



CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAY 2020

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Table of Contents

1. INTERNATIONAL MONETARY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE (IMFC)
2. SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY PARKS OF INDIA (STPI)
3. CHITRA GENELAMP-N
4. ANASTOMOSIS
5. TRIMERESURUS SALAZAR
6. SPECIAL DRAWING RIGHTS (SDR)
7. WORLD HERITAGE DAY
8. WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCES
9. ANNAPOORNA TRAINS; JAI KISAN TRAINS
10. DRAFT ELECTRICITY ACT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020
11. REVERSE REPO RATE
12. BUG SNIFFER
13. CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE
14. NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK
15. MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE (MPC)
16. ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORKS BASED GLOBAL IONOSPHERIC MODEL
17. MILK TEA ALLIANCE
18. WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2020
19. WORLD CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DAY (21 APRIL)
20. CIVIL SERVICES DAY
21. ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE EPIDEMIC DISEASES ACT (1897)
22. WORLD BANK REPORT ON REMITTANCES
23. WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME
24. FELUDA AND CRISPR TECHNOLOGY
25. KASOWAL BRIDGE
26. VIDYADAAN 2.0
27. ZONOOSES
28. NUTRIENT BASED SUBSIDY (NBS)
29. SAIYAM
30. KHUDAI KHIDMATGAR
31. KRISHI KALYAN ABHIYAAN
32. REVERSE VACCINOLOGY
33. KHONGJOM DAY
34. DEEP NUDES
35. AMBUBACHI MELA
36. ANTHURIUM
37. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CODE BILL, 2019
38. WORLD MALARIA DAY
39. UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)
40. OPERATION TWIST
41. SWAMITVA YOJANA TO BOOST RURAL ECONOMY
42. g-CNQDs
43. SALEKI
44. NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY
45. E-GRAMSWARAJ PORTAL AND APP

46. BASAVA JAYANTI
47. BASIC STRUCTURE AND THE KESAVANANDA BHARATI CASE
48. AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCILS
49. PRACRITI
50. CERT-IN
51. CVC
52. EXERCISE 'PITCH BLACK'
53. CHAKMAS AND HAJONGS
54. THE REPORT ON TRENDS IN WORLD MILITARY EXPENDITURE
55. COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY (CTBT)
56. RAJA RAVI VARMA
57. IMMUNITY PASSPORT
58. THE GLOBAL REPORT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT (GRID 2020)
59. CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS REGARDING MINORITY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
60. STUDY ON CHINA DAMS BRINGS THE BRAHMAPUTRA INTO FOCUS
61. SPECIAL 301 REPORT
62. ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION
63. DESERT LOCUST
64. ONLINE CAREER SKILLS TRAINING
65. MSP FOR MINOR FOREST PRODUCE
66. MISSILE PARK
67. G7 PARTNERSHIP ON AI
68. PUNITUS SANCTUS

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE (IMFC)

- Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman recently attended through video-conference the Plenary Meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee.
- Discussions at the meeting were based on IMF Managing Director's Global Policy Agenda titled, "Exceptional Times – Exceptional Action".
- IMFC: Composition: 24 members, drawn from the pool of 187 governors. Its structure mirrors that of the Executive Board and its 24 constituencies. As such, the IMFC represents all the member countries of the Fund.
- IMFC meets twice a year, during the spring and Annual Meetings.
- The Committee discusses matters of common concern affecting the global economy and also advises the IMF on the direction its work.
- There is no formal voting at the IMFC, which operates by consensus.
- IMFC advises and reports to the IMF Board of Governors on the supervision and management of the international monetary and financial system, including on responses to unfolding events that may disrupt the system.

SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY PARKS OF INDIA (STPI)

- In light of the current coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has decided to provide rental waiver to IT companies housed in STPI premises in the country from March to June, i.e., for 4 months period as of now.
- About Software Technology Parks of India (STPI): an autonomous society under MeitY established in 1991 with the objective of encouraging, promoting and boosting the export of software from India.
- STPI's Governing Council's Chairperson is the Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology.
- The objectives of the Software Technology Parks of India are; To promote the development and export of software and software services including Information Technology (IT) enabled services/ Bio- IT, provide statutory and other promotional services to the exporters by implementing Software Technology Parks (STP)/ Electronics and Hardware Technology Parks (EHTP) Schemes, SEZ scheme and other such schemes which may be formulated and entrusted by the Government from time to time.
- It provides data communication services including value added services to IT / IT enabled Services (ITES) related industries.
- To promote micro, small and medium entrepreneurs by creating conducive environment for entrepreneurship in the field of IT/ITES.
- To establish and manage infrastructure resources such as Datacom facilities, Project Management and Consultancy and IT support facilities.

CHITRA GENELAMP-N

- It is a diagnostic test kit that can confirm COVID19 in 2 hours at low cost. Developed by Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Trivandrum, an Institute of National Importance, of the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- Confirmatory diagnostic test detects the N Gene of SARS- COV2 using reverse transcriptase loop-mediated amplification of viral nucleic acid (RT-LAMP).

- Test kit is highly specific for SARS-CoV-2 N-gene and can detect two regions of the gene, which will ensure that the test does not fail even if one region of the viral gene undergoes mutation during its current spread.

ANASTOMOSIS

- Surgeons at Chandigarh's PGIMER have re-implanted the severed hand of an assistant sub-inspector in Punjab whose hand was chopped off by a group of Nihang sect members in Patiala over a curfew pass. The surgery, which took 7.5 hours, was a very complex procedure.
- It involves joining various parts of the arm and the hand — bones, muscles, tendons, arteries, veins as well as nerves. The process is called anastomosis.
- An anastomosis is a surgical connection between two structures. It usually means a connection that is created between tubular structures, such as blood vessels or loops of intestine.

TRIMERESURUS SALAZAR

- A new species of green pit viper found in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The new species is the fifth variety of reptile to have been discovered in the State in a little more than year.
- Salazar's pit viper belongs to the genus Trimeresurus Lacépède and has been collected from the Pakke Tiger Reserve in Pakke-Kessang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

SPECIAL DRAWING RIGHTS (SDR)

- India is not supporting a general allocation of new Special Drawing Rights (SDR) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because it feels it might not be effective in easing COVID-19-driven financial pressures.
- New SDR allocation was supposed to provide all 189 members with new foreign exchange reserves with no conditions.
- Such a major liquidity injection could produce potentially costly side-effects if countries used the funds for "extraneous" purposes.
- SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- The value of the SDR is based on a basket of five currencies—the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling.
- So far SDR 204.2 billion (equivalent to about US\$281 billion) have been allocated to members, including SDR 182.6 billion allocated in 2009 in the wake of the global financial crisis.
- SDR was created as a supplementary international reserve asset in the context of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system.
- SDR serves as the unit of account of the IMF and some other international organizations.
- SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF. Rather, it is a potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF members. SDRs can be exchanged for these currencies.
- SDR basket is reviewed every five years, or earlier if warranted, to ensure that the basket reflects the relative importance of currencies in the world's trading and financial systems.

WORLD HERITAGE DAY

- Every year, 18th April is celebrated worldwide as World Heritage Day to create awareness about Heritage among communities.
- The theme of World Heritage Day 2020 is "Shared Culture", 'Shared heritage' and 'Shared responsibility'.

- There are a total of 38 heritage sites in India.
- India ranks sixth with the highest number of heritage sites in the world.
- Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) announced, 18 April as the “World Heritage Day”, approved by the General Assembly of UNESCO in 1983, with the aim of enhancing awareness of the importance of the cultural heritage of humankind, and redouble efforts to protect and conserve the human heritage.
- A World Heritage site is classified as a natural or man-made area or a structure that is of international importance, and a space which requires special protection.
- These sites are officially recognised by the UN and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, also known as UNESCO.
- UNESCO believes that the sites classified as World Heritage are important for humanity, and they hold cultural and physical significance.
- The list is maintained by the international World Heritage Programme administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, composed of 21 UNESCO member states which are elected by the General Assembly.
- Each World Heritage Site remains part of the legal territory of the state wherein the site is located and UNESCO considers it in the interest of the international community to preserve each site.
- To be selected, a World Heritage Site must be an already classified landmark, unique in some respect as a geographically and historically identifiable place having special cultural or physical significance.

WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCES

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a 60% increase in the Ways and Means Advances (WMA) limit of state governments over and above the level as on March 31, with a view to enabling them “to undertake COVID-19 containment and mitigation efforts” and “to better plan their market borrowings”.
- The increased limit comes at a time when government expenditure is expected to rise as it battles the fallout of a spreading Coronavirus. The availability of these funds will give government some room to undertake short term expenditure over and above its long term market borrowings.
- They are temporary loan facilities provided by RBI to the government to enable it to meet temporary mismatches between revenue and expenditure.
- The government makes an interest payment to the central bank when it borrows money.
- The rate of interest is the same as the repo rate, while the tenure is three months.
- The limits for WMA are mutually decided by the RBI and the Government of India.
- They aren’t a source of finance per se. Section 17(5) of the RBI Act, 1934 authorises the central bank to lend to the Centre and state governments subject to their being repayable “not later than three months from the date of the making of the advance”.
- The WMA scheme for the Central Government was introduced on April 1, 1997, after putting an end to the four-decade old system of adhoc (temporary) Treasury Bills to finance the Central Government deficit.
- When the WMA limit is crossed the government takes recourse to overdrafts, which are not allowed beyond 10 consecutive working days.
- The interest rate on overdrafts would be 2 percent more than the repo rate.
- Types of WMA: There are two types of Ways and Means Advances - normal and special.

