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# Polity and Governance

## 1. Electric Vehicles – Is India Ready for it?

The government has set the target of achieving 100% Electric vehicles by 2030. Manufacturing and putting the electric cars on road is the vision to make India pollution free along with saving billions of dollars in fuel cost and creating new job opportunities. However, there are also criticisms that India is not yet ready for electric vehicles which we will discuss in this article with a suitable way forward.

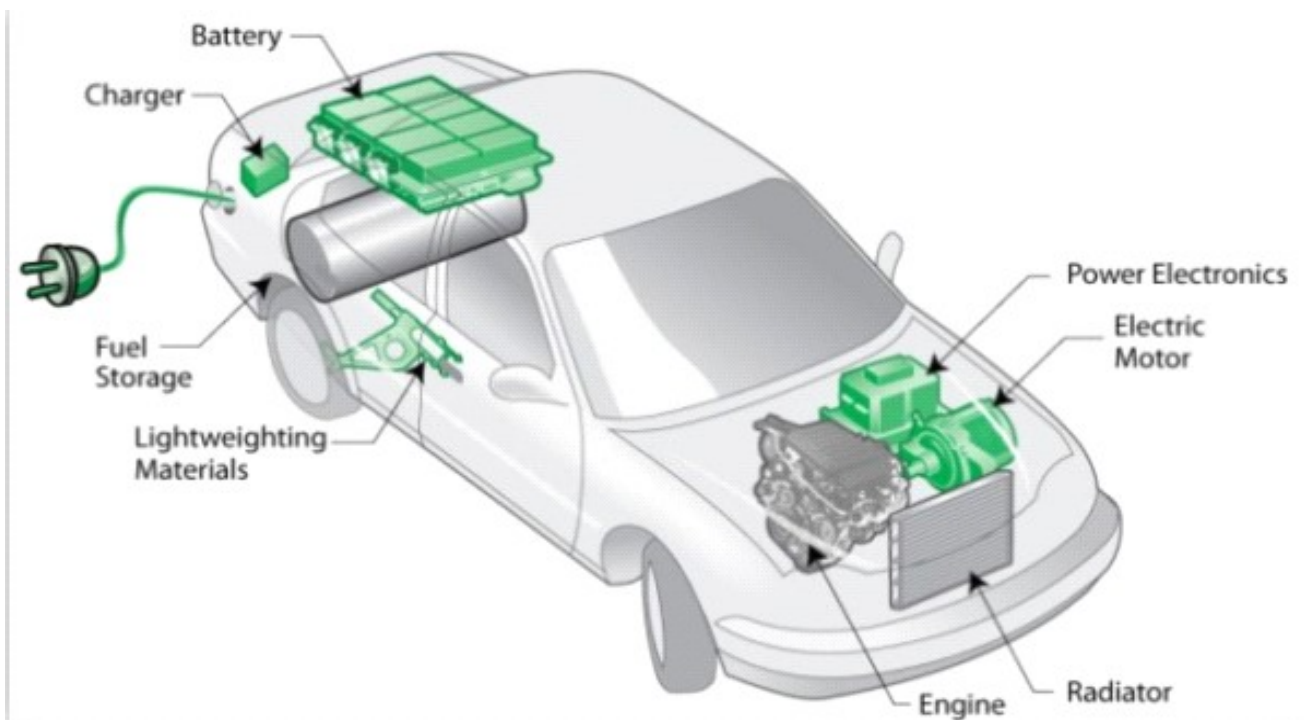
### What are Electric Vehicles (EVs)?

- Electric vehicles, unlike conventional petrol and diesel vehicles, use one or more electric motors for propulsion rather than the internal combustion engine.
- Electric vehicles have a battery that is charged by means of electricity supply
- The electric energy is then stored and used to run the electric motor. There are different types of electric vehicles.
- It includes fully electric vehicles and hybrid electric vehicles (Electric Motor + Combustion Engine)

### Advantages:

#### Environment/Health:

- Vehicles with Internal combustion (IC) engines cause half of the pollution in the cities as they emit harmful gases like Carbon Monoxide, Nitrogen Oxides, Sulphur Dioxide, Hydrocarbons, etc. = Air pollution & Global warming. The air pollution induces deadly diseases particularly for elderly people, pregnant women, and children.



- IC engines also cause noise pollution in cities.
- On the other hand, Electric Vehicles are 100% environment-friendly as they do not emit toxic gases or smoke in the environment which leads to global warming + they also operate quietly compared to conventional vehicles.
- It will help India in its commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement.
- Thus Electric vehicles provide the possibility of not only eliminating the pollution from cities but also improve the health and the environment as a whole.

### **Economy:**

- **Oil Imports:** India is the 5 largest importer of oil, importing more than 2.2 million barrels a day to satisfy around 70% of demand in the country. Most of the consumption of oil is in the transport sector. Therefore electric vehicles can significantly reduce India's oil imports = reduce Current Account Deficit.
- **Cost Effective:** With the advent of advanced technology and dedicated R&D, the cost and maintenance of electric vehicles have gone down. Government is also incentivizing the use of electric vehicles by providing subsidies and lower motor taxes on EVs.
- **Less Maintenance:** Less Fluids (for oil and transmission) to change + Less Moving Parts in EVs = Less Maintenance

### **Disadvantages:**

- **Less Range:** Electric engines provide only limited mileage. A complete battery recharge takes up to 8 hours and there is a lack of quick charge plug-in stations available across the country. **Less Power:** The top speed of electric cars is at 70 mph (even less for smaller electric vehicles) which make them a poor bet with highway driving.
- **Costly:** Electric vehicles are costlier than gasoline-powered vehicles within the same range due to the hefty price of the lithium-ion batteries. Moreover, the insurance cost will be estimated to be higher for electric vehicles than conventional ones due to the danger of running out of power in a bad spot, its higher cost, and the dangers associated with electricity. Lastly, maintenance costs as a result of new technology and developing skills make electric cars even more costly.
- **A small amount of Pollution:** Even though electric vehicles are classified as green cars, the toxicity of batteries is high and not all electricity is derived from renewable energy source.

### **Challenges for India in implementing Electric Mobility:**

- Apart from the disadvantages as mentioned above, there are also key challenges unique to India with respect to electric vehicles.
- **Market Penetration:** Currently, the Indian electric vehicles' market penetration is one of the lowest in the world.

- **High production cost:** The Indian EV industry has been hit hard because of the rapid depreciation of rupee = High production cost due to the high import cost of inputs.
- **Local production of inputs:** for EVs stands at just 35% of total inputs production.
- **Policy:** An uncertain policy environment and the lack of supporting infrastructure are major challenges of implementing EVs across India.
- **Cost effective batteries:** India has only a limited ability to manufacture cost effective batteries + it does not have any known reserves of lithium and cobalt = Dependent on imports of lithium-ion batteries from Japan and China.
- **High GST rate** for EVs = Less incentive for manufacturers/consumers to invest in or buy EVs

### **International experience:**

- In Norway, one in three vehicles (33.1%) registered is plug-in electric.
- China and the US constitute more than half of electric cars in the world.
- China's auto industry is rapidly turning all-electric.
- China aims at having 5 lakh public charging stations in place by 2020.
- UK and France are targeting towards 100% electric cards by 2040

### **Initiatives taken in India:**

**Target:** India has set a target of making a complete shift to electric mobility by 2030.

### **The National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2013**

- It seeks to achieve national fuel security by promoting hybrid and electric vehicles in the country.
- It sets an ambitious target to achieve 6-7 million sales of hybrid and electric vehicles every year from 2020 onwards.
- The government has also announced the scheme named Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid&) Electric Vehicles (FAME India) under NEMMP with an initial allocation of Rs. 75 crore.

