Uttarakhand High Court** then struck down the State's 2012 decision in 2019.
 - A review petition against this order was filed in the high court, which did acknowledge that Article 16 (4A) is an enabling provision.
 - But it directed the state government to collect quantifiable data regarding the inadequacy of representation of SCs and STs in state services, and then take a decision on providing reservations in promotions.
 - This decision was challenged in the Supreme Court.

What SC ruled?

- The apex court has now reiterated that Articles 16(4) and 16(4A) do not confer any **fundamental rights** to claim reservations in promotion. It is for the state government to decide whether reservations are required for appointments and promotions to public posts.
- However, **if the state government does want to exercise this discretion and provide reservations, it would have to first collect quantifiable data** showing the inadequacy of representation of that class in public services.
 - It observed that the state government has the absolute discretion to decide whether or not to provide for reservation in jobs or reservations in promotions.
- No mandamus can be issued by the Court directing the State Government to provide reservations.
- The top court also clarified that a state government is **bound to collect data regarding the inadequacy of representation of SCs/STs** in government services when it wants to provide reservation.
 - The State can form its own opinion on the basis of the material it has in its possession already or it may gather such material through a Commission/Committee, person or authority.
 - All that is required is that there must be some material on the basis of which the opinion is formed.

A look at the practice of untouchability in the state of Uttarakhand

- According to a recent survey by academician Amit Thorat, up to 47% of respondents in Uttarakhand admitted to practising untouchability.

- More than half the forward caste people confessed to practising untouchability.
- Further, nearly 68% Brahmins in rural and 77% Brahmins in urban areas of the State admitted to the practice.

Concerns

- **The SCs suffer from low ownership of capital assets**, illiteracy, and lack of access to civil rights. In 2013, of the total wealth in the country, the share of SCs was only 5% in rural areas against their population share of almost 17%.
- **In terms of their share in agricultural land**, it was only 5% while in **building assets** it was 8%.
 - On the other hand, the **high castes** owned 39% of total natural wealth — 41% land and 39% building assets.
- In **urban areas**, SCs own only 4% of total wealth: 6% land and 2.6% of buildings as against 45% of land and 76% of buildings by high caste, much in excess of their population share of about 21%.
- In 2015, the **enrolment rate in higher education** was 20% for SCs compared to 43% for higher castes. Besides the massive backlog in government services, these are spheres where SCs are grossly under-represented.
- Primary studies show **extensive discrimination in employment**, farming, enterprise/business against SCs. Based on NSS data, these studies indicate that in 2017-18, of the differences in access to employment between SCs and high castes, about 71% was due to discrimination in hiring.
- Findings of **another primary survey in 2013 in rural India** show that SC entrepreneurs in grocery, eatery, and transport services faced discrimination, with the high castes reluctant to avail of their goods and services. Many SC farmers admit that they face discrimination in the buying of inputs and sale of outputs.

The Court, while passing its order, remained silent on the sources of under-representation: namely data on caste discrimination in public employment and other spheres.

- With such a massive backlog in the condition of SCs, the top court should have been more sensitive in its observations.

Conclusion

- Unaccountability and caste slavery have completely crippled Dalits. They remain asset-less, illiterate and socially isolated with overt residential segregation in rural areas, and subtly in urban areas.
- Therefore, the reservation policy is necessary as a safeguard against discrimination and to secure their fair share.

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Youth can be a clear advantage for India

Introduction

- India's population is among the youngest in an ageing world.
- By 2022, the median age in India will be 28 years; in comparison, it will be 37 in China and the United States, 45 in Western Europe, and 49 in Japan.
- India's working-age population has numerically outstripped its non-working age population.
- A demographic dividend, said to have commenced around 2004-05, is available for close to five decades. This is an extraordinary opportunity.