- Special WMA or Special Drawing Facility is provided against the collateral of the government securities held by the state. After the state has exhausted the limit of SDF, it gets normal WMA.
- The interest rate for SDF is one percentage point less than the repo rate.
- The number of loans under normal WMA is based on a three years average of actual revenue and capital expenditure of the state.
- For the Centre, the WMA limit during the first half of 2020-21 (April-September) has been fixed at Rs 120,000 crore. This is 60% higher than the Rs 75,000 crore limit for the same period of 2019-20. The limit for the second half of the last fiscal (October-March) was Rs 35,000 crore.
- For the states, the aggregate WMA limit was Rs 32,225 crore till March 31, 2020. On April 1, the RBI announced a 30% hike in this limit, which has now been enhanced to 60%, taking it to Rs 51,560 crore. The higher limit will be valid till September 30.

ANNAPOORNA TRAINS; JAI KISAN TRAINS

- Indian Railways continues to deliver essential commodities like food grains through its freight services to strengthen Government's efforts in managing the challenges and adverse impact of corona virus in the country.
- Northern Railway has formed 5000 tonnes long lead long haul loaded foodgrain trains. 25 such Annapoorna trains have been formed and run by NR upto 16.04.2020.
- Like NR, As part of this endeavour, now the South Central Zone of Indian Railways too has come up with a unique concept of running "Jai Kisan" Special freight trains so as to ensure speedy delivery of foodgrains to different parts of the country.
- Under normal circumstances, one freight train containing 42 covered wagons loaded with food grains carries around 2600 tonnes. But in the new concept two freight trains means 42+42 =84 covered wagons with 5200 tonnes capacity food grains will be moved in a single path.

DRAFT ELECTRICITY ACT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2020

- Power Ministry floats draft Electricity Act. This will amend the 2003 act.
- This is the fourth draft of the Electricity (Amendment) Bill since 2014.
- The government had brought first draft in 2014 that was introduced in the Lok Sabha seeking separate carriage and contend electricity distribution business.
- The Bill could have given option to consumers to change their service providers like they do for their mobile phone service. But, unfortunately, that Bill lapsed after dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
- The second and third drafts were circulated in 2018 and 2019.+Key provisions in the bill: The draft proposes to privatise discoms by way of sub-licensing and franchisee models. The sub-licensing will allow states to choose a private company for the distribution of electricity supply of a particular area to help it bring down losses of both electricity and finances.
- The bill proposes to restrict deferment of revenue recovery and reduction in cross-subsidy to bring in a cost-reflective tariff, simplified tariff.
- It also proposes to bring in an Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority (ECEA) to deal with the issues of non-performance of contracts leading to uncertainty.
- For the renewable sector, the draft proposes to bring National Renewable Energy Policy and may bring in a minimum percentage of the purchase for the states from renewable sources.
- The bill enables state as well as central power regulators to specify transmission charges under open access. Earlier, both functions were with the central commission.
- It also provides additional roles to the National Load Desptach Centre that include scheduling and dispatch of power across the country in accordance with contracts.

- It also provides that the cross (power) border trade shall cover import or export of electricity from India and any other country.
- The transaction related to passage of electricity through India would be treated as transit between two other countries.
- The Bill also provides that the Electricity Act would be applicable to the entire country, including the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.
- Composition and powers of Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority: The Authority will be headed by a retired Judge of the High Court. It is proposed to be set-up with powers of the Civil Court.
- It will enforce performance of contracts related to purchase or sale or transmission of power between a generating, distribution or transmission companies.

REVERSE REPO RATE

- Unlike in the past, when the RBI used its repo rate as the main instrument to tweak the interest rates, presently, it is the reverse repo rate that is effectively setting the benchmark.
- The repo rate is the rate at which the RBI lends money to the banking system (or banks) for short durations.
- The reverse repo rate is the rate at which banks can park their money with the RBI.
- Under normal circumstances, that is when the economy is growing, the repo rate is the benchmark interest rate in the economy because it is the lowest rate of interest at which funds can be borrowed and, as such, it forms the floor rate for all other interest rates in the economy.
- However, over the last couple of years, India's economic growth has decelerated sharply. Also, banks are not lending to businesses, partly because banks are too risk-averse to lend and partly because the overall demand from the businesses has also come down.
- Recognising this, the central bank has cut the reverse repo rate more than the repo twice in the space of the last three weeks.
- The idea is to make it less attractive for banks to do nothing with their funds because their doing so hurts the economy and starves the businesses that genuinely need funds.

BUG SNIFFER

- Researchers at the Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology have developed 'bug sniffer.'
- It is a biosensor that uses synthetic peptides, magnetic nanoparticles, and quantum dots to detect the presence of bacteria, providing a cost- and time-effective way of screening water and foodborne pathogens.
- The portable device can detect as low as ten bacterial cells from a sample size of one milliliter in just 30 minutes.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE

- Essentially, a currency's exchange rate vis-a-vis another currency reflects the relative demand among the holders of the two currencies. This demand, in turn, depends on the relative demand for the goods and services of the two countries.
- If the US dollar is stronger than the rupee, then it shows that the demand for dollars (by those holding rupee) is more than the demand for rupees (by those holding dollars).
- The Reserve Bank of India tabulates the rupee's Nominal Effective Exchange Rate (NEER) in relation to the currencies of 36 trading partner countries.

- This is a weighted index — that is, countries with which India trades more are given a greater weight in the index.
- A decrease in this index denotes depreciation in rupee's value; an increase reflects appreciation.
- The Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER) and is essentially an improvement over the NEER because it also takes into account the domestic inflation in the various economies.

NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK

- Finance Minister of India recently attended the 5th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the New Development Bank through video-conference.
- It is a multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).
- The New Development Bank was agreed to by BRICS leaders at the 5th BRICS summit held in Durban, South Africa in 2013.
- It was established in 2014, at the 6th BRICS Summit at Fortaleza, Brazil.
- The bank is set up to foster greater financial and development cooperation among the five emerging markets.
- In the Fortaleza Declaration, the leaders stressed that the NDB will strengthen cooperation among BRICS and will supplement the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global development.
- The bank is headquartered in Shanghai, China.
- Unlike the World Bank, which assigns votes based on capital share, in the New Development Bank each participant country will be assigned one vote, and none of the countries will have veto power.
- The New Development Bank mobilises resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries, to supplement existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development.

MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE (MPC)

- The RBI has a government-constituted Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) which is tasked with framing monetary policy using tools like the repo rate, reverse repo rate, bank rate, cash reserve ratio (CRR).
- It has been instituted by the Central Government of India under Section 45ZB of the RBI Act that was amended in 1934.
- The MPC is entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the different policy rates including MSF, Repo Rate, Reverse Repo Rate, and Liquidity Adjustment Facility.
- Committee will have six members. Of the six members, the government will nominate three. No government official will be nominated to the MPC.
- The other three members would be from the RBI with the governor being the ex-officio chairperson. Deputy Governor of RBI in charge of the monetary policy will be a member, as also an executive director of the central bank.
- The government nominees to the MPC will be selected by a Search-cum-Selection Committee under Cabinet Secretary with RBI Governor and Economic Affairs Secretary and three experts in the field of economics or banking or finance or monetary policy as its members.
- Members of the MPC will be appointed for a period of four years and shall not be eligible for reappointment.
- Decisions will be taken by majority vote with each member having a vote.

- The RBI Governor will chair the committee. The governor, however, will not enjoy a veto power to overrule the other panel members, but will have a casting vote in case of a tie.

ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORKS BASED GLOBAL IONOSPHERIC MODEL (ANNIM)

- Researchers from Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG), Navi Mumbai, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India, have developed a global model to predict the ionospheric electron density with larger data coverage—a crucial need for communication and navigation.
- The model- Artificial Neural Networks based global Ionospheric Model (ANNIM)— has been developed using long-term ionospheric observations to predict the ionospheric electron density and the peak parameters.
- Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) replicate the processes in the human brain (or biological neurons) to solve problems such as pattern recognition, classification, clustering, generalization, linear and nonlinear data fitting, and time series prediction.
- The target (output) of ANNs is the electron density as a function of altitude for any given location and time.
- ANNIM has successfully reproduced large scale anomalies of the ionosphere.
- It also captured the general morphological features of the ionosphere during disturbed space weather periods, such as geomagnetic storms which occurs when the magnetic cloud originated from Sun (known as Coronal Mass Ejection (CME)) interacts with the Earth's magnetosphere.
- The model may be utilized as a reference model in the ionospheric predictions and has potential applications in calculating the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) positioning errors.
- Significance of the model and the need for data on this: The ionospheric variability is greatly influenced by both solar originated processes and the neutral atmosphere origin, and therefore, difficult to model.
- Scientists have tried to model the ionosphere using theoretical and empirical techniques; however, the accurate prediction of electron density is still a challenging task.
- Tracking the variability of the Ionosphere is important for communication and navigation.