### **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME India)**

- The scheme was launched in 2015 to promote early adoption and market creation of both hybrid and electric vehicles in the country through upfront incentive on the purchase of Electric vehicles and also by way of establishing a necessary charging Infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Heavy Industries.

- Phase 2 of the scheme named FAME II – the expanded version of FAME with the allocation of Rs. 10,000 crore over 3 years was recently approved by the cabinet.

### **Concerns with the government's efforts:**

- Promoting EVs manufacturing without ensuring adequate demand for the vehicles produced. More incentive on 4-wheeler segments even though the electric 2-wheelers and 3-wheelers are most appropriate for Indian conditions.
- It is because 2-wheelers account for 76% of vehicles in the country and consume most of the fuel. However, under FAME India scheme, the amount of incentive is relative to the size of the battery in the vehicle = more incentives for 4-wheeler segments.
- Moreover, for electric vehicle manufacturers to benefit from the FAME scheme, at least 50% of their EVs must be produced locally. However, it is not the right approach as has been experienced in the solar panels manufacturing.

### **Solutions:**

- **Ensure Demand:** More focus should be given towards the creation of demand by making it easy and cheap for consumers to switch to electric vehicles.
- **Incentives:** The focus should also shift from subsidizing vehicles to subsidizing batteries as batteries take up 50% of EV costs. And more incentives should be given for electric two-wheelers and three-wheeler segments than four-wheelers.
- **Retrofitting:** Retrofitting (addition of a new component/technology) existing small vehicles can be considered for a nominal cost for consumers. Example- the CNG fleet of Delhi's auto-rickshaws can be turned into an all-electric/hybrid fleet at a very low cost to owners. But it will require some innovative finance on the part of the government.
- **Raw material:** Acquiring lithium fields in Bolivia, Australia and Chile could become as important as buying oil fields since India needs raw material to manufacture batteries for EVs. India could also diversify the supply risk by including lithium in existing Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) or creating new PTAs with other lithium producing countries.
- **R&D:** Creating a vibrant battery research and development ecosystem domestically to develop alternative technologies containing minerals with low supply risks + battery recycling techniques to recover the raw materials in the batteries.
- **Charging points:** A wide network of charging stations is required for attracting investments. Tech Parks, Public bus depots and Multiplexes are some of the potential places to install charging points. Corporate

shall invest in charging infrastructure under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

- **Technical concerns:** such as AC versus DC charging stations, handling of peak demand, grid stability, etc. should be addressed promptly.
- **Renewable energy sources:** should also increase with the increase in EV demand as high dependence on thermal sources would negate the EV's environmental benefits.
- **Policy roadmap:** on EVs for planned investments in the sector. Financial concerns: can be addressed by providing a waiver of road tax and registration fees, GST refunds and free parking spaces for EVs.

Therefore, Electric vehicles have a long way to go before entering the mainstream as researchers develop new technologies, increase the availability of plug-in stations, and other disadvantages that make electric vehicles not yet ready for running on the roads of India. However, with innovative policy and implementation mechanism, the target of achieving 100% electric vehicles by 2030 could be realized much sooner.

## 2. Emergency Response Support System (ERSS)

20 and Union territories have so far joined a pan-India network of single emergency helpline number '112' on which immediate assistance can be sought by anyone in distress.

**About:** The Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) envisages a single pan-India emergency number '112', which is an internationally recognised number, to target all types of emergencies.

### Features:

- The single number for emergency services is similar to '911' in the United States.
- The '112' helpline is an integration of police (100), fire (101) and women (1090) helpline numbers.
- On pressing the number, the system would identify the location of the person in distress connecting through voice or data and immediate assistance would be provided.
- **SHOUT:** To ensure safety of women, a SHOUT feature has been introduced in '112 India' mobile app **to seek immediate assistance from registered volunteers in the vicinity** apart from the immediate assistance from Emergency Response Centre (ERCs). **The SHOUT feature is exclusively available to women.**





**Parent Programme:** The project is being implemented under Nirbhaya Fund, which was set up by the central government for projects specifically designed to improve the safety and security of the women.

**Background:** In November 2018, Himachal Pradesh became the first state to launch pan-India single emergency number '112' under ERSS project.

### 3. Demonetisation – A Success or a Failure?

The government under the prime ministership of Narendra Modi on November 8, 2016, had announced that the largest denomination of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 were demonetised with immediate effect ceasing to be a legal tender. This move led to widespread impacts across all the sectors of the economy.

In a recent report by Azim Premji University, around 50 lakh people lost their jobs since demonetization was launched in November 2016. This report on jobs has come at a time when employment is one of the biggest issues in the Lok Sabha elections.

#### **Demonetisation:**

- Demonetization refers to the decision of the government to revoke the legal tender status of a currency note. (Note- All the currencies issued by RBI are used as a legal tender because the value they bear is assured by the RBI).
- Once the currency note is demonetised, it cannot be used anymore.
- Central banks all over the world follow a practice where older currency notes are revoked and new currency notes with better features are issued.

#### **Was this the first time the government is demonetising?**

- India opted for demonetization two times before the 2016 monetisation.
- The first instance of demonetisation by the government was implemented in 1946 when the RBI demonetised Rs 1,000 and Rs 10,000 notes.
- Later, higher denomination bank notes (Rs 1000, Rs 5000 and Rs 10000) were reintroduced in 1954. However, the Morarji Desai government demonetised these notes in 1978.
- According to data provided by RBI Rs 10,000 note was printed in 1938 and 1954 and was subsequently demonetised in 1946 and 1978 respectively.
- Demonetisation has been implemented in India primarily because of economic and political issues like hyperinflation, hostilities, political turmoil, or other sensitive states of affairs like corruption, etc.

#### **Main motives behind 2016 demonetisation:**

Government and RBI had many intentions behind this. The major objectives of the demonetisation drive are as follows:

- **Curb Corruption:** Cash and corruption are correlated. By reducing the cash circulation one can control the corruption as well.
- **Eliminate Counterfeiting/Fake currency:** The Annual Report of RBI shows that during the year 2016-'17, Rs 41.5 crores worth of fake currency notes in the form of old Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes were detected in the banking system. The estimate of the total fake currency in the system was Rs 400 crores.
- **Tackle Terrorism:** High denomination notes like Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 are often used in terrorist/naxalist activities, drug, and human tracking. In addition, these notes constitute a huge percentage of money spent during general elections by political parties and candidates in India.
- **Eradicate Black Money:** The accumulation of black money generated by the income that has not been declared to tax authorities (tax evasion).
- Demonetisation would bring back those black money in the form of high-value notes into the banks which otherwise would not have any value.
- Improve digital transactions.
- Lower Cash-to-GDP ratio.

