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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. IMF Package to Sri Lanka

Syllabus: Effect of Policies & Politics of Developed & Developing Countries on India's Interests

Mains: Sri Lankan Economic crisis

Context: Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reached a staff-level agreement with Sri Lanka.

Introduction:

- Sri Lanka is facing one of its worst ever economic crises, resulting from mismanaged government finances and ill-timed tax cuts, besides the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Sri Lanka's [forex reserves](#) have reached bottom-low and it is facing mounting challenges in the form of unsustainable public debts, low international reserves and is in need of large financing.
- The economy is expected to contract by 8.7 percent in 2022 and inflation recently exceeded 60 percent. The impact has been disproportionately borne by the poor and vulnerable.

IMF Assistance:

- Sri Lanka and the [IMF](#) have reached a preliminary agreement on an emergency.
- Both have reached a staff-level agreement to support Sri Lanka's economic policies with a 48-month arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility [EFF] of about \$2.9 billion.
- Staff-level agreements are typically subject to the approval of the IMF management and its executive board, after which the recipient nations get access to funds.

Key elements of the program:

- The objectives of Sri Lanka's new fund-supported program are to restore macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability, while safeguarding financial stability, protecting the vulnerable, and stepping up structural reforms to address corruption vulnerabilities and unlock Sri Lanka's growth potential.
- IMF has also laid out expectations that Sri Lanka must meet, before the IMF management and

Executive Board can approve the programme. These include:

- Raising fiscal revenue to support fiscal consolidation.
- Implementing major tax reforms. The program aims to reach a primary surplus of 2.3 percent of GDP by 2025.
- Introducing cost-recovery based pricing for fuel and electricity to minimise fiscal risks arising from state-owned enterprises.
- Increasing social spending and improving the coverage and targeting of social safety net programs to minimise the impact of the crisis on the poor and vulnerable.
- Restoring price stability through data-driven monetary policy action, fiscal consolidation.
- Stronger central bank autonomy starting with a new central bank act that allows pursuing a flexible inflation targeting regime.
- Restoring foreign reserves through market-determined and flexible exchange rates.
- Healthy and adequately capitalised banking system to safeguard financial stability.
- Stronger anti-corruption legal framework to reduce corruption through improving fiscal transparency.

***Nut Graf:** Ongoing Sri Lankan economic crisis is the product of several poor policies and mismanaged government finances. Sri Lanka and IMF have reached a staff-level agreement to support Sri Lanka's economic policies with certain prior goals and expectations that Sri Lanka has to meet. The country must work to obtain debt relief from its creditors and additional financing from multilateral partners apart from IMF assistance for sustainable recovery.*

C. GS 3 Related

Category: BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Ban on Single Use Plastics

***Syllabus:** Environment Pollution and Degradation*

***Mains:** Need and impact of banning single-use plastics*

Context: Recently, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021.

Introduction:

- India has banned the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of [single-use plastic \(SUP\)](#) items with low utility and high littering potential since July 1, 2022.
- As a party to the UN Environment Assembly India has signed a resolution to draw up an

agreement in the future that will make it legally binding for signatories to address the full life cycle of plastics, from production to disposal.

Why are single-use plastics harmful?

- Plastic pollution is the harmful outcome of dumping single use plastics as waste which are non-biodegradable.
- Single Use Plastics cause major harm to the environment and are toxic to the ecosystems and the organisms living in those ecosystems.
- There is a greater likelihood of single-use plastic products ending up in the sea than reusable ones.

Global Commitment:

- All countries face a major environmental challenge due to pollution caused by single-use plastic items.
- The UN Environment Assembly adopted a resolution piloted by India on single-use plastics pollution in 2019, recognising the urgent need for the global community to address this issue.
- Bangladesh was the first country to ban thin plastic bags in 2002; New Zealand banned plastic bags in July 2019; China has issued a ban on plastic bags in 2020 with a phased implementation.