There are however, two caveats

- First, India's population heterogeneity ensures that this window of demographic dividend becomes available at different times in different States.
 - While Kerala's population is already ageing, in Bihar the working age cohort is predicted to continue increasing till 2051.
 - By 2031, the overall size of our vast working age population would have declined in 11 of the 22 major States.
- Second, harnessing the demographic dividend will depend upon the **employability of the working age population**, their health, education, vocational training and skills, besides appropriate land and labour policies, as well as good governance.
 - India will gain from its demographic opportunity **only if policies and programmes are aligned to this demographic shift.**

Demographic dividends

- Demographic dividend refers to the growth in an economy that is the result of a change in the age structure of a country's population.
- There is consensus now that among other factors, it was the demographic dividend that powered respectively the Asian economies of Japan, China, and South Korea to spectacular growth.
- More significantly, in each case, the underlying pattern was fairly similar i.e., **countries will benefit from the economic potential of their youth bulge** when and where they succeed in providing good health, quality education, and decent employment to their entire population.

Need for skills

- The [Economic Survey 2019](#) calls for additional jobs to keep pace with the projected annual increases in working age population. We need a workforce that is well educated, and appropriately skilled.
- **UNICEF 2019 reports that at least 47% of Indian youth are not on track to have the education and skills** necessary for employment in 2030.
- The projected demographic dividend would turn into a demographic disaster if an unskilled, under-utilised, and frustrated young population undermines social harmony and economic growth.

Measures to improve quality education

- National Family Health Surveys (completed up to 2015-16) confirm that **poor infrastructure in government schools**, malnutrition, and scarcity of trained teachers have ensured poor learning outcomes.
- **High quality education** achieves gender parity and propels people forward into more productive lives.
- A coordinated **incentive structure prompting States to adopt a broadly uniform public school system** focusing on equity and quality will yield a knowledge society faster than privatising school education can accomplish.
- Irrespective of rural or urban setting, the **public school system must ensure that every child completes high school education, and is pushed into appropriate skilling**, training and vocational education in line with market demand.
- **Deploying new technology** will help accelerate the pace of building human capital by putting in place virtual classrooms together with Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS).
 - It will help prepare this huge work force for next-generation jobs.
- The Govt. should invest on open digital universities which would further help yield a higher educated workforce.

Helping women

- Growing female literacy is not translating into relevant and marketable skills. **A comprehensive approach is needed to improve their prospects** vis-à-vis gainful employment.
- **Flexible entry and exit policies for women into virtual classrooms**, and into modules for open digital training, and vocational education would help them access contemporary vocations.
- A mushrooming of job portals and organisations are providing employment for trained women, even from home. **Equal pay for women** will make it worth their while to stay longer in the workforce.

On health care

- In India, population health is caught between the rising demand for health services and competition for scarce resources.
- The National Sample Survey Office data on health (75th round, 2018), shows that a **deep-rooted downturn in the rural economy is making quality health-care unaffordable**.
- People are availing of private hospitals less than they used to, and are moving towards public health systems.
- That is all very well except for the fact that the **central budget 2020-21 lays emphasis on private provisioning of health care** which will necessarily divert public investment away from public health infrastructure.
 - The Ayushman Bharat Yojana links demand to tertiary in-patient care.
 - This promotes earnings of under-utilized private hospitals, instead of modernizing and up-grading public health systems in each district.

Improving Healthcare facilities

- We need to assign 70% of health sector budgets to integrate and strengthen primary and integrated public health-care services and systems up to district hospital levels, include out-patient department and diagnostic services in every health insurance model adopted.

Conclusion

- The policies that we adopt, and their effective implementation will ensure that our demographic dividend, a time-limited opportunity, becomes a boon for India.

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Financial Secrecy Index (FSI)

- Tax Justice Network (TJN) which is a U.K.-based financial advocacy group, pushes for transparency, ranks countries on the size and secretiveness of their financial sectors **every two years**.
- It examines how intensely the **country's legal and financial system allows wealthy individuals and criminals to hide and launder money**.
- Parameters used in the ranking include **automatic exchange of information and registration of beneficial ownership**.
- TJN's FSI ranking is based on a combination of a country's secrecy score and a scale-weightage based on the country's share in the global market for its offshore financial services.