MILK TEA ALLIANCE

- It is a pro-democratic front formed by thousands of internet users from Thailand, Taiwan and Hong Kong in social networks against the authoritarianism of the Chinese Government and its supporters.
- The informal movement began by defending itself against the insults of pro-Chinese twitter users against Thailand.
- It has now ended up forming a social network group to combat Chinese “propaganda”.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2020

- The World Press Freedom Index 2020 has been released by the media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders. Norway ranks first for the fourth consecutive year and Finland and Denmark in second and third place.
- India has dropped two places to be ranked 142nd.
- With no murders of journalists in India in 2019, as against six in 2018, the security situation for the country's media might seem, on the face of it, to have improved.
- World Press Freedom Index is published annually by Reporters Without Borders since 2002, the World Press Freedom Index measures the level of media freedom in 180 countries.

- It is based on an evaluation of media freedom that measures pluralism, media independence, the quality of the legal framework and the safety of journalists.
- It also includes indicators of the level of media freedom violations in each region.
- It is compiled by means of a questionnaire in 20 languages that is completed by experts all over the world. This qualitative analysis is combined with quantitative data on abuses and acts of violence against journalists during the period evaluated.

WORLD CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DAY (21 APRIL)

- On the World Creativity and Innovation Day 2020, the United Nations has urged the world to accept that innovation is necessary for harnessing a country's economic potential.
- World Creativity and Innovation Day (WCID) is a global UN day celebrated on April 21 to raise awareness around the importance of creativity and innovation in problem solving with respect to advancing the United Nations sustainable development goals.

CIVIL SERVICES DAY

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted Civil Servants and their families and paid tributes to Sardar Patel on Civil Services Day on 21st April every year.
- On this day, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the first batch of probationers at the All India Administrative Service Training School at Metcalfe House, New Delhi in 1947.
- In his speech he called civil servants as the steel frame of India.
- On the occasion of civil services day and instituted in 2006 all officers individually or as group or as organization are eligible for national civil services awards.

ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE EPIDEMIC DISEASES ACT, 1897

- The Union Cabinet has approved promulgation of an Ordinance to amend the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 to protect healthcare service personnel and property including their living/working premises against violence during epidemics. The ordinance is intended to ensure that during any situation akin to the current pandemic, there is zero tolerance to any form of violence against healthcare service personnel and damage to property.
- Members of healthcare services are targeted and attacked by miscreants, thereby obstructing them from doing their duties. They have become the most vulnerable victims as they have been perceived by some as carriers of the virus. This has led to cases of their stigmatization and ostracization and sometimes worse, acts of unwarranted violence and harassment.
- Such a situation tend to hamper the medical community from performing their duties to their optimum best and maintaining their morale, which is a critical need in this hour of national health crisis.
- Need for a National Level legislation: The existing state laws do not have a wide sweep and ambit. They generally do not cover harassment at home and workplace and are focused more on physical violence only. The penal provisions contained in these laws are not stringent enough to deter mischief mongering.
- The Ordinance provides for making acts of violence cognizable and non-bailable offences.
- It has provisions for compensation for injury to healthcare service personnel or for causing damage or loss to the property in which healthcare service personnel may have a direct interest in relation to the epidemic.
- Violence includes harassment and physical injury and damage to property.
- Healthcare service personnel include public and clinical healthcare service providers such as doctors, nurses, paramedical workers and community health workers; any other persons

empowered under the Act to take measures to prevent the outbreak of the disease or spread thereof; and any persons declared as such by the State Government, by notification in the Official Gazette.

- Punishment can be imprisonment for a term of three months to five years, and with fine of Rs.50,000/- to Rs.2,00,000/-. In case of causing grievous hurt, imprisonment shall be for a term six months to seven years and with fine of Rs.1,00,000/- to Rs.5,00,000/-.
- Offences shall be investigated by an officer of the rank of Inspector within a period of 30 days, and trial has to be completed in one year, unless extended by the court for reasons to be recorded in writing.
- Provisions of the 1897 Epidemic Diseases Act empowers state governments/UTs to take special measures and formulate regulations for containing the outbreak. It also empowers state to prescribe such temporary regulations to be observed by the public or by any person or class of persons as it shall deem necessary to prevent the outbreak of such disease or the spread thereof.
- The state may determine in what manner and by whom any expenses incurred (including compensation if any) shall be defrayed.
- It also provides penalties for disobeying any regulation or order made under the Act. These are according to section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant).

WORLD BANK REPORT ON REMITTANCES

- The World Bank has released a report on the impact of the COVID-19 on migration and remittances. Remittances to India are likely to drop by 23 per cent from \$83 billion last year to \$64 billion this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has resulted in a global recession.
- India is the world's biggest recipient of remittances.
- In 2019, India is estimated to have received \$83.1 billion in remittances from people working overseas, about 12% of the total expected global inflow.
- Remittance flows are expected to fall across all World Bank Group regions, most notably in Europe and Central Asia (27.5 per cent), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (23.1 per cent), South Asia (22.1 per cent), the Middle East and North Africa (19.6 per cent).
- Studies show that remittances alleviate poverty in lower- and middle-income countries, improve nutritional outcomes, are associated with higher spending on education, and reduce child labor in disadvantaged households. They are a vital source of income for developing countries. A fall in remittances affect families' ability to spend on these areas as more of their finances will be directed to solve food shortages and immediate livelihoods needs.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

- The World Food Programme (WFP) is the food assistance branch of the United Nations and the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security. The WFP strives to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, with the ultimate goal in mind of eliminating the need for food aid itself.
- It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its Executive Committee.
- Born in 1961, WFP pursues a vision of the world in which every man, woman and child has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life.
- The WFP is governed by an Executive Board which consists of representatives from member states.

- The WFP operations are funded by voluntary donations from world governments, corporations and private donors.
- WFP food aid is also directed to fight micronutrient deficiencies, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat disease, including HIV and AIDS.
- The objectives of the World Food Programme are to save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies.
- Support food security and nutrition and (re)build livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies.
- Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs.
- Reduce under-nutrition and break the inter-generational cycle of hunger.

FELUDA AND CRISPR TECHNOLOGY

- It is a low-cost, paper-strip test which can detect the new coronavirus within an hour. Developed by Scientists at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research — Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB). It is expected to cost around Rs 500 against the RT-PCR test that costs Rs 4,500 in private labs.
- The test is based on a bacterial immune system protein called Cas9. It uses cutting-edge gene-editing tool Crispr-Cas9 system.
- Genes contain the bio-information that defines any individual. Physical attributes like height, skin or hair colour, more subtle features and even behavioural traits can be attributed to information encoded in the genetic material. An ability to alter this information gives scientists the power to control some of these features.
- CRISPR technology is basically a gene-editing technology that can be used for the purpose of altering genetic expression or changing the genome of an organism. The technology can be used for targeting specific stretches of an entire genetic code or editing the DNA at particular locations.
- CRISPR technology is a simple yet powerful tool for editing genomes. It allows researchers to easily alter DNA sequences and modify gene function. Its many potential applications include correcting genetic defects, treating and preventing the spread of diseases and improving crops. However, its promise also raises ethical concerns.
- CRISPR-Cas9 technology behaves like a cut-and-paste mechanism on DNA strands that contain genetic information.
- The specific location of the genetic codes that need to be changed, or “edited”, is identified on the DNA strand, and then, using the Cas9 protein, which acts like a pair of scissors, that location is cut off from the strand. A DNA strand, when broken, has a natural tendency to repair itself.
- Scientists intervene during this auto-repair process, supplying the desired sequence of genetic codes that binds itself with the broken DNA strand.
- Concerns and issues involved: Tampering with the genetic code in human beings is more contentious. Leading scientists in the field have for long been calling for a “global pause” on clinical applications of the technology in human beings, until internationally accepted protocols are developed.
- Studies highlighted that CRISPR-Cas9-edited cells might trigger cancer.
- May increase the risk of mutations elsewhere in the genome in those cells.
- Many things are not clear like how we should determine which disease or traits are appropriate for gene editing.
- Ethical concerns are concerns with manipulating human embryos for own interest.

KASOWAL BRIDGE

- It is a 484- metre long permanent bridge on the river Ravi to connect the Kasowal enclave of Punjab along the Pakistan border to the rest of the country.
- It has been built by the Borders Roads Organization.
- Kasowal enclave is around 35 square km. It was till now connected through a pontoon bridge of limited load capacity.

VIDYADAAN 2.0

- Union HRD Minister launched national program VidyaDaan 2.0 for inviting e-learning Content contributions. VidyaDaan is conceptualised as a common national program for individuals and organizations across the country to contribute e-learning resources for both school and higher education to ensure continuity of quality learning.
- The content will be used on the DIKSHA app to help millions of children across the country to continue their learning anytime and anywhere.
- Contributions can be made by educationists, subject experts, schools, colleges, Universities, Institutes, government and non-government organisations and individuals.
- The programme has been launched due to the increasing requirement for e-learning content for students in both school and higher education especially in the backdrop of situation arising out of COVID-19.
- The DIKSHA Platform of the Ministry has been operating since 2017 with more than 30 States and Union Territories leveraging DIKSHA for augmenting teaching and learning processes.
- ZONOSSES
- According to experts, the coronavirus outbreak comes from the animal world. It is human activity that enabled the virus to jump to people, and specialists are warning that if nothing changes, many other pandemics of this nature will follow.
- The name given to diseases transmitted from animals to humans is “zoonoses”, based on the Greek words for “animal” and “sickness”.
- They are not new — tuberculosis, rabies, toxoplasmosis, malaria, to name just a few, are all zoonoses.
- According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), 60% of human infectious diseases originate from animals. This figure climbs to 75% for “emerging” diseases such as Ebola, HIV, avian flu, Zika, or SARS, another type of coronavirus. The list goes on.
- The emergence of zoonotic diseases is often associated with environmental changes or ecological disturbances, such as agricultural intensification and human settlement, or encroachments into forests and other habitats.