Plastic waste management rules in India:

- Under the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2021, the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of carry-bags made of virgin or recycled plastic less than 75 microns has been banned with effect from September 2021.
- A number of items are banned, including earbuds with plastic sticks, balloon sticks, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice cream sticks, polystyrene (thermocool) for decorations, plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straws, trays, wrapping or packaging films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners less than 100 micron, stirrers, etc.
- The Union government took the initiative to ban their usage which is conveyed through the "Clean and Green" Campaign which focuses on enhancing cleanliness and taking environment-friendly measures.
- The advisory on banning SUPs is in alignment with the objectives of the [Swachh Bharat Mission Urban 2.0](#) which is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- From December 31, 2022, plastic carry bags whose thickness is less than 120 microns will be banned.
- India has also taken steps to promote innovation and create an ecosystem for accelerated adoption and availability of alternatives across the country.
- To prevent the movement of banned single-use plastic items between States and Union

Territories, border checkpoints have been established.

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has launched a grievance redressal application to empower citizens.
- Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022 has provisions for [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#). The guidelines provide a framework to strengthen the circular economy of plastic waste.

Challenges:

- Participation of all stakeholders for effective engagement and actions is crucial for the success of the ban.
- Previously almost 25 Indian States had banned plastic at the state level but they had a very limited impact due to widespread use of these items.
- Now the challenge is to see how the local level authorities will enforce the ban in accordance with the guidelines.
- It is difficult to take accountability of non-branded items as the majority of them belong to the informal sector.

Way Forward:

- Social media and other media should be effectively used to create awareness among consumers.
- Research and development should be promoted to find sustainable alternatives with public and private participation.
- Greener alternatives to plastic such as compostable and biodegradable plastic shall be considered a sustainable option.

***Nut Graf:** India is taking steps to overcome unmanaged plastic pollution in the spirit of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'. The solution to this problem is not the responsibility of the government alone, but of industries, brands, manufacturers and consumers. However, in the absence of workable alternatives, the feasibility of plastic ban seems difficult right now.*

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Academia, research and the glass ceiling in India

Syllabus: Role of women and associated issues

Mains: *Analysis of the participation of women in academia and research in India and comparing it with the participation in the corporate sector.*

Context: This article talks about issues such as gender inequality and discrimination in academia.

Background

- In 1933, Kamala Sohoni had reached out to Sir C.V. Raman to take up research in physics under his guidance. However, it is said that Sir C.V. Raman, who was then the director of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, rejected her request because “she was a woman”.
 - Kamala Sohoni was later provided admission to the institution after she protested against the discrimination on the condition that her work would not be recognised till the director was satisfied with the quality of her research and that her presence did not distract any of her male colleagues.
- In 1937, Professor D.M. Bose, then Palit Professor of Physics at Calcutta University, was unwilling to induct Bibha Chowdhuri into his research group as he felt that there were no suitable research projects to assign to women.
 - However, determined Bibha Chowdhuri made her way into the research group and her work on cosmic rays in determining the mass of mesons is widely appreciated.
- Even in international institutes and organisations, there have been several instances where it is believed that women are less capable than men in scientific research.
 - This can be understood in the statement of a professor at Pisa University who said that “physics was invented and built by men.”

Government initiatives

- The Indian government has undertaken various efforts to improve women’s participation and address the issues of gender inequality and discrimination.
- In this context, the major focus is on incentivising women to take up higher education. The major initiatives of the government include:
 - **Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI)** - GATI is an innovative Pilot Project launched by the Department of Science and Technology that aims to promote gender equity in science and technology.
 - GATI project envisages to develop an enabling environment for equal participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) disciplines at all levels and address key challenges.
 - **Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN)** - KIRAN is an initiative launched by the Department of Science and Technology in 2014 which enables gender parity in science by nurturing research careers of women scientists and also prevents women from giving up research due to family reasons.
 - Other key initiatives include the **Women Scientists Scheme, Consolidation of**

University Research for Innovation and Excellence in Women Universities (CURIE) and Indo-U.S. Fellowship for Women in STEM.

- Further, universities and research institutes are setting up creches to help scientist mothers to carry on with their research work uninterrupted.