Global Picture

FSI Rank	Jurisdiction	Secrecy Score
1	Cayman Islands	76
2	United States	63
3	Switzerland	74
4	Hong Kong	66
5	Singapore	65
6	Luxembourg	55
7	Japan	63
8	Netherlands	67
9	BVI	71
10	UAE	78

India

- It has managed to reduce its contribution to global financial secrecy, with its rank falling from 32 on the 2018 index to 47 in 2020, but this is partly because the new edition of the index covers more countries than it did two years ago.

Transparency reforms

- It is true that the government has adopted and supported a few changes, such as the **automatic exchange of tax and financial information with other jurisdictions, like Switzerland**.
- For example, if an Indian citizen has an account with a Swiss bank, and has a balance over a certain threshold, this information will be sent to the Indian tax authorities automatically.

But reducing the financial losses and making multinationals and the super-rich pay their fair share of taxes requires much more.

Revenue concerns for the government

- Multinational companies have shifted their profits taking advantage of an outdated international tax system.
 - These multinationals may be making profits in India but can easily declare those profits in a low tax jurisdiction like Hong Kong and justify that transaction as a payment for the use of a patent.

- According to one estimate, this strategy represented a loss of \$27.5 billion in 2014 for the Indian government, up from \$142 million in 2000.
- The government did create a **beneficial ownership register** — which would allow the identification of the beneficial owner of an asset regardless of whose name the title of the property is in — but the law is weak, since it **exempts a lot of people at the discretion of the authorities**.
 - This register is not accessible to the public.
- The government has granted tax incentives on a discretionary basis even though there is little evidence that these incentives attract investment.
 - The massive reduction in corporate tax rates has thus far **not led to any increase in private investment** — but it has meant a significant reduction in tax revenues, with devastating consequences.
 - It translates into a **lack of resources** for education, healthcare, food and nutrition and infrastructure.
 - The government budget is also highly dependent on indirect taxes like the Goods and Services Tax which are regressive and hit ordinary citizens harder.

Way forward

- India cannot revive its economy without increasing public spending, and so **increasing its fiscal resources is essential**.
- There is a need for **adopting legislation and institutional reforms** to end financial opacity — including, for example, opening the beneficial ownership register to the public and stopping the creation of onshore tax havens.
- In addition, the Government of India must also assume a more **vocal role in the international debate about how to make multinationals pay their fair share of taxes**.
- This means continuing to appeal for a United Nations tax body, which is much more legitimate than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)).

F. Prelims Facts

1. Hunar Haat

For more on Hunar Haats, check [PIB dated Feb 9, 2020](#).

2. World's largest cave fish discovered in Meghalaya

Context



- A team of experts from the UK, Switzerland and India has discovered the world's largest species of cave fish in Meghalaya's Jaintia Hills.

Details

- The cave fish, similar in anatomy to an endangered mahseer species, is around one and a half feet in length and was found inside a remote cave in Jaintia Hills.
- The fish has no eyes and is white due to a lack of melanin pigmentation.
- As they live in a nutrient-limited environment most of these species are small.

G. Tidbits

1. 4,000 year old crafts village unearthed

Context

- A nearly 4,000-year-old urban settlement has been unearthed by a team of surveyors from the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), which experts say could be one of the craft villages mentioned in ancient texts.