NUTRIENT BASED SUBSIDY (NBS)

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) gave its approval for fixation of Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for Phosphatic and Potassic (P and K) Fertilizers for the year 2020-21. The approved rates for NBS will be 18 rupees 78 paise per kg for Nitrogen, 14 rupees 88 paise per kg for Phosphorus, 10 rupees 11 paise per kg for Potash and 2 rupees 37 paise per kg for Sulphur.
- The CCEA also approved the inclusion of a complex fertilizer namely Ammonium Phosphate under the NBS Scheme.
- The subsidy on the Phosphorus and Potassium will be provided on the subsidy rates approved by the CCEA to the fertilizer companies.

- Government is making available fertilizers, namely Urea and 21 grades of P&K fertilizers to farmers at subsidized prices through fertilizer manufacturers/importers.
- The subsidy on P&K fertilizers is being governed by NBS Scheme w.e.f 01.04.2010.

SAIYAM

- A mobile application named Saiyam has been developed by the Pune Municipal Corporation under Smart Cities Mission to effectively track the home-quarantined citizens and ensure that they are staying in the home.
- The Mobile Application has GPS tracking so that whenever quarantined citizens leave their homes, City Administration gets alerted and the local ward or the local police station gets informed, who then visit the family.
- Citizens' movements can be monitored centrally real-time from the monitoring cell and are marked as Red, Amber or Green.
- Red signifies that the person has ventured out for longer duration; Yellow signifies that the person has limited movements and Green signifies that the person is confined to house limits.

KHUDAI KHIDMATGAR

- Its 90 years for Peshawar's Qissa Khwani Bazaar massacre. The massacre was perpetrated by British soldiers against non-violent protesters of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement on April 23, 1930.
- The Khudai Khidmatgar was a non-violent movement against British occupation of the Indian subcontinent.
- It was led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a Pashtun freedom fighter, in the NorthWest Frontier Province.
- Post-Independence, The Khudai Khidmatgar opposed Partition, a stance that many interpreted as the movement not being in favour of the creation of the independent nation of Pakistan.
- Post 1947, the Khudai Khidmatgar slowly found their political influence decreasing to such an extent that the movement and the massacre 90 years ago in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar has been wiped out from collective memory.

KRISHI KALYAN ABHIYAAN

- The Krishi Kalyan Abhiyan (KKA) is being implemented in 112 Aspirational districts of the country.
- Launched in 2018 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
- Aims to aid, assist and advise farmers to improve their farming techniques and increase their incomes.
- Krishi kalyan Abhiyaan will be undertaken in 25 Villages with more than 1000 population each in Aspirational Districts identified in consultation with Ministry of Rural Development as per directions of NITI Ayog.
- In districts where number of villages (with more than 1000 population) is less than 25, all villages will be covered.
- The overall coordination and implementation in the 25 villages of a district is being done by Krishi Vigyan Kendra of that district.
- Various activities to promote best practices and enhance agriculture income are being undertaken under this plan such as: Distribution of Soil Health Cards to all farmers
- 100% coverage of bovine vaccination for Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in each village

- 100% coverage of Sheep and Goat for eradication of Peste des Petits ruminants (PPR) also known as sheep and goat plague
- Distribution of Mini Kits of pulses and oilseeds to all
- Distribution of Horticulture/Agro Forestry/Bamboo plant @ 5 per family (location appropriate)
- Making 100 NADAP Pits in each village
- Artificial insemination saturation
- Demonstration programmes on Micro- irrigation
- Demonstrations of integrated cropping practice

REVERSE VACCINOLOGY

- Researchers from Tamil Nadu have developed a vaccine candidate against SARS-CoV2 through 'reverse vaccinology'.
- Previously, Reverse vaccinology has been used for developing vaccinations for meningococcal and staphylococcal infections.
- Reverse vaccinology defines the process of antigen discovery starting from genome information.
- The process includes comparative in silico analyses of multiple genome sequences in order to identify conserved antigens within a heterogeneous pathogen population and identification of antigens that are unique to pathogenic isolates but not present in commensal strains.
- In addition, transcriptomic and proteomic data sets are integrated into a selection process that yields a short list of candidate antigens to be tested in animal models, thus reducing the costs and time of downstream analyses.
- Only proteins can be targeted using this process. Whereas, conventional vaccinology approaches can find other biomolecular targets such as polysaccharides.

KHONGJOM DAY

- The Khongjom Day is a state holiday and celebrated every year on April 23 by the State government to pay tribute to the war heroes of Anglo-Manipuri War 1891 who had sacrificed their lives fighting against the British to protect freedom of Manipur.
- The site is about 35 KM south of Imphal in Thoubal district where the battle was fought between Manipuri and British.

DEEP NUDES

- Deep nudes are computer-generated images and videos.
- Cybercriminals use Artificial Intelligence (AI) software to superimpose a digital composite (assembling multiple media files to make a final one) on to an existing video, photo or audio.
- Because of how realistic deepfake images, audio and videos can be, the technology is vulnerable for use by cybercriminals who could spread misinformation to intimidate or blackmail people.

AMBUBACHI MELA

- In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the annual Ambubachi Mela of Assam has been cancelled this year.
- The festival symbolises the fertility cult of goddess Kamakhya.
- There is no idol in the temple, the goddess is worshipped in the form of a yonilike stone over which a natural spring flows.
- The festival is also known as 'Mahakumbh of the East' as it draws lakhs of devotees from all over the world.

- Social significance of the festival: The ritualistic fair celebrating the goddess' period is one of the reasons why the taboo associated with menstruation is less in Assam compared with other parts of India. The attainment of womanhood of girls in Assam is celebrated with a ritual called 'Tuloni Biya', meaning small wedding.
- Ambubachi Mela serves as an occasion to promote awareness on menstrual hygiene.
- Kamakhya, atop Nilachal Hills in Guwahati, is one of 51 shaktipeeths or seat of Shakti followers, each representing a body part of the Sati, Lord Shiva's companion.

ANTHURIUM

- National Innovation Foundation-India (NIF) boosts new varieties of Anthurium, a flower with high market value, by lady innovator from Kerala. Anthurium (Anthurium spp.) is a vast group of beautiful blooming plants available in a wide range of colors.
- They are beautiful but also purify the surrounding air and remove harmful airborne chemicals like formaldehyde, ammonia, toluene, xylene, and allergens.
- Due to its importance of removing toxic substances from the air, NASA has placed it in the list of air purifier plants.
- Vasini Bai, a women innovator from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, has developed ten varieties of Anthurium by crosspollination. In 2017, she was awarded with the state award at the Ninth National Biennial competition organized by National Innovation Foundation-India (NIF).

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CODE BILL, 2019

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour has made suggestions to the Industrial Relations Code. The code proposes to amalgamate The Trade Unions Act, 1926, The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, and The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.
- In case of natural calamities, payment of wages to the workers until the re-establishment of the industry may be unjustifiable. The law has to be reasonable, in such cases it is for the government to step in and extend a helping hand for the industries.
- A separate and an exclusive chapter should be created for outlining the rights of both the employee and the employer containing the principles pertaining to the industrial relations based on the ILO conventions.
- Union Labour Ministry should include scheme workers like Anganwadi, Asha, Mid-day Meal, etc, in the definition of worker on the ground that this is as per the existing provision for the formation of a Trade Union.
- The Government should give a consolidated and merged definition of worker/ employee so that supervisors, managers, etc. could find a place therein.
- The Bill seeks to allow companies to hire workers on fixed-term contract of any duration.
- Has retained the threshold on the worker count at 100 for prior government approval before retrenchment, but it has a provision for changing 'such number of employees' through notification.
- Provides setting up of a two-member tribunal (in place of one member) wherein important cases will be adjudicated jointly and the rest by a single member, resulting speedier disposal of cases.
- Has vested powers with the government officers for adjudication of disputes involving penalty as fines.
- Introduces a feature of 'recognition of negotiating union' under which a trade union will be recognized as sole 'negotiating union' if it has the support of 75% or more of the workers on the rolls of an establishment.

- Under the code, termination of service of a worker on completion of tenure in a fixed-term employment will not be considered as retrenchment.
- Proposes setting up of a “re-skilling fund” for training of retrenched employees. The retrenched employee would be paid 15 days’ wages from the fund within 45 days of retrenchment.

