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## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. [The move to ease voting for overseas citizens](#)

*Syllabus: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

*Prelims: Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System or ETPBS*

**Mains: e-Voting process for overseas voters; Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System or ETPBS****Context:**

- In response to a question in the Lok Sabha, the Union Minister for Law and Justice stated that the government was looking into the possibility of allowing non-resident Indians to vote online (NRI).

**How can overseas voters currently vote in Indian elections?**

- Prior to 2010, an Indian citizen who was an eligible voter and had lived in another country for more than six months could not vote in elections.
- After the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2010, eligible NRIs who had been away for more than six months were allowed to vote, but only in person at the polling station where they had been enrolled as an overseas elector.
- Overseas Indian citizens have the same voting rights as resident Indian citizens in the constituency where they live.
- In the case of overseas voters, their passport address is used to determine their place of ordinary residence and the constituency in which they should register.
- **Concerns of overseas voters:**
  - Only a small percentage of eligible overseas residents registered to vote or showed up to vote.
  - The requirement that eligible voters visit the polling station in person has deterred them from exercising their right to vote.

**Recommendations by Election Commission of India (ECI):**

- In November 2020, the Election Commission of India (ECI) wrote to the Law Ministry, requesting that eligible NRIs be allowed to vote by postal ballot in the various State Assembly elections scheduled for 2021.
- In order to allow this facility, the ECI proposed amending the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.
- The postal ballots were to be sent to NRIs electronically, and they were to return the ballots via post after selecting their candidate.

**Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System or ETPBS:**

- **What is ETPBS?**
  - In 2016, the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, were amended to allow service voters to vote using the ETPBS.
  - Postal ballots are sent electronically to registered service voters under this system.
  - The service voter can then download the ETPB, register their mandate on the ballot, and mail it to the constituency's returning officer.
  - The ECI proposed that this facility be extended to international voters as well.
  - The Law Ministry must amend the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 before this can begin.
- **How does ETPBS function?**

- NRI voters who want to vote through ETPBS must notify the returning officer at least five days after the election is announced.
- The ballot will then be sent electronically via the ETPBS by the returning officer.
- The senior officer would be appointed by the Indian diplomatic or consular representative in the NRI's resident country, except in this case.

**Conclusion:**

- In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the ETPBS method resulted in a higher turnout among service voters.
- With citizens increasingly moving between countries for work, the postal ballot method has been recognised as a means of allowing overseas voters to exercise their right to vote.
- However, there must be certain conditions that are normally associated with time spent abroad or work done abroad.

**Nut Graf**

*Online voting mechanism is an effective system that will ease the voting process for NRIs, but rules must be clearly framed for eligibility on the basis of time spent away from the country.*

**2. States can identify minorities: govt.**

**Syllabus:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

**Mains:** Affinity test and identification of Scheduled tribes

**Context:** The Center has told the Supreme Court that governments in nine places where followers of Hinduism, Bahaim, and Judaism are a minority' can consider establishing guidelines to identify them as minority communities at the state level.

**Background:**

A petition filed by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay that the followers of Judaism, Baha'ism and Hinduism cannot establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

**Government's Response:**

- **Parliament and state legislatures have concurrent powers to enact legislation to protect minorities and their interests**, according to the government.
- Declaring that minorities in Ladakh, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Kashmir, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Manipur have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- The State government in question may consider establishing guidelines for identifying minorities at the state level.

**Parliament's Power with respect to minorities:**

- Article 246 of the Constitution, read with Concurrent List Entry 20, "economic and social planning," gives Parliament the power to pass laws that promote and protect minorities' interests.

- Under Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992, Parliament has legislative authority and the Central government has executive authority to declare a community a minority.
- Under Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992, the central government designated six communities as minorities: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, and Jains.

### **Affinity test and identification of Scheduled tribes:**

- **Bombay High Court in Shilpa Vishnu Thakur v State of Maharashtra:**
  - In this case, a full Bench accepted the “relevance and importance of the affinity test”. The full Bench held that the **affinity test was an “integral part” of the verification process for caste certificates.**
  - The HC had said that the term ‘**affinity**’ meant the ‘**association**’ of the applicant for a **caste certificate with a Scheduled Tribe** into which he or she has been born.
- **Recent Observation by Supreme Court:**
  - The Supreme Court stated that the judiciary is no longer confident in a “affinity test” that is used to sort through anthropological and ethnological traits in order to link a person to a tribe.
  - Contact with other cultures, migration, and modernisation are all likely to have obliterated a tribe’s traditional characteristics.
  - After realizing that the courts were faced with differing opinions about the efficacy of the affinity test, the Supreme Court decided to refer the case to a larger Bench for an authoritative decision.
  - The Supreme Court had previously stated that the affinity test should only be used to corroborate documentary evidence and not as the sole criterion for denying a claim.