### **Positive impacts of demonetisation:**

#### **Increase in tax collection:**

- Due to the demonetisation drive, there is a considerable increase in the number of Income Tax Returns (ITRs) led.
- The number of Returns led as on August 2017 registered an increase of 24.7% compared to a growth rate of 9.9% in the previous year.

#### **Tackling Black Money:**

- Transactions of more than 3 lakh registered firms are under the radar of suspicion while one lakh companies were struck off the list.
- The government has identified more than 37000 shell companies which were engaged in hiding black money and hawala transactions.
- About 163 companies which were listed on the exchange platforms were suspended from trading due to the pending submission of proof documents.

#### **Impacts on terrorism, Naxalism, and tracking:**

- Due to demonetisation, terrorist and Naxalite nancing has stopped almost entirely. The surrender rate has reached its highest since the demonetisation is announced.
- According to the Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi and several others working to ght human tracking, the note ban had led to a huge fall in sex tracking.

- Since demonetisation, no high-quality fake currency notes were found/seized by intelligence operations, including at the Indo-Bangladesh border.
- Furthermore, it also affected the hawala operators and dabba trading venues

### **Increase in digital transactions:**

- In 2015-16, the value of transactions for debit and credit cards was <sup>1</sup> 1.6 lakh crore and <sup>1</sup> 2.4 lakh crore, respectively; in 2016-17, it was <sup>1</sup> 3.3 lakh crore for each. Thus digital transactions have increased by around 50-55% points since demonetisation.
- Increase in digital transactions = RBI has to print fewer notes = save printing costs of the government. In addition to demonetisation, digital transactions have also been boosted by the launch of BHIM and UPI App.
- Increase in digital transactions could also improve the e-commerce business due to a decline in Cash On Delivery (COD) demand which could cut down their costs.

### **Concerns/negative impacts of demonetisation:**

#### **Poor Planning:**

- At the time of demonetisation, the high-value notes constitute 87.5% of the currency value which is certainly a huge percentage of currency in the economy.
- Therefore, the same amount of currency should have been printed and made ready for the circulation in the economy once the demonetisation drive started.
- However, India went for demonetisation without having done this which led to many repercussions.

#### **Economic impacts:**

**Jobs:** As people ran out of money, they could not be able to pay = economic activity slowed down & supply-chain affected particularly in the informal sector = A lot of people have lost their jobs. In a recent report by Azim Premji University, around 50 lakh people lost their jobs since demonetization was launched in November 2016.

**Savings:** Households are now holding far more of their savings in cash than in the year prior to demonetisation = setback to the attempt at financialising household savings.

**Govt expenditure:** by RBI cost the government around Rs 8000 crore during the period between July 2016-June 2017.

**GDP:** During the Demonetisation, many industries were not able to continue their production activities due to the decrease in consumption demand. This is the reason why the country's growth rate, which was 7.5% in

September 2016 declined to 5.7% in June 2017. It means the demonetisation caused a reduction of 1.5% in the Indian GDP.

### **Tax Evasion/Black Money:**

- One of the main motives behind demonetisation was to get people to pay taxes and eradicate black money. But cash is only one component of black wealth (about 1% of it).
- Black money is produced by different means which are not affected by the one-shot squeezing out of cash as it can quickly regenerate.
- Also, People very quickly found ways around the system to evade taxes. Many converted the unaccounted money into legal tender.
- Thus demonetisation itself became a tool for turning the black money into white. Moreover, there were logistical difficulties in penalising all of them = whole purpose gets defeated.

**Corruption:** It was claimed that the drive would reduce corruption by bringing to light the corrupt rich and by reducing the cash flow. But it is apparent that the corruption has not yet suppressed since demonetisation.

**Fake notes:** The number of fake notes in the banking system jumped by 20.4 % during 2016-17 compared to the previous year. Apart from this, we have heard the news of the fake notes coming out of ATM across the country.

### **Cash-GDP ratio:**

- The cash-GDP ratio has reached levels similar to the period before demonetisation.
- Hence the government's expectation of bringing behavioural changes among the people in terms of holding cash was not realized.

### **Agriculture:**

- Reports of stress in agriculture have begun to appear because of demonetization.
- It is because; cash is the dominant mode of transaction in the agriculture sector from Sale, transport, marketing, and distribution of ready produce to wholesale centres or mandis.

### **Other impacts:**

- Real-estate – It was badly affected as it is highly cash-dependent and has long been a favourite asset for holding black wealth.
- Banks –Banks are not in a position to considerably increase lending; their net interest income has decreased, thus, worsening their capital situation and their NPA situation got worse.
- Stock market – Demonetisation hasn't really affected the overall stock market much and investors believe the impact is temporary, with lower interest rates and more government spending offsetting any adverse effects.



- Foreign investors –Foreign investors were major sellers of equities because they feared an economic slump, resulting in the slump in the stock market.

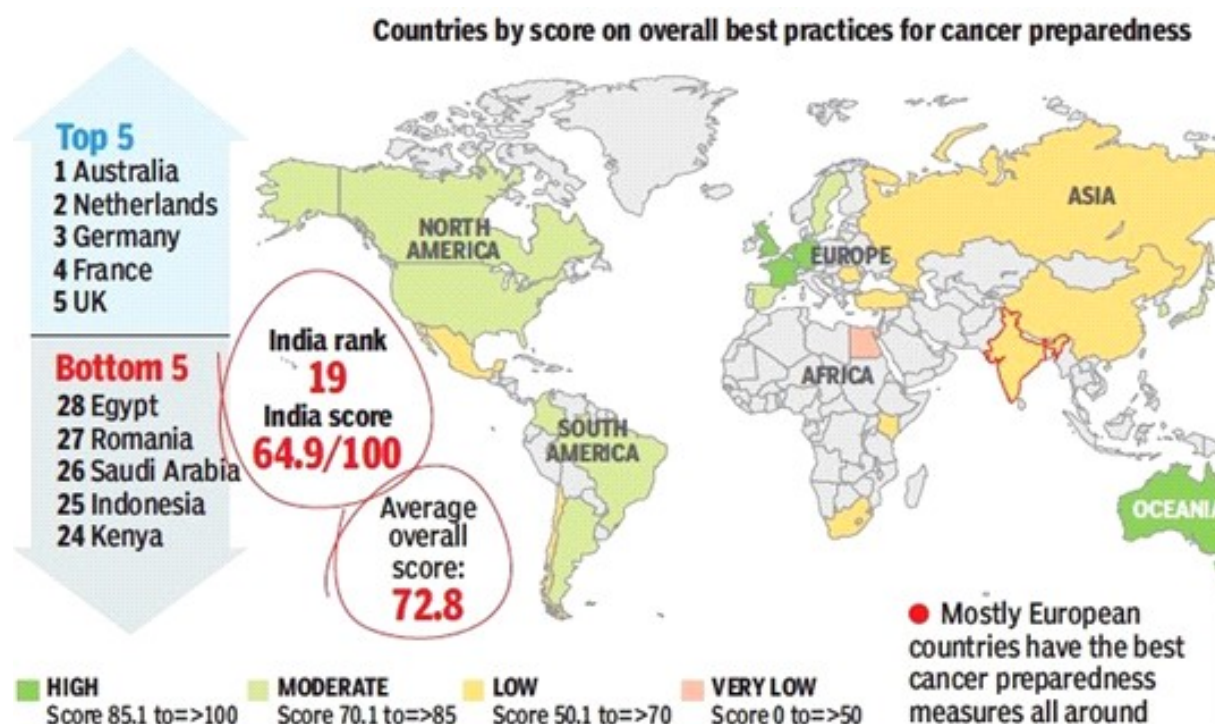
To summarize, the main benefit that the demonetisation brought about was the considerable increase in the number of income tax returns led and the resultant tax collections. It also led to a formalisation of the economy.