Participation of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)

- There is an under-representation of women in STEM disciplines worldwide.
- As per the [UNESCO](#) data on a few selected countries, India has occupied the lowest rank with only 14% female researchers working in STEM areas.
 - However, India is not lagging far behind as various advanced countries have also performed poorly in this aspect.
 - Example: female researchers working in STEM areas in Japan is only 16%, in the Netherlands it is 26%, in the U.S. it is 27% and 39% in the U.K.
 - The highest participation of female researchers was seen in countries like Tunisia, (55%), Argentina (53%) and New Zealand (52%).
 - Countries like Cuba (49%), South Africa and Egypt with 45% have also performed very well.
- In India, women among the graduate population in STEM account for nearly 43% which is one of the highest in the world. However, only about 14% of women get into academic institutions and universities. Further, the participation of women in research is also lower.
- The participation of women as faculty in universities and research institutes is very low and the participation percentage drops further as there is an increase in the hierarchy of the position held.
 - As per a survey by the University Grants Commission, 7 out of the 54 central universities; 52 of the 456 State universities; 10 of the 126 deemed universities; and 23 of the 419 private universities have female vice-chancellors.
- The total number of women fellows in major science academies of India is
 - 7% for the Indian Academy of Sciences (IAS) founded in 1934
 - 5% for the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) founded in 1935
 - 8% for the National Academy of Sciences India (NASI) founded in 1930
- The number of women employees at Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) is also very low.
 - Example: At IIT Madras only 31 out of 314 professors (10.2%) and in IIT Bombay only 25 out of 143 professors (17.5%).

Women participation in the corporate sector

- The participation of women in leadership and decision-making positions in the corporate or the private sector is better when compared to the prospects in academics.
- The number of women in senior management positions in the corporate sector in India is 39%, which is better than the global average.
- The number of women CEOs in Fortune 500 companies is about 15% and the number of women

as board members has posted a significant growth from 15% in 2016 to 19.7% in 2022.

Reasons for the disparity in corporate sector and academic sector

- The process of selection and promotion in the private sector is usually based on merit and is more result oriented with a definite structure as compared to academic institutes.
- Further, various initiatives such as flexible work hours, maternity benefits, and sections that are operated only by women which promote the participation of women in the private sector were adopted long ago.

***Nut graf:** India has undertaken significant efforts in the last century to address the issues of gender discrimination and equality in the workforce. However, women are still under-represented in the academia and research sectors. Various programmes initiated by the Government in this context are expected to bridge the gender disparity by 2047.*

2. A revert to the mean

***Syllabus:** Developmental issues, their problems and their remedies.*

***Prelims:** About National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)*

***Mains:** Key findings of the “Crime in India” report (2021) of NCRB*

Context: According to a report by the [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#), violent crimes such as rape, kidnaps, atrocities against children, robberies and murders have increased in 2021.

Details

- The “Crime in India” report released by the NCRB highlighted that the number of violent crimes has increased across India in 2021 after declining in 2020 on account of COVID induced restrictions.
- However, the overall crime rate (crimes per 1 lakh people) reduced to 445.9 (2021) from 487.8 (2020) which is mainly due to the decline in cases registered under Section 188 of the IPC – “disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant”.