### **Nut Graf**

*The claim by persons demanding benefits entitled to Scheduled Tribes cannot be disregarded on the ground that their present traits do not match their tribes’ peculiar anthropological and ethnological traits, deity, rituals, mode of marriage, death ceremonies, method of burial of dead bodies, etc. Thus, it is critical to understand the relevance of the affinity test verification process for caste certificates.*

### **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

#### **1. U.S cuts a deal with the EU vis-a-vis LNG**

**Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests.**

**Mains: U.S.-EU LNG deal and implications on Europe**

#### **Context:**

- U.S struck a deal with the European Union to supply liquefied natural gas (LNG) to meet the continent’s energy needs.

#### **U.S.-EU LNG deal:**

- The US will supply LNG to the EU under the US-EU LNG agreement.
- This is expected to reduce Europe’s reliance on Russian energy exports, effectively neutralizing Russia’s influence in Europe.

#### **Significance of LNG deal for Europe:**

- About 40% of Europe's natural gas requirements and a quarter of its crude oil requirements are met by Russian exports.
- Even before the Russian invasion, gas prices in Europe skyrocketed, and a drop in Russian supplies could exacerbate the situation.
- As a result, the EU has become extremely vulnerable, to the point where the West has decided not to impose sanctions on the EU's energy imports from Russia.
- Because Russian gas supplies to Europe pass through Ukraine, energy supplies to Europe have been disrupted.

#### **Nord Stream 2 pipeline as an Alternative:**

- The Nord Stream 2 pipeline project was devised by the EU to ensure direct gas supply from Russia, bypassing Ukraine.
- As a result, the EU devised a strategy to reduce its reliance on Russian gas to zero by 2030.

#### **Concerns with US-EU LNG Deal:**

- The LNG deal with the United States is unlikely to immediately reduce Europe's heavy reliance on Russian energy.
- To secure new supplies, Europe will have to raise the price of existing supplies sold to other international buyers. This will raise the price of LNG for other market buyers.
- LNG prices may stabilize in the long run if production from countries other than Russia increases to meet increased demand from Europe.
- When it comes to LNG, there are also logistical and production costs to consider, making it a more expensive fuel than natural gas delivered through pipelines.
- Because of the increased reliance on LNG over natural gas as a result of changing geopolitical dynamics, Europeans may have to pay a higher energy price in the future unless alternative suppliers increase production.
- Furthermore, Europe will have to invest in additional LNG terminals to process new LNG supplies, which will take time.

#### **Nut Graf**

*In the context of the EU's commitment to its climate change goals, the EU should make a shift in strategy when it comes to energy security even in the midst of Russian energy threats. The U.S.-EU LNG deal could mark the beginning of efforts by the EU to diversify its energy source to end its reliance on Russia.*

### **C. GS 3 Related**

***Nothing here for today!!!***

### **D. GS 4 Related**

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### **E. Editorials**

**Category: ECONOMY**

## 1. The era of an unemployed India

**Syllabus: Indian Economy and issues related to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth development and employment**

**Prelims: Difference between underemployment and unemployment**

**Mains: Concerns with respect to employment scenario in India**

### Context:

- In the context of the recent **agitations by railway job aspirants** in the state of Bihar, the article examines some of the major concerns with respect to employment scenario in India.

### Concerns:

#### **High unemployment rates:**

- Unemployment was high even before the COVID-19 pandemic, with the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) reporting a **1% unemployment rate in 2017-18**. This was the highest unemployment rate in over four decades.
- The economic disruption caused by the pandemic only worsened the employment scenario. The **unemployment rate stood at 7.91% in December 2021**. As per the estimates provided by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) nearly 53 million Indians were unemployed with women accounting for a large proportion.
- Despite some improvement in the current year, the unemployment rate still stands at a worrying 6.57%.

#### **Reducing number of government jobs:**

- Not only are the number of government jobs limited but they have also been reducing in number due to the **contractualization and outsourcing**.

#### **Overqualified candidates seeking middle and lower rung government jobs:**

- There has been a large **influx of overqualified youth aspiring for middle and lower rung government jobs**.
- This is leading to Underemployment is a measure of employment and labour utilization in the economy that looks at how well the labour force is being used in terms of skills, experience, and availability to work. It refers to a situation in which individuals are forced to work in low-paying or low-skill jobs.
- This preference for government jobs though they pay lower salaries is because of the greater job security ascribed to them. The **private sector jobs are mostly characterized by high job insecurity** (easy hire and fire), poor basic pay, and long hours of work. This is contributing to periodic unemployment among the workforce.