However, these could have been achieved by other policy initiatives as well and not necessarily by demonetisation. Tax reforms and effective monitoring of suspicious transactions could be a viable alternative for resolving the issues that the policy-makers sought to x through demonetisation. Another benefit is that digital transactions have become more common. But financial savings in the form of currency notes have also increased, which means that people still value cash. To conclude in the words of the ex-RBI governor, Raghuram Rajan, “the demonetisation is not a well-planned or well-thought-out, useful exercise”.

## International Relations

### 4. Index of Cancer Preparedness (ICP)

India is ranked at 19 out of 28 countries in the Index of Cancer Preparedness (ICP) released by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).



#### About:

- **Report name:** ICP has been introduced as part of the report titled “Cancer preparedness around the world: National readiness for a global epidemic.”
- **Prepared by:** The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).
- **Countries covered:** 28 countries.
- **Objective:** To allow benchmarking of national efforts and identify best practice in addressing the cancer challenge.
- **Domains covered:** The ICP explores the issue of cancer preparedness through three broad domains: 1) policy and planning; 2) care delivery; and 3) health systems and governance.
- **Four essentials of cancer preparedness:** Investment (appropriate spending and resources), roadmap (effective planning), foundation (functioning health systems) and intelligence (availability and quality of cancer-related data).

#### Findings on overall best practices for cancer preparedness:

- **Top 3:** Australia tops the ICP, followed by the Netherlands and Germany.
- **Bottom 3:** Saudi Arabia, Romania and Egypt face the largest room for improvement.

- **Indian Scenario:** India is ranked 19 out of 28 countries with a score of 64.9/100.

### Important Info:

Cancer is the world's second biggest killer, responsible for 9.6m deaths in 2018—roughly one out of six across the globe—and the leading or second largest cause of mortality before the age of 70 in over half the world's countries.

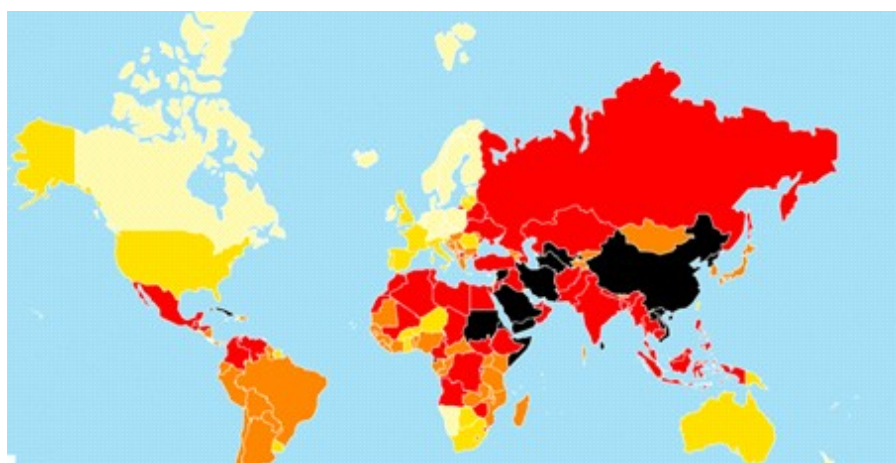
## 5. World Press Freedom Index

### Context:

Recently “The Reporters Without Borders (RSF)” has released the World Press Freedom Index 2019.

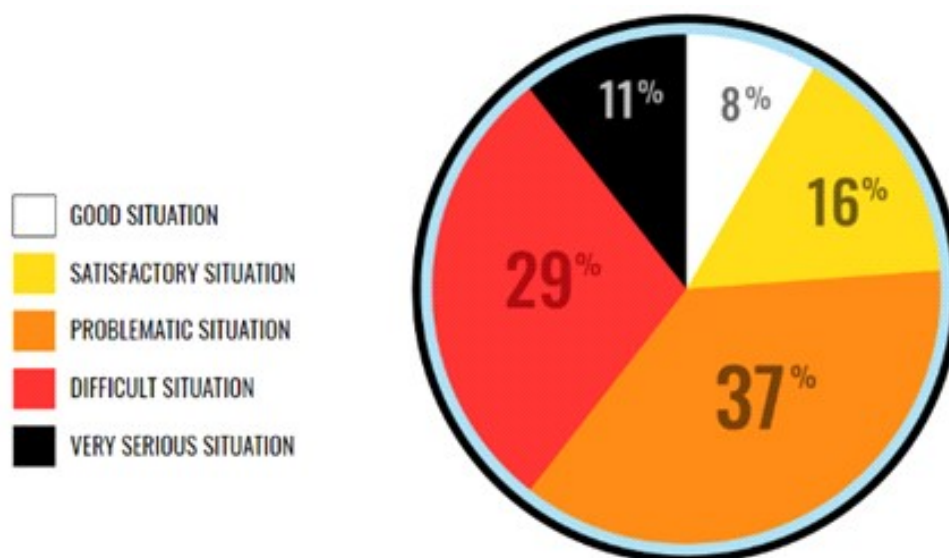
### Highlights

The 2019 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) shows how hatred of journalists has degenerated into violence, contributing to an increase in fear. The number of countries regarded as safe, where journalists can work in complete security, continues to decline, while authoritarian regimes continue to tighten their grip on the media.



### Performance of various countries:

- The index has been topped by Norway again for the third year, followed by Finland and Sweden at second and third positions, respectively.
- Only 24 percent of the 180 countries and territories were classified as “good” or “fairly good”, as opposed to 26 percent last year.
- Of all the world's regions, Americas (North and South) suffered the greatest deterioration, falling by 3.6 percent, in its regional score.
- The Middle East and North Africa region continues to be the most difficult and dangerous for journalists.
- Syria (174th) continues to be extremely dangerous for media personnel and as does Yemen (168th).
- The Asia-Pacific region continues to rank third last. The number of murdered journalists was extremely high in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. Disinformation is becoming a big problem in the region.