Key findings of the report

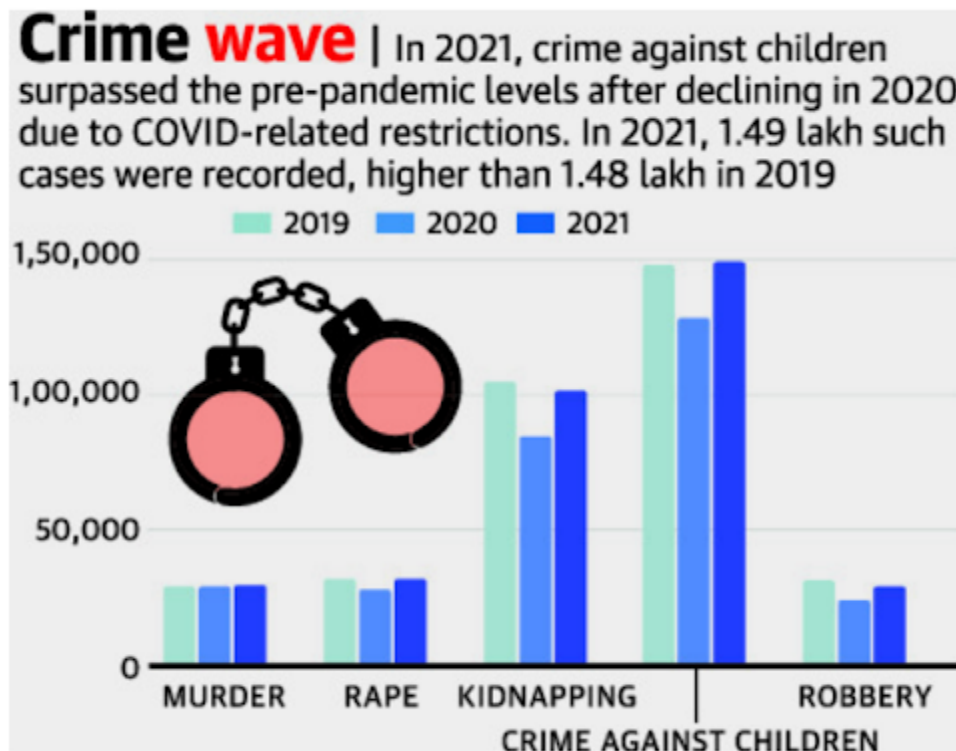


Image source: The Hindu

- Domestic violence continues to be a major issue in the country as “cruelty by husband or his relatives” accounted for over 31.8% of crimes against women in 2021 registering an increase from 30.2% in 2020 and 30.9% in 2019.
- The chargesheeting rate in 2021 has declined to 72.3% as compared to 75.8% in 2020.
 - Further, even the conviction rate has dropped from 59.2% in 2020 to 57% in 2021.
 - This suggests that despite an increase in violent crimes in the country, law enforcement has been less responsive.
- According to the report, the highest rate of violent crimes (per 1 lakh people) in 2021 was recorded in Assam (76.6 violent crimes per 1 lakh people), followed by Delhi (57) and West Bengal (48.7).
 - The lowest rate was recorded in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
 - Odisha saw the highest increase in the rate of violent crimes.
- The report pointed out that the suicide rate in 2021 with 12 per 1 lakh people was the highest in the past five years.
 - The key reasons for suicides in the country are said to be domestic problems (33.2%) and illnesses (18.6%)

- Further, most of the suicide victims were daily wage earners (25.6%) and housewives (14.1%).
- The report also suggests that there is a 5.9% increase in the cases registered as cyber crimes in 2021 as compared to 2020 which indicates an increase in the use of digital devices.
 - As cyber crimes in urban areas have declined by about 8.3% as compared to 2020, the overall increase in cyber crimes is attributed to the increase of such crimes in rural areas.
 - This mandates the government to intervene and increase its awareness programmes in rural areas.

Nut graf: *The increase in violent crimes, suicide rate and cyber crimes along with a drop in charge sheeting and conviction rates in the country requires immediate attention and interventions from the governments at the centre and state and other law enforcement bodies.*

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Can civil servants express their views on law, governance?

Syllabus: *Role of civil services in a democracy.*

Mains: *Critical evaluation of the restrictions on the freedom of speech of Government employees.*

Context

- Recently, a senior IAS officer from Telangana questioned the Gujarat government's decision of the releasing the convicts of Bilkis Bano gang rape case.
- This has once again brought the debate on the freedom of civil servants to express their views on matters of law and governance and the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules of 1964 into the limelight.

Government employees and their freedom of speech

- Citizens of India have been guaranteed the fundamental [right of free speech](#) under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, which is subjected to various reasonable restrictions.
 - However, individuals in government service are required to follow certain disciplinary rules that restrict them from expressing themselves freely with regard to the governance of the country or from becoming a member of a political organisation, or any organisation of such a nature.
- According to **Rule 9 of the Rules of the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964**, no Government servant shall, in any radio broadcast, telecast, electronic media or in any document published in his own name or anonymously in any communication to the press or in any public

utterance, make any statement of fact or opinion

- Which has the effect of an adverse criticism of any current or recent policy or action of the Central Government or a State Government.
- Which is capable of embarrassing the relations between the Central Government and the Government of any State.
- Which is capable of embarrassing the relations between the Central Government and the Government of any foreign State.