WORLD MALARIA DAY

- World Malaria Day 2020 is being celebrated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on April 25 with the theme ‘Zero malaria starts with me’. World Malaria Day was established on April 25 in 2007 by the 60th session of the World Health Assembly, WHO’s decision-making body.
- Caused by a parasite that commonly infects a certain type of mosquito which feeds on humans.
- Female Anophelesmosquitoes deposit parasite sporozoites into the skin of a human host.
- Four kinds of malaria parasites infect humans: Plasmodium falciparum, P. vivax, P. ovale, and P. malariae.
- In addition, P. knowlesi, a type of malaria that naturally infects macaques in Southeast Asia, also infects humans, causing malaria that is transmitted from animal to human
- Despite huge progress in tackling the disease, there are still 212 million new cases of malaria and 430,000 malaria-related deaths worldwide each year according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- Most cases (80%) and deaths (90%) were in sub-Saharan African.
- Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative: Among states, Odisha’s Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative is significant. The initiative aims to deliver services to the most inaccessible and hardest hit people of the State. The initiative has in-built innovative strategies to combat asymptomatic malaria.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has released its latest Trade and Development Report. Present global scenario: This is necessary because of the hardship caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Developing countries may see their public external debt increase to \$2.4-3.6 trillion in 2020 and 2021.
- The report outlined three key steps: Automatic temporary standstills: Provides macroeconomic “breathing space” for all crisis-stricken developing countries requesting forbearance to free up resources, normally dedicated to servicing external sovereign debt.”
- Debt relief and restructure programmes: Such programs would ensure the “breathing space” gained under the first step is used to reassess longer-term developing country debt sustainability, on a case-by-case basis.”
- UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964.
- It is part of the UN Secretariat. It reports to the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, but has its own membership, leadership, and budget. It is also a part of the United Nations Development Group.
- It supports developing countries to access the benefits of a globalized economy more fairly and effectively. Along with other UN departments and agencies, it also measures the progress made in the Sustainable Development Goals, as set out in Agenda 2030.
- Reports published by UNCTAD are: Trade and Development Report, World Investment Report, Technology and Innovation Report, Digital Economy Report.

OPERATION TWIST

- The Reserve bank of India has decided to bring back its bond swapping programmed billed as India's Operation Twist with an aim to help monetary transmission.
- The RBI said that it will conduct purchase and sale of government securities under open market operations (OMO) for Rs10,000 crore each on 27 April.
- 'Operation Twist' is RBI's simultaneous selling of short-term securities and buying of long term securities through open market operations (OMO).
- Under this mechanism, the short-term securities are transitioned into long-term securities.
- This operation involves buying and selling government securities simultaneously in order to bring down long-term interest rates and bolster short-term rates.
- There is an inverse relationship between the bond prices and their yields.

SWAMITVA YOJANA TO BOOST RURAL ECONOMY

- On Panchayati Raj Diwas (April 24th), the Prime Minister of India launched 'Swamitva Yojana' or Ownership Scheme to map residential land ownership in the rural sector using modern technology like the use of drones.
- The scheme aims to revolutionise property record maintenance in India.
- The scheme is piloted by the Panchayati Raj ministry.
- The residential land in villages will be measured using drones to create a non-disputable record.
- Property card for every property in the village will be prepared by states using accurate measurements delivered by drone-mapping. These cards will be given to property owners and will be recognised by the land revenue records department.
- Benefits of the scheme: The delivery of property rights through an official document will enable villagers to access bank finance using their property as collateral.
- The property records for a village will also be maintained at the Panchayat level, allowing for the collection of associated taxes from the owners. The money generated from these local taxes will be used to build rural infrastructure and facilities.
- Freeing the residential properties including land of title disputes and the creation of an official record is likely to result in appreciation in the market value of the properties.
- The accurate property records can be used for facilitating tax collection, new building and structure plan, issuing of permits and for thwarting attempts at property grabbing.

g-CNQDs

- Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), an autonomous institute under the DST has found a low-cost metal-free nanomaterial for visible light microbial disinfection which can be an alternative to silver and other metal-based materials. Carbon Nitride Quantum Dots (g-CNQDs) are found to be a viable anti-bacterial alternative to metal/non-metal semiconductors and expensive silver, thus making it cost-effective.
- These nanomaterials possess enhanced biocidal activity attributed to larger surface area of g-CNQDs having more reactive sites and optical absorption both in the ultraviolet and visible region. The gCNQDs have the ability to generate reactive oxygen species (ROS).
- The ROS rapidly interact and damage the immediately available biological macromolecules such as lipids present on the cell membrane or envelope and proteins present on the cellular surface, towards inactivation of the microorganism.
- The dependence on visible light is also advantageous over regular ultraviolet mediated disinfection, which requires cautious handling of the UV light-emitting devices.
- This technology will also be simultaneously explored for antiviral efficiency considering its relevance to the current scenario.

SALEKI

- Amid the countrywide lockdown, the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has recommended coal mining by North-Easter Coal Field (NECF), a unit of Coal India Limited in Saleki proposed reserve forest land, a part of an elephant reserve in Assam.
- The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- Saleki is a part of the Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve that includes the Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary covering 111.19 sq km of rainforest and several reserve forests in Sivasagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts.

NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY

- Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu extended his greetings on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day (April 24).
- On the occasion, Panchayati Raj Ministry conferred Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) Award to Baramulla district in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Ministry of Panchayati Raj commemorates 24th April of every year as the National Panchayati Raj Day, as the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force on this date, thus institutionalizing the Panchayati Raj.
- On this occasion, Ministry of Panchayati Raj awards the best performing Panchayats/States/UTs across the country under various categories namely Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar (DDUPSP), Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (NDRGGSP), Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award (CFGPA), Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) Award and ePanchayat Puraskar (given to States/UTs only).

E-GRAMSWARAJ PORTAL AND APP

- On the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day 2020 (April 24), PM Modi launched a unified e-GramSwaraj Portal and mobile application. The e-GramSwaraj will help in preparing and executing Gram Panchayat Development Plans.
- It will ensure real time monitoring and accountability and is a major step towards digitization down to the Gram Panchayat level.

BASAVA JAYANTI

- Global Basava Jayanthi – 2020 was observed on 26th April digitally.
- Basava Jayanti marks the birth anniversary of Lord Basavanna, the 12th-century poet-philosopher, and the founding saint of the Lingayat faith.
- Basavanna was a 12th-century philosopher, statesman, Kannada poet and a social reformer during the reign of the Kalachuridynasty king Bijjala I in Karnataka, Basavanna spread social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as Vachanaas.
- Basavanna rejected gender or social discrimination, superstitions and rituals.
- He introduced new public institutions such as the Anubhava Mantapa (or, the “hall of spiritual experience”), which welcomed men and women from all socioeconomic backgrounds to discuss spiritual and mundane questions of life, in open.
- As a leader, he developed and inspired a new devotional movement named Virashaivas, or “ardent, heroic worshippers of Shiva”. This movement shared its roots in the ongoing Tamil Bhakti movement, particularly the Shaiva Nayanars traditions, over the 7th- to 11thcentury.

- Basava championed devotional worship that rejected temple worship and rituals led by Brahmins, and replaced it with personalized direct worship of Shiva through practices such as individually worn icons and symbols like a small linga.
- The egalitarianism of Basavanna's Sharana movement was too radical for its times.

BASIC STRUCTURE AND THE KESAVANANDA BHARATI CASE

- Chief Justice Sikri and 12 judges of the Supreme Court in the case of Kesavananda Bharati v State of Kerala by a 7-6 verdict, ruled that the 'basic structure' of the Constitution is inviolable, and could not be amended by Parliament. The basic structure doctrine has since been regarded as a tenet of Indian constitutional law.
- All this effort was to answer just one main question, was the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution unlimited? In other words, could Parliament alter, amend, abrogate any part of the Constitution even to the extent of taking away all fundamental rights?
- In the early 1970s, the government of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had enacted major amendments to the Constitution (the 24th, 25th, 26th and 29th) to get over the judgments of the Supreme Court in RC Cooper (1970), Madhavrao Scindia (1970) and the earlier mentioned Golaknath.
- In RC Cooper, the court had struck down Indira Gandhi's bank nationalisation policy, and in Madhavrao Scindia it had annulled the abolition of privy purses of former rulers.
- All the four amendments, as well as the Golaknath judgment, came under challenge in the Kesavananda Bharati case— where relief was sought by the religious figure Swami Kesavananda Bharati against the Kerala government vis-à-vis two state land reform laws.
- The court held that under Article 368, which provides Parliament amending powers, something must remain of the original Constitution that the new amendment would change.
- The court did not define the 'basic structure', and only listed a few principles — federalism, secularism, democracy — as being its part. Since then, the court has been adding new features to this concept.
- The 'basic structure' doctrine has since been interpreted to include the supremacy of the Constitution, the rule of law, Independence of the judiciary, doctrine of separation of powers, federalism, secularism, sovereign democratic republic, the parliamentary system of government, the principle of free and fair elections, welfare state, etc.
- At the same time, its proponents have hailed the concept as a safety valve against majoritarianism and authoritarianism.

AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCILS

- The COVID-19 pandemic may earn Governor's rule for the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) in Assam.
- The State's Governor is the constitutional head of the BTAD that falls under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and is administered by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).
- Elections were scheduled to be held for the BTC on April 4 but was deferred indefinitely in view of the pandemic. The council's current term expires on April 27.
- As per the Sixth Schedule, the four states viz. Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram contain the Tribal Areas which are technically different from the Scheduled Areas.
- Though these areas fall within the executive authority of the state, provision has been made for the creation of the District Councils and regional councils for the exercise of the certain legislative and judicial powers.