### Observations on India:

- India's rank dropped down to 140th from 138th in 2018, two points below the previous year.
- As per the Index, one of the most striking features of the current state of press freedom in India is violence against journalists including police violence, attacks by Maoist fighters, criminal groups and corrupt politicians.
- The media coverage in the sensitive regions like Kashmir continues to be very difficult. Even the entry of foreign reporters is prohibited in Kashmir and the Internet is often disconnected there.

### About World Press Freedom Index:

- 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.

## 6. Israel Palestine developments

### Context

- On May 1, 2017, Hamas published a policy document approved by all the movement leaders.
- The leaders clarified that the document was not replacing the Hamas Charter but was aimed at adapting the movement's position to the current time.



- The policy document is aimed at casting the movement in a pragmatic, democratic, tolerant, and non-extremist light, in order to burnish its image in the world and to present a political position that it shares with Fatah and the PLO.
- However, it is full of internal contradictions that are irresolvable.
- One of these is the contradiction between the political view that it sets out regarding a state in the 1967 borders as a “national, agreed-upon, and joint formula” by Hamas, Fatah and the PLO and other statements in the document setting out Hamas’s unwillingness to relinquish any part of Palestine, its demand for the refugees’ return to their homes, and its non-recognition of Israel.
- The document also states that Hamas insists on continuing the armed struggle and jihad.
- Hama’s founding charter, which was published in 1988, defines Hamas “as a universal Islamic movement and one of the branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.” Consequently, Hamas has been tied to the Brotherhood for the past 29 years.
- The new Document of General Principles and Policies announced from Doha, Qatar, many articles that were included initially and that mentioned the Muslim Brotherhood were removed.

### **Israel Palestine history**

- The region of present Israel has been battled over for millennia. The nations and people in charge of it keep shifting. If the question is “who was there first,” then the answer is the Jews.
- Their faith is a few millennia older than Christianity and Islam, and was founded in the land of “Judea,” which is now in the West Bank.
- In Jerusalem, Judaism’s holiest city, Jews have had an unbroken presence since the city was built. However, this presence was at time limited to one or two Jews. Christians and Muslims have controlled the region at times.
- The Nation of Israel is an ancient term referring to the Jewish people, but an actual nation called Israel (specifically, a kingdom) was founded about 1000BCE.
- Around 70AD, the first Jewish Revolt occurred (and failed), Jerusalem was sacked, and a large (but not 100%) Jewish exile occurred. A few more exiles and leadership changes and the land became predominantly Christian.
- In 614 the land became Persian, briefly. By 640, Arabs conquered the region and Jerusalem fell (again), and the land was renamed “Filastin”. It’s also worth pointing out that the Jews and Arabs were allies at this point against the Persians.
- Islam existed at this point, but it would be replaced as the dominant faith of the region in 1095 during the Crusades. The Moslem leadership

shifted repeatedly, with the last Muslim governors being the Turks, as the land was part of the Ottoman Empire.

- At no point in this timespan did “Palestinians,” be they Jews or Christians or Muslims, control their own land or have their own nation since the fall of the Kingdom of Israel. The term “Zionism” arose at this time, reflecting the desire for Jews to return to their ancestral homeland. The movement at this point was religious and small.
- In 1917, when the British, French and Russians controlled much of the regions once belonging to the Ottomans, including what is now Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, as well as what was then “Palestine.” Note that Jews existed in Palestine at this time along with the Arab Muslims, the various Christians, and a few other faiths like Samaritan and Bahai'i. N.

### **Modern conflict**

- Social and political developments in Europe convinced Jews they needed their own country, and their ancestral homeland seemed like the right place to establish it. European Jews — 90 percent of all Jews at the time — arrived at Zionism partly because of rising anti-Semitic persecution and partly because the Enlightenment introduced Jews to secular nationalism.
- Between 1896 and 1948, hundreds of thousands of Jews resettled from Europe to what was then British-controlled Palestine, including large numbers forced out of Europe during the Holocaust.
- Many Arabs saw the influx of Jews as a European colonial movement, and the two peoples fought bitterly. The British couldn't control the violence, and in 1947 the United Nations voted to split the land into two countries. Almost all of the roughly 650,000 Jews went to the blue territory in the map to the right, and a majority of the Arab population (roughly twice the size of the Jewish community) went to the orange.
- The Palestinians, who saw the plan as an extension of a long-running Jewish attempt push them out of the land, fought it. The Arab states of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria all later declared war on Israel, as well.
- Israeli forces defeated the Palestinian militias and Arab armies in a vicious conflict that turned 700,000 Palestinian civilians into refugees. The UN partition promised 56 percent of British Palestine for the Jewish state; by the end of the war, Israel possessed 77 percent — everything except the West Bank and the eastern quarter of Jerusalem (controlled by Jordan), as well as the Gaza Strip (controlled by Egypt). It left Israelis with a state, but not Palestinians.
- Today, there are more than 7 million Palestinian refugees, defined as people displaced in 1948 and their descendants. A core Palestinian demand in peace negotiations is some kind of justice for these refugees,

most commonly in the form of the “right of return” to the homes their families abandoned in 1948.

- Israel can't accept the right of return without abandoning either its Jewish or democratic identity. Adding 7 million Arabs to Israel's population would make Jews a minority — Israel's total population is about 8 million, a number that includes the 1.5 million Arabs already there.
- The West Bank is a chunk of land east of Israel. It's home to 2.6 million Palestinians, and would make up the heart of any Palestinian state. Israel took control of it in 1967 and has allowed Jewish settlers to move in, but Palestinians (and most of the international community) consider it illegally occupied Palestinian land.
- In 1967, Israel fought a war with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Israel fired the first shot, but claims it was preempting an imminent Egyptian attack; Arabs disagree, casting Israel as an aggressor. In six days, Israel routed the Arab powers, taking the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan.
- Israel has controlled the West Bank since the Six-Day War (as it's called). For many Jews, this is wonderful news in theory: the West Bank was the heartland of the ancient Jewish state. It's also home to many Jewish holy sites.

### **Gaza issue:**

- Gaza is a densely populated strip of land that is mostly surrounded by Israel and peopled almost exclusively by Palestinians. Israel used to have a military presence, but withdrew unilaterally in 2005. It's currently under Israeli blockade.
- Egypt controlled Gaza until 1967, when Israel occupied it (along with the West Bank) in the Six-Day War. Until 2005, Israeli military authorities controlled Gaza in the same way they control the West Bank, and Jews were permitted to settle there.
- Gaza is governed by the Islamist group Hamas, which formed in 1987 as a militant “resistance” group against Israel and won political power in a 2006 US-based election. Hamas's takeover of Gaza prompted an Israeli blockade of the flow of commercial goods into Gaza, on the grounds that Hamas could use those goods to make weapons to be used against Israel.
- Hamas's charter calls for the destruction of Israel. Though Hamas does not recognize Israel's legitimacy, in 2011 it committed to a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank. It's not clear whether Hamas could reconcile itself to the existence of Israel.
- Hamas led the charge in using suicide bombings against Israel in the 1990s and 2000s, though in recent years it has shifted to rockets and mortars as its weapons of choice. The organization also offers

Palestinians a robust network of social services, which it developed as an alternative to deeply corrupt PA institutions.