#### **High degree of competition:**

- Advertisements for even a handful of lower rung government jobs are also attracting large number of applications. The entry of overqualified aspirants results in intense competition among the aspirants.

- One of the consequences of such heightened competition has been the enforcement of **higher and higher qualifications for jobs**. This has resulted in massive insecurity among candidates who only meet the minimum eligibility but are having to compete with candidates having higher educational credentials.

#### **High degree of uncertainty:**

- In Universities, highly skilled workforce of serving teachers are being forced to hold **insecure temporary job contracts**.

#### **Possible factors at play:**

##### **Insufficient regulation of private sector:**

- The lack of adequate regulation of employer-employee work relations in the private sector has triggered periodic unemployment of even the higher skilled workers, who have been spilling over into and crowding lower rung government jobs and also lower-skilled informal sector jobs.

##### **Reduced government expenditure:**

- Reduced expenditure by the governments on health, education and the social sector as a whole has also ensured inadequate employment generation to observe the large incoming workforce.

#### **Nut Graf**

*The lack of adequate and appropriate employment opportunities for the workforce in India is a major point of concern both in terms of economic as well as the social impacts that unemployment results in.*

#### **2. Poverty rose but income inequality fell**

**Syllabus: Inclusive Growth and issues arising from it.**

**Mains: Economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic- On poverty levels and income inequality**

#### **Impact of the pandemic on poverty levels:**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe economic impact. The economy has contracted with many being pushed into poverty. As a result **Poverty rose during the COVID-19 pandemic**. Extreme poverty, defined by the World Bank as the percentage of the population with an income below \$1.90, rose from 7.6% in November 2019 to 11.7% in July 2021.
- Even though there has been a **V-shaped economic recovery, output remains about 10% lower than 2019**.

#### **Impact of the pandemic on income inequality:**

- The **general perception is that the poor bear the brunt of any economic disruption** given they remain the most vulnerable to economic disruptions because of their **reliance on contractual protections and lack of adequate safety nets**.
- The article argues **this usual trend was not observed during the COVID-19 pandemic** in India wherein interestingly it notes that **income inequality has actually fallen**.

#### **Understanding the trend of income inequality:**

- The article attributes this trend to a **fall in the income levels of households in the top 25% of the income distribution** and the almost steady or slight increase in the income levels of households in the bottom 25% of the income distribution. The result is that inequality, measured as the percentage change in the income of the top quartile minus the income in the bottom quartile, fell by 15-20 percentage points.
- The article examines **three sources of household income: government transfers, business profits, and labour income** to explain the above observation.
  - Government transfers includes cash or in-kind payments to support the vulnerable population. Profits Includes income from business initiatives while labour income includes wages earned from work or employment contracts.
- The government had **targeted government payments to the poor** to help limit the adverse economic impact of the pandemic on them.
- The rich saw a **larger decline in business income**. The rich depend on this type of income more than the poor. **Business income being highly volatile given its susceptibility to changes in demand and macro-economic conditions** of the economy suffered steeper declines than labour income levels.
- Labour income account for the largest share of the total income of both the rich and poor, with the poor accounting for the most. When the economy contracted, people lost jobs and income. These workers tried to compensate by finding alternate work, even while accepting lower pays. Notably as per the analysis carried out by the article, while the minimum amount that the poor were willing to accept to take a job fell roughly 40%, the minimum amount fell more than 45% for the rich. Also **the larger loss of labour income among the top quartile households is because the demand for their labour fell more**. The rich tend to work in the **service sector**, and demand for services fell more than demand for other sectors like manufacturing or agriculture.

### Nut Graf

*The economic impact of the pandemic has been notable on developing economies like India. While it has increased the number of people in poverty, notably however the income inequality has actually decreased. Income inequality, measured as the percentage change in the income of the top quartile minus the income in the bottom quartile, fell by 15-20 percentage points.*

## F. Prelims Facts

### 1. India test-fires two surface-to-air missiles

**Syllabus: GS-3: Security Challenges: Defense equipment**

**Prelims: Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (MRSAMs)**

**Context:** India successfully test-fired two Army-version Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (MRSAMs) from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in Odisha.

- **Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (MRSAMs):**
  - The MRSAM is a surface-to-air missile developed by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for use by the Indian Army.
  - The missile will replace the Army's aging Air Defense systems.