- Each district is an autonomous district and Governor can modify / divide the boundaries of the said Tribal areas by notification.
- **The Governor may, by public notification:** (a) Include any area.(b) exclude any area.(c) create a new autonomous district.(d) increase the area of any autonomous district.(e) diminish the area of any autonomous district.(f) alter the name of any autonomous district.(g) define the boundaries of any autonomous district.
- **Constitution of District Councils and Regional Councils:** (1) There shall be a District Council for each autonomous district consisting of not more than thirty members, of whom not more than four persons shall be nominated by the Governor and the rest shall be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. (2) There shall be a separate Regional Council for each area constituted an autonomous region. (3) Each District Council and each Regional Council shall be a body corporate by the name respectively of the District Council of (name of district) and the Regional Council of (name of region), shall have perpetual succession and a common seal and shall by the said name sue and be sued.
- **Related- 125th amendment bill:** It seeks to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 Autonomous Councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the northeastern region.
- The amendments provide for elected village municipal councils,ensuring democracy at the grassroot level.
- **Powers:** The village councils will be empowered to prepare plans for economic development and social justice including those related to agriculture, land improvement, implementation of land reforms, minor irrigation, water management, animal husbandry, rural electrification, small scale industries and social forestry.
- The Finance Commission will be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to them.
- **Finance:** The Autonomous Councils now depend on grants from Central ministries and the State government for specific projects.
- **Reservations:** At least one-third of the seats will be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura after the amendment is approved.

PRACRITI

- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi have developed a web-based dashboard for predicting the spread of COVID-19 in India.
- The mobile-friendly dashboard, PRACRITI (PRediction and Assessment of CoRona Infections and Transmission in India) gives detailed State-wise and district-wise predictions of COVID-19 cases in India for a three-week period, which is updated on a weekly basis.
- PRACRITI provides the R0 values of each district and State based on data available from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, National Disaster Management Authority, and the World Health Organization.
- R0 is a key parameter of interest on COVID-19 is the basic reproduction number (R0), pronounced 'R naught' and its countrywide variability.
- R0 refers to the number of people to whom the disease spreads from a single infected person. For instance, if an active COVID-19 patient infects two uninfected persons, the R0 value is two.
- Reduction of R0 is key in controlling and mitigating COVID-19 in India.

CERT-IN

- CERT-In (the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) is a government-mandated information technology (IT) security organization. CERT-In was created by the Indian Department of Information Technology in 2004 and operates under the auspices of that department.
- The purpose of CERT-In is to respond to computer security incidents, report on vulnerabilities and promote effective IT security practices throughout the country.
- According to the provisions of the Information Technology Amendment Act 2008, CERT-In is responsible for overseeing administration of the Act.

CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSION

- Sanjay Kothari appointed as Central Vigilance Commissioner by President.
- It is the apex vigilance institution created via executive resolution (based on the recommendations of Santhanam committee) in 1964 but was conferred with statutory status in 2003.
- It submits its report to the President of India.
- The Commission was set up on the recommendation of the K.Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption.
- Consists of central vigilance commissioner along with 2 vigilance commissioners.
- They are appointed by the President of India on the recommendations of a committee consisting of Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha (if there is no LoP then the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha).
- Their term is 4 years or 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- The Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner can be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry, reported that the Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner, as the case may be, ought to be removed.

EXERCISE 'PITCH BLACK'

- Australia has informed India that its premier multilateral air combat training exercise — Pitch Black 2020-scheduled from July 27 to August 14 has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 situation.
- The next edition of Pitch Black is scheduled for 2022.
- In the last edition of Pitch Black in 2018, the Indian Air Force (IAF) for the first time deployed fighter aircraft.
- The defence and strategic engagement between India and Australia has steadily gone up in recent years especially on the bilateral front with naval cooperation at the forefront.
- The bilateral naval exercise AUSINDEX early last year saw participation of the largest Australian contingent ever to India with over 1,000 personnel.

CHAKMAS AND HAJONGS

- Human rights body – Rights and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) – has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention alleging that the Chakmas and Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh are facing hunger and starvation as they were not included in the government's economic package.
- The state government announced the economic package for vulnerable sections in these difficult times of COVID-19 pandemic, among others, to provide 5 kg rice and 1 kg pulses per head to beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Garib Anna Yojana.

- But, Chakmas and Hajongs do not have ration cards as the state government had seized those through an order on October 25, 1991. Hence, the two communities have been forced to buy rice at a higher price.
- About 33% or 22,000 of the 65,875 Chakmas and Hajongs are children. Hunger and starvation have engulfed them because of the violation of the right to food during the pandemic.
- And, the denial of food is being seen as a violation of the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Chakmas and Hajongs were originally residents of Chittagong Hill Tracts in the erstwhile East Pakistan. They left their homeland when it was submerged by the Kaptai dam project in the 1960s.
- The Chakmas, who are Buddhists, and the Hajongs, who are Hindus, also allegedly faced religious persecution and entered India through the then Lushai Hills district of Assam (now Mizoram). The Centre moved the majority of them to the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), which is now Arunachal Pradesh.

THE REPORT ON TRENDS IN WORLD MILITARY EXPENDITURE

- The report on Trends in World Military Expenditure was recently released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri).
- Top three biggest military spenders in the world last year: The United States, China and India.
- This is the first time that India and China have featured among the top three military spenders.
- New Delhi's defence spending grew 6.8% to reach \$71.1 billion in 2019.
- India's military expenditure grew 259% over the 30-year period (1990-2019) and by 37% over the decade (2010–19).
- However, its (India's) military burden fell from 2.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010 to 2.4% in 2019.
- India's military spending has grown significantly over the past decade due to a raft of reasons including a mounting salary bill for about 1.4 million serving personnel, pensions for more than two million veterans and deals worth billions of dollars to induct new combat jets, air defence missile systems, helicopters, warships and artillery guns to enhance capabilities.
- The US topped the list of military spenders with \$732 billion in 2019 accounting for 38% of the total global defence expenditure. It spent almost as much on its military last year as the next 10 highest spenders combined, the report said.
- China's military expenditure has increased continuously since 1994 (for 25 consecutive years). The growth in its military spending has closely matched the country's economic growth.

COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY (CTBT)

- A recent report issued by the United States State Department on "Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Non-proliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments (Compliance Report)" has raised concerns that China and Russia might be conducting nuclear tests in violation of its Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) undertakings.
- However, Russia and China have rejected the U.S.'s claims.
- The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the Treaty banning all nuclear explosions – everywhere, by everyone. The Treaty was negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
- It opened for signature on 24 September 1996.
- The Treaty will enter into force after all 44 States listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty will ratify it. These States had nuclear facilities at the time the Treaty was negotiated and adopted.

- India, North Korea and Pakistan have not yet signed the Treaty.
- A comprehensive test ban has been defined as a “zero yield” test ban that would prohibit supercritical hydro-nuclear tests but not sub-critical hydrodynamic nuclear tests.
- The CTBT is the last barrier on the way to develop nuclear weapons. It curbs the development of new nuclear weapons and the improvement of existing nuclear weapon designs.
- The Treaty provides a legally binding norm against nuclear testing. The Treaty also helps prevent human suffering and environmental damages caused by nuclear testing.

RAJA RAVI VARMA

- April 29 is the birth anniversary of the famed Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma.
- He is remembered for giving Indians their western, classical representations of Hindu gods and goddesses.
- Through his printing press, Varma’s humanised depiction of Hindu pantheon travelled beyond the surfaces of costly canvases, and into the prayer and living rooms of working-class homes.
- He achieved this by making affordable lithographs, which were accessible even to the poor.
- Ravi Varma first started a press in Mumbai and later shifted it to a place near Lonavala.
- His 1873 painting, Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair, won Varma prestigious awards including Governor’s Gold Medal when it was presented in the Madras Presidency, and Certificate of Merit at an exhibition in Vienna.
- In 1904, the British colonial government awarded Varma with the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal.
- In 2013, a crater on the planet Mercury was named in his honour.
- His prominent works include: A Family of Beggars, A Lady Playing Swarbat, Arjuna and Subhadra, Damayanti Talking to a Swan, Jatayu (a bird devotee of Lord Rama), Lady Lost in Thought, Shakuntala.
- Varma is often criticized for being too showy in his paintings. His paintings are also condemned for overshadowing traditional Indian art forms, especially the ones depicting Hindu gods and goddesses. His approach is said to lack the dynamism of expression seen in the traditional paintings.
- Critics have also criticized him for modelling goddesses after prostitutes, saying that his representation of deities have reduced them to the level of mortals.

IMMUNITY PASSPORT

- A few countries have started considering issuing “immunity passports” or some kind of certificates indicating a person has immunity to COVID-19. However, the World Health Organization has warned against idea of ‘immunity passports’.
- The idea for the “immunity passport” or a “back to work” pass is this: If you’ve been infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and recover, then you have immunity that will protect you from getting the disease again for some amount of time.
- WHO says there is currently no evidence that people who have recovered from COVID-19 and have antibodies are protected against a second infection.
- Many have criticised the scheme as both scientifically and ethically controversial.
- Lack of necessary information would make categorising between immune and non-immune persons a challenging as well as potentially dangerous task.