### Isreal-Palestine Peace process

- Sometimes called “Oslo” after the 1993 **Oslo Accords** that kicked it off, the peace process is an ongoing American-mediated effort to broker a peace treaty between Israelis and Palestinians. The goal is a “final status agreement,” which would establish a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank in exchange for Palestinians agreeing to permanently end attacks on Israeli targets — a formula often called “land for peace.”
- Secretary of State John Kerry’s fairly intense efforts to revive the peace process fell apart in April 2014. The immediate cause was the (now mostly defunct) Hamas-Fatah agreement to form an interim joint government, as Israel refused to negotiate with Hamas. But the talks really failed because the two sides **simply couldn’t come to terms** on mutual concessions necessary to keep the talks afloat, reflecting a deep underlying mistrust between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership.
- This is far from the first time the peace process looked dead; in fact, many people believed the peace process to be over in January 2001. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat had just rejected his Israeli counterpart Ehud Barak’s **peace offer** (there’s huge disagreement as to just what that offer entailed). Moreover, renewed talks failed to generate an agreement, and worsening violence during the second intifada violence made another round of talks seem impossible.
- Despite the 2001 failure, the general Oslo “land for peace” framework remains the dominant American and international approach to resolving the conflict. The Bush administration pushed its own update on Oslo, called the **“road map,”** and the Obama administration has made the peace process a **significant foreign policy priority**. Any successful peace initiative would need to resolve the four core issues that have plagued the peace process: West Bank borders/settlements, Israeli security, Palestinian refugees, and Jerusalem.
- So far there’s been little success, and there are three major hurdles to any agreement.
- First, Israel continues to expand West Bank settlements, which Palestinians see as a de facto campaign to erase the Palestinian state outright. Second, the Palestinians remain politically divided between Fatah and Hamas after the shared government’s effective collapse, and thus are unable to negotiate jointly. And even if it worked, Israel still has shown zero indication that it would negotiate with a government that includes Hamas.
- Third, and finally, it’s not actually clear how to get talks started. The current right-wing Israeli government is skeptical of concessions to the Palestinians. The Palestinians, having essentially decided that



Israel isn't serious about peace, have launched a campaign for statehood in international institutions aimed at pressuring Israel into peace — which might well backfire by convincing Israelis the Palestinians are done with the US-led peace process.

- To restart talks, the US needs to somehow get the two sides to start taking each other's commitment to peace a little more seriously. It's not at all clear how it could do that.

### **How has Hamas changed its policy towards Israel?**

- In its new policy document, Hamas has indicated that it is willing to make some concessions towards Israel.
- The document states clearly that it is not waging a battle against the Jewish people but it is against the state of Israel and wants a "fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of 4th of June 1967".
- This aim of establishing a new Palestinian state along the lines of the pre-1967 border indicates a willingness to adjust to the new regional reality.

### **Is Hamas distancing itself from the Muslim Brotherhood?**

- The new charter abandons past references of the movement's association with the Muslim Brotherhood. Closely linked to the pan-Islamist movement when it was formed in the late 1980s, Hamas has moved away from the Brotherhood ever since the Mohamed Morsi regime was ousted in Egypt.
- Hamas, which rules the Gaza strip that has been blockaded by Israel, is totally dependent on Egypt for access to the outside world. And Egypt is now ruled by a regime that has declared an open war on the Brotherhood. Besides, Saudi Arabia, a benefactor of Hamas, is ideologically opposed to the Brotherhood.
- So keeping a distance from the Brotherhood could help Hamas cultivate better ties with both Cairo and Riyadh.

### **So what is the core agenda of Hamas?**

- At the core of Hamas's agenda is liberation of the Palestinians, and a return of all displaced people to a sovereign Palestinian state.
- However, it is obvious that Hamas does not want to give up on any of its core agenda items like religion, nationality and ethno-linguistic identity.

### **Does that mean a fundamental shift?**

- This is not yet clear as it demands fulfilment of all other conditions such as the return of all people who were displaced by the establishment of Israel in 1948.
- What is particularly problematic is that Hamas has rejected all agreements, including the Oslo accords, that tried to normalise ties

with Israel, without quite spelling out what sort of negotiations it would prefer. Its rejection of past peace efforts is also a sign that Hamas cannot attain change just by publishing a new agenda document.

### So, is the issue of Jerusalem now secondary?

- On the contrary, Hamas has maintained a tough position on Jerusalem and has in fact extended its claim not just to the Old Jerusalem but also to its “surroundings”.
- A Palestinian state will have to be built around Old Jerusalem according to this new vision document.

### What is issue on Jerusalem?

- Jerusalem is a city that straddles the border between Israel and the West Bank. It's home to some of the holiest sites in both Judaism and Islam, and so both Israel and Palestine want to make it their capital. How to split the city fairly remains one of the fundamental issues dividing Israelis and Palestinians.
- For the first 20 years of Israel's existence, Jerusalem was divided. Israel controlled the parts of Jerusalem and its suburbs while Jordan controlled the rest.
- Jordan controlled the Temple Mount. The hill hosts the **Western Wall**, a retaining wall of an ancient Jewish temple and one of Judaism's holiest sites, and two of Islam's most important landmarks, the **al-Aqsa Mosque** and the **Dome of the Rock**. Israeli Jews weren't allowed to pray in the area while Jordan controlled it. During the 1967 war, Israel took control of East Jerusalem.
- Israel calls Jerusalem its undivided capital today, but almost no one (including the United States) recognizes it as such. UN Security Council Resolution 478 **condemns** Israel's decision to annex East Jerusalem as a violation of international law and calls for a compromise solution.
- Jews have moved in and around Jerusalem in huge numbers. They now make up about two-thirds of the city.

## 7. OBOR challenge

### Context

- China is organising 'Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation' which will be held in Beijing on May 14 and 15.
- It will mark the formal launch of China's ambitious and potentially game-changing initiative to build a network of transport and economic corridors across Asia and Europe with China as the nodal point.
- At last count, some 28 heads of state and government had confirmed attendance while another 50 countries will send official representatives.
- India is unlikely to participate, except at a functional level, as it has objected to one major component of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) —

the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) — as it runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

- After all, China routinely blocks any international funding of projects in Arunachal Pradesh on the ground that it is disputed territory. Of late, it has even raised objections to the central government undertaking projects in that state.
- China has suggested starting negotiations on a 'China India Treaty of Good Neighbours and Friendly Cooperation', restarting negotiations on the China-India Free Trade Agreement, striving for an early harvest on the border issue and actively exploring the feasibility of aligning China's 'One Belt One Road Initiative' (OBOR) and India's 'Act East Policy'.
- To repeat Nehru's outright rejection in 1960 of Zhou Enlai's proposal to settle the border dispute would be a historic mistake.