- Multi-function radar, mobile launcher system, and other vehicles make up the MRSAM weapon system.
- It is available in Army, Navy, and Air Force versions.
- **Key features of the missile:**
  - It has fins and canards to help it maintain stability and maneuverability in flight.
  - Eight canisterised missiles can be transported, placed, and launched from the mobile launcher.
  - The missile is propelled by a solid-fuel engine with a thrust vector control system.
  - The missile has a top speed of Mach 2 and can travel at a range of speeds (twice the speed of sound).

## G. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which amongst the following is the best description of the Lasker Award?

- It is awarded annually to honor a living architect or architects
- It is an award for achievements in newspaper, magazine and online journalism
- It is a prize awarded annually to grassroots environmental activists
- It is awarded to persons who have made major contributions to medical science

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- The Lasker Awards program was created in 1945 by Albert and Mary Lasker to shine a spotlight on fundamental biological discoveries and clinical advances that improve human health, and to draw attention to the importance of public support of science.
- Lasker Awards are given in the categories of Basic Research, Clinical Research, Special Achievement, and Public Service.
- **Hence Option D is correct.**

Q2. Gidda is a popular folk dance form practiced in the State of

- Goa
- Himachal Pradesh
- Odisha
- Punjab

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Gidda, also known as Lokh Naach, is a popular women's folk dance from Punjab.
- It is derived from an ancient ring dance. Gidda is a bright, colorful, and energetic dance performed by women during social gatherings.
- It is accompanied by rhythmic clapping and boliyan. Gidda, like other folk dances, is a very energetic dance with a lot of leg action.
- **Hence Option D is correct.**

**Q3. With respect to the Scheduled Tribes, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. Presidential order under Article 342 regarding scheduled tribes is final. Court cannot add or subtract any entry.
2. A person declared as Scheduled Tribe in one state cannot claim benefit of his status for employment, education or land allotment in any other state on migration.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Article 342 deals with the provisions related to Scheduled Tribes.
- It states that the **President may**, with respect to any State or Union territory, and where it is a state, after consultation with the Governor thereof by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall, for the purposes of this constitution, be deemed to be scheduled tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory, as the case may be.
- Presidential order under Article 342 regarding scheduled tribes is final. Court cannot add or subtract any entry. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- Recently, the Supreme Court said a person declared as Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe in one state cannot claim benefit of his status for employment, education or land allotment in any other state on migration. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**
  - For example, being a Scheduled Caste belonging to Punjab and being a permanent resident of Punjab, cannot claim the benefit of a Scheduled Caste in the state of Rajasthan.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. Natural rubber is a polymer of Styrene
2. Rubber Board's headquarters is located at Kottayam in Kerala.
3. The world's first Genetically Modified (GM) rubber plant was planted in the state of Assam

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Natural rubber is a **polymer made up of isoprene units** with a small percentage of impurities derived from tree latex. **Hence Statement 1 is not correct.**
- The Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII) in Puthuppally, Kottayam, Kerala, developed the GM rubber sapling. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**
- Rubber Board has planted the world's first genetically modified (GM) rubber plant at its farm in Sarutari, near Guwahati, in Assam. **Hence Statement 3 is correct.**

**Q5. How is permaculture farming different from conventional chemical farming?**

1. Permaculture farming discourages monocultural practices but in conventional chemical farming, monoculture practices are predominant.
2. Conventional chemical farming can cause an increase in soil salinity but the occurrence of such phenomenon is not observed in permaculture farming.
3. Conventional chemical farming is easily possible in semi-arid regions but permaculture farming is not so easily possible in such regions.
4. Practice of mulching is very important in permaculture farming but not necessarily so in conventional chemical farming.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below.**

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- Permaculture is a nature-inspired, fully integrated design system. Multicropping and integrated farming systems are encouraged in permaculture farming. A good example is agroforestry. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- Due to the use of crop-specific inputs such as irrigation, chemical fertiliser, and harvesting methods, chemical farming is better suited to monoculture cropping.

- Chemical fertilizers deplete the soil's fertility over time, resulting in serious issues such as soil salinization. Permaculture farming, on the other hand, does not have these issues because it uses organic fertilizers. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**
- Permaculture is based on the idea that well-designed systems don't produce waste, and that permaculture tries to imitate well-designed systems. As a result, permaculture attempts to account for local conditions such as arid climate. Semi-arid regions are unsuitable for conventional farming. **Hence Statement 3 is not correct.**
- Mulching is an essential part of Permaculture systems for maximizing efficiency. Mulching is not considered necessary in chemical farming, so most farmers do not use it. **Hence Statement 4 is correct.**

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Election Commission of India's proposal to extend postal ballot facility for NRIs will transform the electoral politics in the country. Comment. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, Polity & Governance]
2. Discuss the possible reasons as to why overqualified candidates seek middle and lower rung government jobs in India. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-2, Polity & Governance]