Details

- The University's Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, did the preliminary survey of the site in **Babhaniyav village** which is about 13 km from Varanasi.
- The site at Babhaniyav could be a **small sub-centre of Varanasi** which grew as an urban town.
- Such crafts villages have been earlier unearthed in Sarnath, Tilmapur, Ramnagar and other areas, Babhaniyav is an addition.
- They have also found a pillar with a two-line text in Kushan-Brahmi script which makes the findings at least 3,500-4,000 years old.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Justice DM Dharmadhikari Committee was appointed to address issues related to:

- a) Interstate Border issues
- b) Sharing of water from River Krishna between the states of Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh
- c) Resolution of the dispute between Punjab and Haryana with respect to Sutlej
- d) Allocation of power sector employees between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

Answer: d

Explanation:

Justice DM Dharmadhikari

- It is a one-man committee appointed by the Supreme Court.
- It is tasked with ensuring fairness in the allocation of power sector employees between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Q2. With respect to Namdapha National Park, which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect?

1. It is located in Arunachal Pradesh.
2. The Namdapha flying squirrel is endemic to the park and its IUCN status is endangered.
3. It lies close to the India-Myanmar border.

Options:

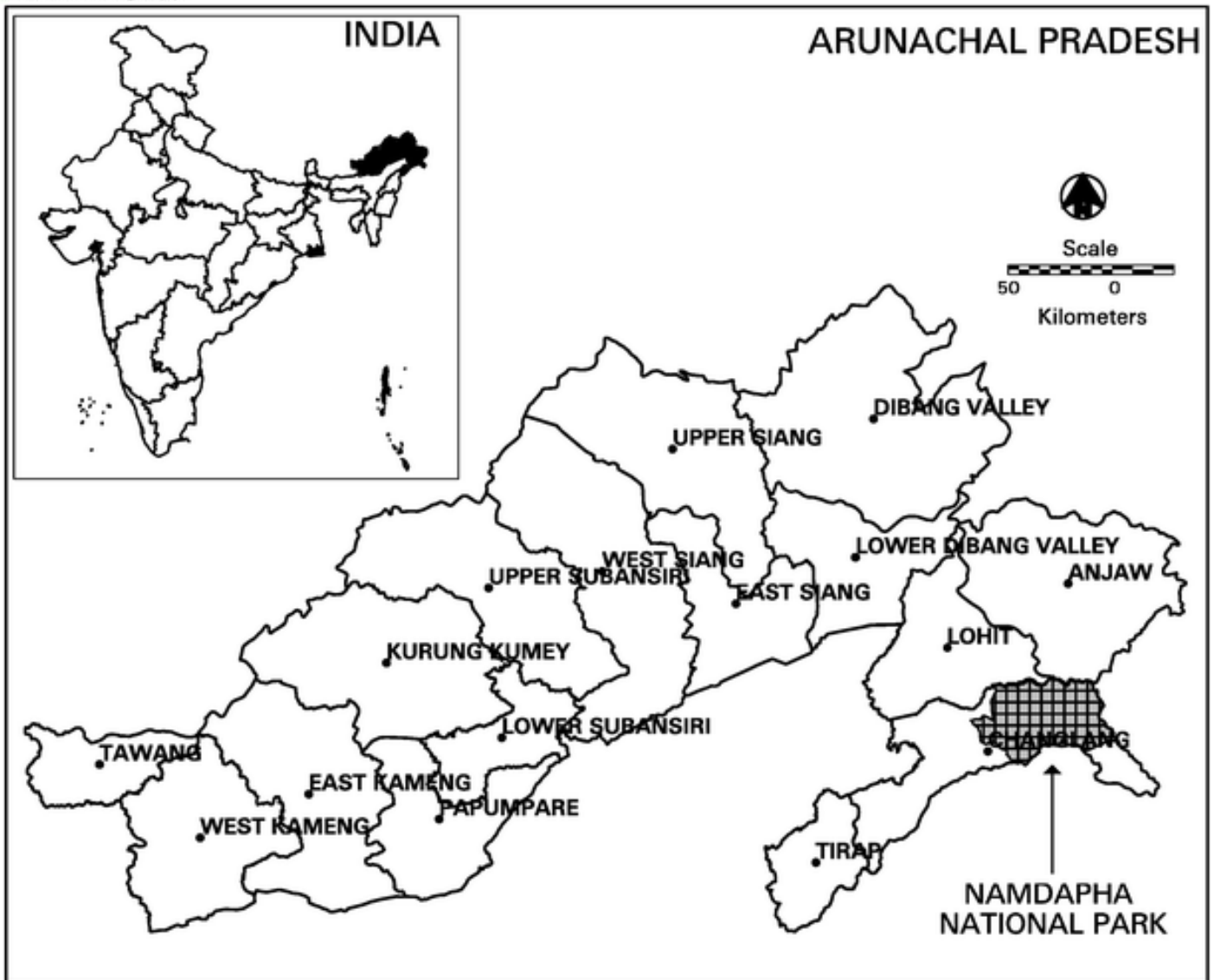
- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) None