### **What are long term benefits from China's OBOR?**

- India's response should be based on its long-term interest and not short-term concerns.
- 1.(I) Treat the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) — which already has contracts of over \$1 trillion covering over 60 countries — as enlarging areas of cooperation
    - (II) Push for India as the southern node and a 'Digital Asia'.
    - (III) India cannot be a \$10 trillion economy by 2032 without integrating itself with the growing Asian market and its supply, manufacturing and market networks.
  - 2.Complementary to China's Initiative, develop common standards with the fastest growing economies in Asia that are on the periphery of the B&R Initiative, such as Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia, to facilitate trade, investment and business engagement.
  - 3.(I) Offer a new cooperation framework in South Asia around global challenges.
    - (II) For example, sharing meteorological reports, region specific climate research and the 'Aadhaar' digital experience, despite on-going security concerns.
  - 4.(I) Thought leadership provides an avenue to increasing global influence.
    - (II) Hinduism and Buddhism spread to East and South-East Asia with commerce and an urbanising Asia and world, and needs a new organising principle around shared prosperity — principles that dominated India till 1800 making it the world's richest country for over two millennia.

### **What are objections of India?**

- Notwithstanding Chinese activities in PoK, India saw merit in joining

the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the BRICS Development Bank and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), all initiatives led by China.

- The difference is that India was actively involved in shaping the architecture of the AIIB and the Development Bank, their lending policies, and is represented at senior levels in these institutions.
- The SCO, too, is a multilateral institution and members have an important say in its policies.
- But the OBOR does not fit into this pattern. India had conveyed to China that a similar consultative process was even more important for such an ambitious undertaking.
- The Chinese apparently want India to first sign on to the initiative before getting into the specifics of India's role, the choice of projects and financing. If this, indeed, is the case, then India's caution is well founded.
- The OBOR appears to be more a series of bilateral projects among China and various partner countries rather than a truly multilateral cooperative venture.
- If there are specific projects, such as port development or railway projects, that China is willing to offer for India-China cooperation, let these be posed so that they may be properly evaluated.
- Projects under the OBOR, even in closely allied countries like Pakistan, are financed through loans that have to be paid back. The economic viability of projects has to be a prime consideration.
- The experience of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, which is included in the OBOR, is not encouraging. The revenue from the port, financed by Chinese credit, is not even able to meet the interest costs and, being in hock, the Sri Lankan government is willing to convert the outstanding loan into equity to be held by a Chinese company.
- But in return, China wants a 90-year lease on a vast acreage around the port to develop an industrial zone. There are other examples of such debt traps created by Chinese-funded projects, including the CPEC.
- Cooperating with China where there are convergent interests and confronting it when India's interests are threatened has been an effective time-tested policy. The same principle should be applied in evaluating the OBOR.

### **What are other issues?**

- China is making strong efforts to persuade India to join its 'One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. India has, however, not yet openly agreed to be a part of the project which aims to connect the Eurasian landmass and Indo-Pacific maritime routes through an overland 'belt' and a 'maritime' silk road.



- The project envisages the construction of a maze of road, rail and port projects through a number of countries to connect mainland China to markets in Asia and Europe.
- The OBOR initiative includes a number of projects including the “flagship” China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM), New Eurasian Land Bridge, China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.
- Most of India’s neighbours, including Nepal and Bangladesh, have already agreed to participate in the project.
- It has been widely projected that India’s reluctance to join OBOR is mainly because of the CPEC, which violates India’s sovereignty as the project covers the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) region.
- It has been suggested that India may shed its reluctance to join OBOR if CPEC is renamed, or China declares CPEC is not the part of Belt and Road initiative.
- OBOR would massively strengthen China’s economic, political and security influence in India’s neighbourhood.
- OBOR would involve the export of Chinese capital, labour, technology, industrial standards, commercial benchmarks, use of the Yuan, development of new ports, industrial hubs, special economic zones and military facilities, under Beijing’s auspices.
- The scope of OBOR is bigger than the one undertaken by the British Empire in the 19th Century.
- Not just India, even Japan has refused to join the project and started its own Belt and Road initiative named as “Partnership for Quality Infrastructure” which would cover Indo-Pacific and Eurasian regions. Japan has also invested around \$150 billion for this project.
- New Delhi aspires for a friendly neighbourhood but considering the constant security threat, it faces from Pakistan and often from China even now, India cannot afford to play second fiddle to Beijing. And even if it decides to join OBOR, it cannot afford to be a junior partner

### **Criticism of India’s policy towards OBOR**

- Countries are now gaining influence more through the strength of their economy than the might of the military. However, analysts in India have yet to recognise these global trends and continue to see the re-emergence of China through a security prism.
- Calls for new alliances with Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan “to create a two-front dilemma for our western neighbours, but also encirclement of our northern neighbour from the west” ignore the strategic impact of the BRI which all countries in Asia, except Japan, embrace and require new approaches to secure our own re-emergence.

- As a continental power, China is knitting together the Asian market not only with roads, rail, ports and fibre optics but also through currency exchange, standards, shifting of industry and common approaches to intellectual property rights.
- As the world economy is expected to triple by 2050, Asia will again have half of global wealth. China is seeking to fill the vacuum following the U.S.'s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and India should add elements to it that serve its national interest as part of its vision of the 'Asian Century'.
- Change also raises the question whether existing approaches, institutions and rules are the best way of organising international relations.
- Coordination between the major powers is emerging as the best way of global governance in a multi-polar world.
- Despite their territorial dispute, strategic differences and military deployment in the South China Sea, China and Japan have just agreed to strengthen financial cooperation, and the Forum could provide an impetus to settling the border dispute between India and China.
- BRI seeks "complementarities between a countries' own development strategy and that of others", though its goals have yet to be formalised, and India would lend a powerful voice to a strategy and structure that ensures common goals will not be neglected.

### **Way forward**

- India needs to speed up its own infrastructure projects and find ways to strengthen its sphere of influence.
- India should ramp internal connectivity. As China didn't start OBOR as an external initiative but it was "built upon the top of the internal "Go West" strategy that focused, over the last two decades, on unifying China's domestic market and connecting its developed east coast with the interior provinces."
- India should modernise connectivity across its land and maritime frontiers with neighbouring countries. China is certainly not responsible for India neglecting its inherited trans-border connectivities since Independence; nor has Beijing stopped India from building road and rail links to its borders.
- India should work with countries like Japan and multilateral institutions to develop regional connectivity in the Indian Subcontinent and beyond.

## **8. Korean – US relations**

### **Context**

- S. President Donald Trump, while describing North Korea as his biggest challenge, cautioned: "There is a chance that we could end up having a major conflict with North Korea. Absolutely."

- Earlier in April, amid reports that North Korea might be planning another nuclear test to coincide with the 105th birth anniversary of long-time leader Kim Il Sung, Mr. Trump had announced that “an armada, very powerful” was headed towards the Korean peninsula
- In turn, the DPRK threatened a “super mighty pre-emptive strike”. After undertaking a live firing exercise off its east coast, it followed up with another test-firing of a ballistic missile on April 29 which fizzled, causing loss of face.
- During the campaign, Mr. Trump had said that he would be willing to talk to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, making it clear that Barack Obama’s policy focussing on tighter sanctions was a failure.
- After assuming office, he adopted a harder line, declaring that he would do “whatever is necessary” to prevent North Korea from developing a nuclear-capable missile that can reach the U.S.
- The U.S. has not held bilateral talks with North Korea since the Bill Clinton presidency. So clearly, there is no dearth of signalling but the question is, what is the 33-year-old Kim Jong-un expected to make of it?