THE GLOBAL REPORT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT (GRID 2020)

- The Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID 2020) has been released by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).
- Nearly five million people were displaced in India in 2019 — the highest in the world so far.
- The displacements in India were prompted by increased hazard intensity, high population and social and economic vulnerability.
- More than 2.6 million people suffered displacement due to the southwest monsoon. 2019 was the seventh warmest year since 1901 in India; its monsoon was the wettest in 25 years.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS REGARDING MINORITY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- In a significant judgment, the Supreme Court has ruled that the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to graduate and postgraduate medical and dental courses, does not violate the rights of minorities under the Constitution.
- The ruling came on a bunch of petitions originally filed in 2012 by the Christian Medical College, Vellore and others, challenging the notifications for NEET issued by the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the Dental Council of India (DCI).
- Petitioners' arguments was that NEET took away the right of the religious and linguistic minority institutions to administer their business, including the right to admit students from the minority community in terms of their own standards.
- Observations made by the Court: Rights of the minority institutions under Articles 19(1)(g) and 30 read with Articles 25, 26 and 29(1) do not come in the way of securing transparency and recognition of merits in matter of admissions.
- State has the right to frame regulatory regime for aided/ unaided minority/private institutions, as mandated by the Constitution. There cannot be any other examination for admitting students.
- NEET is a regulatory measure that is in the larger national interest.
- The regulatory measures in no way interfere with the rights to administer the institution by the religious or linguistic minorities.
- Besides, regulating academics and imposing reasonable restrictions to ensure educational standards, are in national and public interest.
- Constitutional Provisions regarding Minority Educational Institutions: Article 30(1) recognizes linguistic and religious minorities but not those based on race, ethnicity.
- It recognizes the right of religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions, in effect recognizing the role educational institutions play in preserving distinct culture.
- A majority community can also establish and administer educational institution but they will not enjoy special rights under Article 30(1)(a).
- Special rights enjoyed by religious minority institutions are: Under Art 30(1)(a), MEI enjoy right to education as a Fundamental Right. In case the property is taken over by state, due compensation to be provided to establish institutions elsewhere
- Under Article 15(5), MEIs are not considered for reservation
- Under Right to Education Act, MEI not required to provide admission to children in the age group of 6-14 years upto 25% of enrolment reserved for economically backward section of society
- In St Stephens vs Delhi University case, 1992, SC ruled that MEIs can have 50% seats reserved for minorities

- In TMA Pai & others vs State of Karnataka & others 2002 case, SC ruled that MEIs can have separate admission process which is fair, transparent and merit based. They can also separate fee structure but should not charge capitation fee.

STUDY ON CHINA DAMS BRINGS THE BRAHMAPUTRA INTO FOCUS

- China's upstream activities along the Mekong River have long been contentious — but a recent study has sparked fresh scrutiny over its dam-building exercises, reigniting warnings that millions of livelihoods could be destroyed. The US funded study was carried out by research and consulting firm, Eyes on Earth.
- The report was published by the UN-backed Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership, and the Lower Mekong Initiative — a multinational partnership of the U.S. with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.
- Key findings and observations: China built its first dam on the upper Mekong in the 1990s and currently runs 11 dams along the river. The country has plans to build more dams, which are used to generate hydropower.
- Moreover, the Brahmaputra is not entirely dependent on upstream flows and an estimated 35% of its basin is in India. But, India does not have a water-sharing agreement with China.
- Mekong River Commission (MRC): Mandate: It is inter-governmental organisation to jointly manage the shared water resources and the sustainable development of the Mekong River. Membership: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam.

SPECIAL 301 REPORT

- The United States Trade Representative (USTR) has released its Annual Special 301 Report.
- It is prepared annually by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) that identifies trade barriers to United States companies and products due to the intellectual property laws, such as copyright, patents and trademarks, in other countries.
- The Report includes a list of "Priority Foreign Countries", that are judged to have inadequate intellectual property laws; these countries may be subject to sanctions.
- In addition, the report contains a "Priority Watch List" and a "Watch List", containing countries whose intellectual property regimes are deemed of concern.
- India continues to be on the 'Priority Watch List' for lack of adequate intellectual property (IP) rights protection and enforcement.
- Demands by the USTR is that India to join the Singapore Treaty on the Law of Trademarks, a treaty that harmonises trademark registration.

ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION (APEC)

- The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region is expected to post a 2.7 per cent economic decline in 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19. This will be the most significant fall since the near-zero growth rate logged in 2009 during the global financial crisis.
- The region's unemployment rate is projected to rise to 5.4 per cent in 2020 from 3.8 per cent in 2019, or an additional 23.5 million workers being unemployed in 2020.
- Economic rebound: An economic rebound is a forecast for 2021, with the anticipated growth of 6.3 per cent, higher than the projected global economic growth of 5.8 per cent.
- This rebound, however, depends on the effectiveness of containment mechanisms to avoid a second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as measures to stimulate the economy.
- APEC: The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is a regional economic forum established in 1989 to leverage the growing interdependence of the AsiaPacific.

- To create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration.
- APEC works to help all residents of the Asia-Pacific participate in the growing economy. APEC projects provide digital skills training for rural communities and help indigenous women export their products abroad.
- **Members:** APEC's 21 member economies are Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; The Philippines; The Russian Federation; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; United States of America; Viet Nam.

DESERT LOCUST

- Desert Locusts are from the family of grasshoppers. They normally live and breed in desert regions. However, they feed on green vegetation. A single swarm of locusts consist of 40 to 80 million adults. They are capable of travelling upto 150 km in a day.
- The Locusts swarming in the Northern parts of India have so far reached Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh.
- The Locusts are said to have come from Ethiopia and Somalia after crossing Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan. As India has just finished harvesting its Rabi crops, the damages were not major. There were eight locust attacks between 1812 and 1889 in India.
- According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, much of the movement of these locusts is mainly due to Westerlies. The Locust Warning Organization that monitors locusts swarms announced that there are no immediate danger to Delhi due to these swarms.
- The Locusts are controlled with spray of pesticides such as organo-phosphate. This year chemicals such as deltamethrin, lambda-cyhalothrin, chlorpyrifos, fipronil, malathion have been recommended.

ONLINE CAREER SKILLS TRAINING

- The Ministry of Labour and Employment is to provide Career Skills Training under its National Career Service Project in partnership with Tata Consultancy Services.
- The National Career Service Project will provide employment related services to career counselling, job matching, vocational guidance, job search, information on skill development courses, etc. Around 1000 employment exchanges are integrated with NCS. This includes 200 model career centres as well.
- Currently, a new link for work from home has also been added. The NCS also offers functions to create video profiles of job seekers. This platform helps the job seekers to showcase their ability through short videos.
- National Career Service is a Five Year Mission Mode Project launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 20th July, 2015.
- The project is being implemented by the Directorate General of Employment, Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- National Career Service (NCS) is a one-stop solution that provides a wide array of employment and career related services to the citizens of India. It works towards bridging the gap between jobseekers and employers, candidates seeking training and career guidance, agencies providing training and career counselling.

MSP FOR MINOR FOREST PRODUCE

- Recently, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs announced that 23 additional Minor Forest Produce of Minimum Support Price has been included.
- The minimum support price for the existing forest produce was reduced for 50 items. The increase in Minor Forest Produce is from 16% to 66%. In certain cases such as Giloe, the increase is in the range of 190%.
- The Indian Forest Act, 1927 defines forest produce. However, the Minor Forest Produce got its definition only in 2007. Minor Forest Produce includes brushwood, bamboo, canes, honey, cocoon, tusser, roots, tuber, etc.
- The Forest Rights Act was enacted in 2007. The act gives forest rights to live, cultivate, manage and regenerate.
- Around 100 million people living around the forest area are dependent on the forests for their livelihood.
- The data was collected by the National Committee on Forest Rights Act.
- Therefore, it is certainly important to regulate minor forest produce and make sure the tribals make maximum out of it.

MISSILE PARK

- Recently, foundation stone for a missile park called “Agneeprastha” was laid at INS Kalinga.
- The Missile Park aims to provide information about the history of INS Kalinga. The main attraction of the park is the P-70 Ametist. It is an anti-ship missile that is launched under water.
- The Missile Park will also be a motivational arena for minds that are interested in missiles and missile technologies.
- The missile park is to be dedicated to officers, sailors and other support staff that have served in support of INS Kalinga.
- The Park is to operate on solar power. A 2 MW Solar Photo voltaic plant was commissioned at INS Kalinga as well.
- The plant is a part of the National Solar Mission of GoI. It will aid the GoI to achieve its target of 100 GW of solar power by 2022.
- The INS Kalinga is an Indian Navy establishment that reports to the Eastern Naval Command. It is located in Vishakhapatnam.

G7 PARTNERSHIP ON AI

- The Leaders of Group of the seven countries in the world had set up Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence. Recently, US has joined the group to counter Chinese dominance in shaping international standards on surveillance and facial recognition at the United Nations.
- The initiative to launch a global group on Artificial Intelligence was initiated by France and Canada.
- The US initially objected G7 partnership on AI claiming that focusing too much on regulation of AI would hamper innovation.
- It is important for the US to join the partnership as there are several tech giants such as Google, Microsoft and Apple that contribute significant amount to the GDP of US. Also, the international standards set will affect these companies greatly. Therefore, it is important for the US to join the partnership.

- The Group of 7 or G7 is an intergovernmental economic organization that consists of world's largest economies such as France, Canada, Italy, Germany, Japan, UK and US. The group has more than 46% of global GDP.

PUNITUS SANCTUS

- A new fresh water fish called Punitus Sanctus was found in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu. The fish was found in a small water body. Sanctus means 'holy' in Latin. Punitus is a species of fish that are commonly found in the drains of western and Eastern Ghats and also in Eastern Eastern Himalayas.
- The fish was silver in colour. It grows to a maximum length of 7 cm. It has an extended mouth and hence is different from other species of the Punitus. The new fish found has now been deposited in the Zoological Survey of India.
- The Genus Punitus is locally known as Kende in Tamil Nadu and Paral in Kerala. The Punitus belongs to the family of Cyprinidae. Cyprinidae is a family of fresh water fish. They are collectively called Cyprinids. The family includes barbs, goldfish, bitterlings and carps.
- The survey is conducted by the ministry of environment, forest and climate change. It was established in 1916. The survey is conducted to deepen the knowledge about the faunal diversity in the country.