Answer: b

Explanation:

Namdapha National Park

- It is the largest protected area in the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot and is located in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The park harbours the northernmost lowland evergreen rainforests in the world.
- The area is also known for extensive Dipterocarp forests.
 - Dipterocarp forests refer to forests in which the dominant species of trees are members of the family Dipterocarpaceae.
- Namdapha and its adjoining areas, are flanked by the Patkai Hills to the south and south-east and by the Himalayas in the north and lies close to the Indo-Myanmar-China tri-junction.
- Namdapha was originally declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1972, then a National Park in 1983 and became a Tiger Reserve under the Project Tiger scheme in the same year.
- Namdapha comprises the catchment of the **Noa-Dihing River, a tributary of the River Brahmaputra**. The Noa-Dihing originates in the mountains on the India-Myanmar border and flows westwards through the Park before joining the Brahmaputra river in the Assam Valley.
- Namdapha flying squirrel is endemic to the park and its IUCN status is **critically endangered**.



Q3. Consider the following statements about the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) :

1. It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
2. 'Project Tiger' is a Central sector scheme.

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

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both
- d) None

Answer: d

Explanation:

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- NTCA was established in 2005 following a recommendation of the Tiger Task Force, constituted by the Prime Minister of India for reorganized management of Project Tiger.
- It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted **under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- It helps in strengthening tiger conservation in the country by retaining an oversight through advisories/normative guidelines, based on the appraisal of tiger status, ongoing conservation initiatives and recommendations of specially constituted Committees.
- **‘Project Tiger’ is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of the Environment, Forests and Climate Change, providing funding support to tiger range States.
 - Under Central sector schemes, it is 100% funded by the Union government and implemented by the Central Government machinery.
 - Under Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) a certain percentage of the funding is borne by the States in the ratio of 50:50, 70:30, 75:25 or 90:10 and the implementation is by the State Governments.

Objective of the NTCA

- Providing statutory authority to Project Tiger so that compliance of its directives become legal.
- Fostering accountability of Center-State in management of Tiger Reserves, by providing a basis for MoU with States within our federal structure.
- Addressing livelihood interests of local people in areas surrounding Tiger Reserves.

Power and Functions of the NTCA

- To approve the tiger conservation plan prepared by the State Government;
- Evaluate and assess various aspects of sustainable ecology and disallow any ecologically unsustainable land use such as mining, industry and other projects within the tiger reserves;
- Approve, co-ordinate research and monitoring on tiger, co-predators, prey habitat, related ecological and socio-economic parameters and their evaluation;
- Lay down normative standards for tourism activities and guidelines for Project Tiger from time to time for tiger conservation in the buffer and core area of tiger reserves and ensure their due compliance.

Q4. Which of the following countries are part of SAARC?

1. Afghanistan
2. Bangladesh
3. Myanmar
4. Nepal
5. Bhutan
6. Sri Lanka
7. Thailand

Options:

- a) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 only
- b) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7
- c) 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 only
- d) 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 only

Answer: d

Explanation:

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- Its member states are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- More on [SAARC](#).

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. For achieving technological superiority and better outcomes in the industrial sector, investment in research and development is the key. Discuss
2. Should the SC/ST community have reservations in promotions? Critically Analyze.