Arguments in favor of the free speech for government employees

- The strict rules that restrict the freedom of speech of government employees are of the British era and in democracies, the right to criticise the government is said to be a key fundamental right.
- Further, the conditions mentioned in these rules are vague and broad and need to be scrutinised.
- In 2018, the Kerala High Court held that “individuals cannot be prevented from expressing their views only because he/she is an employee. In a democratic society, every institution is governed by democratic norms and healthy criticism is a better way to govern a public institution”.
- Chief Justice of Tripura High Court in the recent judgement had said that “as a Government servant, the petitioner is not devoid of her right to free speech, a Fundamental Right which can be curtailed only by a valid law. She was entitled to hold her own beliefs and express them in the manner she desired, of course, subject to not crossing the borders laid down in sub-rule (4) of Rule 5 of the Conduct Rules.”
- Experts feel that the basic responsibility of any civil servant is to uphold the constitutional principles in letter and in spirit and the rule of law of the country and if these principles are being subverted, it is the duty of the civil servants to raise their concerns.

Nut graf: *In a democracy, the right to express one’s opinion freely, the right to object and the right to dissent are crucial to ensure transparency in the governance and hence it is important that the government servants are allowed to express their views on law and governance freely.*

F. Prelims Facts

1. VOSTOK 2022

Syllabus: *Various Security Forces & Agencies & Their Mandate*

Prelims: *Military Exercise*

Context: India is participating in the multilateral exercise ‘Vostok-2022’ which was commenced recently in Russia.

Details:

- An Indian Army contingent comprising troops from 7/8 Gorkha Rifles is participating in the multilateral strategic and command exercise 'Vostok-2022'.
- It is taking place at the training grounds of the eastern military district in Russia.
- The exercise also includes participation by the Chinese People's Liberation Army.
- The exercise is aimed at interaction and coordination amongst other participating military contingents and observers.
- Participating contingents include observers from the [Collective Security Treaty Organisation](#), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and other partner states.
- According to the Ministry of Defence, the participating Indian Army Contingent will share practical aspects of validated procedures and drills.
- India is not participating in the maritime drill to respect Japan's sentiment, as the drill is taking place in the Sea of Japan and Sea of Okhotsk in which [disputed Kuril Islands](#) are situated as both Russia and Japan claim sovereignty over them.
- However, the warships Pacific Fleet of the Russian Navy and the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will be participating in the maritime drill.

2. Cri-MAC

Syllabus: Challenges to Internal Security Through Communication Networks

Prelims: Cri-MAC portal

Context: Despite the Union government's call to States to share more intelligence inputs through the Multi Agency Centre, at least seven States and one Union Territory have given the cold shoulder to the portal.

Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC)

- It is an online platform meant to share information and coordinate action among law enforcement agencies on serious criminal incidents, including human trafficking 24x7.
- It was launched in 2020 by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It is run by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to help in early detection and prevention of crime incidents across the country.
- Several states have not uploaded a single alert on Cri-MAC till now.
- Delhi, Assam and Haryana uploaded the maximum number of alerts on the portal, which included information on the release of a hardened criminal from jail or an incident of terror, murder, dacoity among others.
- This portal facilitates dissemination of information about significant crimes across the country

on a real-time basis and enables inter-State coordination.

- It is crucial to tackle human trafficking as it is a highly organised crime often involving inter-State gangs.