Classic IAS Academy Quiz

Q.1) Which of the following countries are parts of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) or Quad, sometimes mentioned in the news?

1. Japan
2. India
3. China
4. Australia
5. United States

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Q.2) With reference to Exercise Pitch Black, consider the following statements:

1. It is a triennial air combat training exercise.
2. In 2018, the Indian took part in the exercise for the first time.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.3) Recently, the Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020 stated that nearly five million people were displaced in India in 2019. This report has been published by

- a) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- b) International Organization for Migration
- c) Transparency International
- d) Norwegian Refugee Council

Q.4) With reference to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), consider the following statements:

1. It entered into force in August 2011.

2. It curbs the development of new nuclear weapons as well as the improvement of existing nuclear weapon designs.

3. Ghana is the latest country to ratify this treaty.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.5) The 'Annual Special 301 report' is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of

- a) European Union
- b) ASEAN
- c) United States
- d) African Union

Q.6) With reference to the Gram Swaraj Portal, consider the following statements:

1. It will provide detailed records of work under the Gram Panchayati Development Plan (GPDP).

2. It has been launched by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR).

3. Anybody can create an account on this Portal and know about the developmental works of villages.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.7) The term "One country, two systems" is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of

- a) United Kingdom
- b) Palestine
- c) China
- d) United States of America

Q.8) Recently, India has lifted the export ban on hydroxychloroquine. This lifting has been approved by

- a) The Ministry of Corporate Affairs
- b) The Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- c) The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- d) The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers

Q.9) With reference to the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), consider the following statements:

1. The amount in this fund is used to address disaster mitigation as well as relief and rehabilitation purposes.
2. It is financed through the levy of a cess on certain items and approved annually through the Finance Bill.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.10) With reference to the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma, consider the following statements:

1. His paintings were exclusively based on secular subjects.
2. His paintings were known for a three-dimensional effect.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Keys & Explanation

Q.1)

Ans) A

Exp)

- Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is the informal strategic dialogue between India, USA, Japan and Australia with a shared objective to ensure and support a “free, open and prosperous” Indo-Pacific region.
- The idea of Quad was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. However, the idea couldn’t move ahead with Australia pulling out of it, apparently due to Chinese pressure.
- In December 2012, Shinzo Abe again floated the concept of Asia’s “Democratic Security Diamond” involving Australia, India, Japan and the US to safeguard the maritime commons from the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific.
- In November 2017, India, the US, Australia and Japan gave shape to the long-pending "Quad" Coalition to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence (especially China).

Q.2)

Ans) B

Exp)

- **Statement 1 is incorrect.** Exercise Pitch Black is a biennial three-week multilateral air combat training exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Its last edition was held in 2018. Recently, Australia has informed India that the exercise Pitch Black 2020, scheduled to be held from 27th July to 14th August has been cancelled due to the Covid-19. The next edition will be held in 2022.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** The first Pitch Black exercises took place on 15–16 June 1981 between different RAAF units. The 2018 exercise ran from 27 July to 17 August. Participating countries included Australia, Canada, France (New Caledonia), Germany, Indonesia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and the United States. The Indian Air Force took part in the exercise for the first time.

Q.3)

Ans) D

Exp)

- The 'Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020' revealed that conflict, violence and disasters led to 50.8 million internal displacements across the world at the end of 2019. This report is published by Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).
- Internal Displacement refers to the forced movement of people within the country they live in due to conflict, violence, development projects, disasters and climate change.
- As per the report, nearly five million people were displaced in India in 2019. It is the highest in the world.
- The displacements were prompted by increased hazard intensity, high population and social and economic vulnerability. The Southwest Monsoon and Cyclones are two major natural reasons behind of displacements.

Q.4)

Ans) B

Exp)

- **Statement 1 is incorrect.** The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force, since three of the 44 required states have yet to sign it and five to ratify it. These States had nuclear facilities at the time the Treaty was negotiated and adopted. As of August 2011, 35 of these States have ratified the Treaty. Nine States still need to do so: China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States. India, North Korea and Pakistan have not yet signed the Treaty. All 44 States are listed in the Treaty's Annex 2.

- **Statement 2 is correct.** The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the Treaty banning all nuclear explosions - everywhere, by everyone. The CTBT is the last barrier on the way to develop nuclear weapons. It curbs the development of new nuclear weapons and the improvement of existing nuclear weapon designs. When the Treaty enters into force it provides a legally binding norm against nuclear testing. The Treaty also helps prevent human suffering and environmental damages caused by nuclear testing.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.** The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature on 24 September 1996. Since then, the Treaty has reached near-universality. 182 countries have signed the Treaty – the last country to do so was Trinidad and Tobago on 8 October 2009 which also ratified the Treaty on 26 May 2010. 154 countries have ratified the Treaty – most recently Ghana on 14 June 2011.

Q.5)

Ans) C

Exp)

- The United States Trade Representative (USTR) has released its Annual Special 301 Report.
- It is prepared annually by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) that identifies trade barriers to United States companies and products due to the intellectual property laws, such as copyright, patents and trademarks, in other countries.
- It is published pursuant to Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.
- The Report includes a list of “Priority Foreign Countries”, that are judged to have inadequate intellectual property laws; these countries may be subject to sanctions.
- In addition, the report contains a “Priority Watch List” and a “Watch List”, containing countries whose intellectual property regimes are deemed of concern.
- India continues to be on the ‘Priority Watch List’ for lack of adequate intellectual property (IP) rights protection and enforcement.
- While India made “meaningful progress” to enhance IP protection and enforcement in some areas over the past year, it did not resolve recent and long-standing challenges, and created new ones. The same assessment was made in the 2019 report.

Q.6)

Ans) D

Exp)

All the statements are correct.

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has launched eGramSwaraj. It is a user-friendly web-based portal. eGramSwaraj aims to bring in better

- transparency in the decentralised planning, progress reporting and work-based accounting.
- The Gram Swaraj Portal/App will provide monitoring and recording all the work via Gram Swaraj Portal/App will help speed-up the implementation of projects in village areas.
 - It will contain the details of ongoing development works and the fund allocated for the projects, one can access and know about the groundwork.
 - All the details related to Panchayat Sachiv and Panch can be viewed on Gram Swaraj Portal.
 - The works of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj will be accessible through Gram Swaraj Portal. The Gram Swaraj Portal and application will provide a boost in transparency by decentralized planning of development projects, with progress reports updates and increased accountability.
 - Anybody can create an account on the Gram Swaraj Portal and know about the developmental works of villages.

Q.7)

Ans) C

Exp)

- The "One country, two systems" is a constitutional principle of the People's Republic of China describing the governance of Hong Kong and Macau since they became Special Administrative Regions (SARs) of China in 1997 and 1999 respectively.
- In recent years, there has been a growing outcry from Hong Kong's pro-democracy civil society against China's alleged attempts to erode the city's autonomy. This has created tensions between the city's youth and the local government, which is effectively chosen by Beijing.

Q.8)

Ans) D

Exp)

- Recently, India has lifted the export ban on hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malarial drug. The Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Union Ministry for Chemicals and Fertilizers has approved the lifting of ban on the export of Hydroxychloroquine API as well as formulations.
- Manufacturers, except export-oriented units and those in special economic zones, would still have to supply 20% of their production to the domestic market.
- India is a leading exporter of generic medicines across the world and it banned the export of the drug and its formulations in March as the coronavirus outbreak disrupted supply chains.

Q.9)

Ans) B

Exp)

- **Statement 1 is incorrect.** The National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) was constituted under Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. It supplements State Disaster Response Funds of a State, in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in SDRF.
- The National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) was renamed as the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) with the enactment of the Disaster Management Act in 2005. Thus, NDRF amount can be spent only towards meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation. or projects exclusively for the purpose of mitigation, i.e, measures aimed at reducing the risk, impact or effect of a disaster or threatening disaster situation a separate fund called National Disaster Mitigation Fund has to be constituted.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** The National Disaster Response Fund is financed through the levy of a cess on certain items, chargeable to excise and customs duty, and approved annually through the Finance Bill. The requirement for funds beyond what is available under the NDRF is met through general budgetary resources.
- This fund is located in the “Public Accounts” of Government of India under “Reserve Funds not bearing interest”. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audits the accounts of NDRF.

Q.10)

Ans) B

Exp)

- **Statement 1 is incorrect.** Raja Ravi Verma is considered as the founder of modern Indian art. He excelled in two types of subjects - one was portraiture and another was mythological themes. He was notable for making lithographs of Hindu deities and episodes from the epics and Puranas. He often modelled Hindu Goddesses on South Indian women, whom he considered beautiful.
- Ravi Varma is particularly noted for his paintings depicting episodes from the story of Dushyanta and Shakuntala, and Nala and Damayanti, from the Mahabharata. Ravi Varma's representation of mythological characters has become a part of the Indian imagination of the epics.
- Few famous paintings of Raja Ravi Verma on common human life are Lady Giving Alms at the Temple, A Lady Playing Swarbat, Nair Woman, Romancing Couple, Woman holding a fan etc.
- **Statement 2 is correct.** Raja Ravi Verma excelled in three-dimensional effect which comprises delicate handling of skin tones to adding textures to the jewellery and giving sari border a three-dimensional effect. 3D painting of the Mysore king in a horse is an excellent creation of Raja Ravi Verma. This painting is available at the Mysore palace.

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