G. Tidbits

1. CERVAVAC

- Union Ministry of Science and Technology recently announced the scientific completion of Cervavac, India's first indigenously developed quadrivalent human papillomavirus (qHPV) vaccine for the prevention of cervical cancer.
- It will likely cost ₹200-400 a shot and be commercially available by the end of 2022.
- It is developed by the Serum Institute of India in coordination with the Government of India's Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
- It was approved by the Drug Controller General of India in July 2022.
- It is a quadrivalent vaccine, meaning it is effective against at least four variants of cancer-causing Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

Cervical Cancer:

- Despite being largely preventable, cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women globally, according to the WHO.
- In 2018, an estimated 570,000 women were diagnosed with the disease and it accounted for 311,000 deaths across the world.
- Annually, about 1.25 lakh women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and over 75,000 die from the disease in India.
- Close to 83% of invasive cervical cancers in India and 70% of cases worldwide are attributed to HPV-types 16 or 18.
- HPV transmission is influenced by sexual activity and age.
- Almost 75% of all sexually active adults are likely to be infected with at least one HPV type. A vast majority of the infections resolve itself.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Cri-MAC recently seen in news is (Level- Medium)

- a) A counter-terrorism programme which will utilize technologies like Big Data and analytics
- b) The Centre's online platform meant to share information and coordinate action among law enforcement agencies on serious criminal incidents

- c) Social Media Communication (SMC) hub in every district across the country that will be the eyes and ears of the government
- d) A multi-stakeholder cyber-security and e-surveillance agency

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Cri-MAC is an online platform meant to share information and coordinate action among law enforcement agencies on serious criminal incidents, including human trafficking 24x7.
- It was launched in 2020 by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Q2. Which of the following countries are part of Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)? (Level- Medium)

1. Armenia
2. Azerbaijan
3. Belarus
4. Kazakhstan
5. Kyrgyzstan
6. Russia
7. Tajikistan
8. Uzbekistan

Options:

- a) 1, 2, 7 and 8 only
- b) 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 only
- c) 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is an intergovernmental military alliance (six countries) that came into effect in 2002.
- Its origin can be traced to the Collective Security Treaty, 1992 (Tashkent Treaty).
- The headquarters is located in the Russian capital of Moscow.



Image Source: Word press[/caption]

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Cervavac: (Level- Difficult)

1. It is India's first indigenously developed vaccine for the prevention of cervical cancer.
2. Almost all cervical cancer cases are linked to certain strains of human papillomavirus (HPV).
3. It was developed by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India in coordination with the Government of India's Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Cervavac is India's first indigenously developed quadrivalent human papillomavirus (qHPV) vaccine for the prevention of cervical cancer.
- Nearly all cases of cervical cancer can be attributed to HPV infection. Although most HPV infections clear up on their own and most pre-cancerous lesions resolve spontaneously, there is a

risk for all women that HPV infection may become chronic and pre-cancerous lesions progress to invasive cervical cancer.

- It is developed by the Serum Institute of India in coordination with the Government of India's Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and was approved by the Drug Controller General of India in July 2022.

Q4. With respect to Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY), which of the following statements is/are correct? (Level-Medium)

1. It is a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Central Government.
2. It is a scheme for providing Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for all Senior citizens.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana is a scheme for providing Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens belonging to the BPL category.
- This is a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Central Government.
- The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met by the "Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund".
- The Scheme will be implemented through the sole implementing agency - Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO), a PSU under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Q5. In the context of vaccines manufactured to prevent COVID-19 pandemic, consider the following statements: (Level- Difficult)

1. The Serum Institute of India produced a COVID-19 vaccine named Covishield using mRNA platform.
2. Sputnik V vaccine is manufactured using a vector-based platform.
3. COVAXIN is an inactivated pathogen-based vaccine.

Which of the statements given above 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:

- The Covishield vaccine by the Serum Institute of India was prepared using the viral vector platform. In the vaccine, a chimpanzee adenovirus – ChAdOx1 – has been modified to enable it to carry the COVID-19 spike protein into the cells of humans.
- Sputnik V, the world's first registered vaccine, is based on the human adenoviral vector-based platform.
- Covaxin is an inactivated viral vaccine. It is developed with Whole-Virion Inactivated Vero Cell-derived technology.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. What is the Extended Fund Facility of the IMF? What conditionalities are usually imposed by the IMF on the member nations in exchange of EFF? (250 words; 15 marks) (GS-3; Economics)
2. Just banning them won't be enough to cut down the usage of single use plastic in India. Elaborate. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS-3; Environment)