### **Historical role of USA in Korean peninsula**

- Even before the second world war ended, Russia and the USA had agreed that after the war Korea would be divided into two zones, Russian and American.
- In August 1945 Russian troops entered the north. In September, after the Japanese surrender, American troops landed in the south. Korea was divided in two along an imaginary line, the 38th parallel. It was originally intended that the two zones would eventually be united into one. Of course that did not happen.
- With the onset of the cold war the divide between them hardened. The Russians installed a communist government in the north and in the south a government was elected in 1948. Korea became two countries, one Communist, and one Democratic.
- The North Korean army invaded the south on 25 June 1950. They quickly drove south and captured Seoul.
- The UN Security Council invited members to help the south. US troops arrived on 30 June but they were forced to withdraw into the area around Busan. The first British troops arrived in Korea on 14 September to reinforce them. On 15 September other US troops landed at Incheon 150 miles north of Busan. The soldiers in the Busan area broke out and pushed north and linked up with the troops in Incheon on 26 September. On the same day allied troops liberated Seoul.
- United Nations troops then pushed the communists back over the 38th parallel and by 24 November they controlled about 2/3 of North Korea.

- However the Chinese then intervened. Strengthened by Chinese 180,000 troops the communists then counter-attacked and drove the allies south. By the end of 1950 the allies were back at the 38th parallel.
- The communists attacked again on 1 January 1951. The allies counter-attacked on 25 January and on 14 March they again liberated Seoul. Several communist offensives followed but all of them were repulsed.
- The war ended in a stalemate and on 27 July 1953 a cease-fire was signed. The 38th parallel was once again the border between the two countries.

## **After the Cold War**

- Regime acceptance and regime survival have been key priorities for Pyongyang since the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- A positive move in 1992 was the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula and a suspension of Team Spirit, the joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises, leading to the Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation.
- When joint exercises were resumed in 1993, North Korea announced its decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The ensuing crisis led to talks and a year later, an Agreed Framework was concluded under which North Korea suspended its decision to withdraw from the NPT, agreed to freeze its nuclear activities, and in return, the U.S. pledged to build two light water nuclear power reactors. Food aid and humanitarian assistance provided by the Clinton administration from 1995 till 2000 was close to \$750 million.
- The Bush administration declared North Korea part of the 'axis of evil' in 2002, cancelled direct talks and annulled the 1994 agreement. North Korea responded by throwing out International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors and formally quit the NPT thereby provoking a fresh crisis.
- China and Russia initiated Six Party Talks in 2004 which led to the 2005 joint statement which expanded the scope to more than the nuclear issue. However, the talks collapsed when the U.S. imposed sanctions a few months later; North Korea responded with its first nuclear test in 2006.
- Since then, North Korea has made steady progress in its nuclear and missile programmes. An underground nuclear facility has been built at Mt. Musan.
- Nuclear tests were conducted in 2013 and twice last year, and it is estimated that North Korea has enough fissile material for 10 to 15 nuclear devices. By 2019, North Korea will be able to develop long-range missiles that can reach the U.S. mainland.

- Given Mr. Trump's redline, Mr. Jong-un is convinced that nuclear capability is the ultimate security guarantee to protect his regime against U.S. intervention.
- S. policy has oscillated between sanctions in response to nuclear and missile tests, dilution of sanctions by China, talks about closer defence ties with Japan and South Korea, citing of additional threats by North Korea and more testing, thus repeating the cycle. U.S. expectations that sanctions would lead to regime collapse were misplaced because given China's stakes, this will not happen

## **Role of China**

- Recently China has registered a policy shift reflecting unhappiness about Mr. Jong-un's behaviour, particularly the high-profile executions of those considered to be close to China. The most recent was the assassination of Kim Jong-nam, Mr. Jong-un's half brother, in February, which prompted China to halting coal briquette imports from North Korea. Air China stopped direct flights to Pyongyang last month but these are now being reinstated. North Korea has accused China of "dancing to the tune of the U.S."
- However, China can neither permit a regime collapse which would create instability nor allow its communist ally to be subsumed into a unified Korea.
- Trump is trying to persuade China to exert greater leverage by praising its President, Xi Jinping, as "a good man" who is "trying hard".
- After the latest missile test, Mr. Trump tweeted, "North Korea disrespected the wishes of China & its highly respected President when it launched, though unsuccessfully, a missile today. Bad!" Mr. Xi is unlikely to be persuaded.
- At the UN Security Council meeting on April 28, Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirmed support for a denuclearised Korean peninsula and previous Security Council resolutions but did not support additional punitive measures. Instead, he again suggested that the U.S. and South Korea could suspend their military exercises.
- More than North Korean tests, China is worried about the possibility of an unpredictable Trump initiating unilateral action which could create an escalatory spiral.
- Another concern is the U.S. decision to accelerate deployment of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) system in South Korea though it is hopeful that a moderate President gets elected in the May 9 election in South Korea and reverses the THAAD decision.

## **Way forward**

- Xi's objective is to persuade Mr. Trump that neither more sanctions nor military strikes are viable options; the only option is 'dialogue'.



- Second, while denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula can be a long-term objective, for the foreseeable future, Mr. Jong-un is not going to give up North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities. At most, he can agree to a freeze on its programmes — no further tests, no exports or transfers and no threats.
- In return, the U.S. will need to provide assurances relating to regime acceptance and a gradual normalisation of relations. A moderate leader in Seoul will help the process of a sustained dialogue which also needs coordination with Japan.
- Jong-un's stakes are existential and, having seen Western interventions in Iraq and Libya and Russian intervention in Ukraine, he is determined to retain his nuclear capabilities till the end of what will be a long and delicate negotiating process, a process which could all too easily be derailed by confusing rhetoric and mixed signalling that has escalated tensions.

## Economy

### 9. Jet Airway Crisis

#### Context:

While Jet had been running a bare minimum number of 35-40 flights for the last few days, a total grounding will significantly affect its value for potential investors that are undergoing a bidding process to invest in the airline. Jet's shares yesterday fell close to 20% on rumours of an imminent shutdown.

#### Reason for crisis

- **Purchase of Air Sahara:** Many aviation experts believe the start of Jet's financial troubles can be traced back to the 2006 purchase of Air Sahara for \$500 million in cash.
- **Merger with Jet lite:** The government refuses to approve Jet's merger with its subsidiary JetLite, nearly three years after the proposal was made. The merger would lead to greater efficiency in cash management of the merged entity
- **Competition from Low-cost airlines:** The arrivals of LCCs (Low cost carriers) like IndiGo, SpiceJet and GoAir lead to wearing down the market share of the premium airlines LIKE Jet Airways. To moderate the decline in market share, the Jet airlines were forced to reduce their fares and this in the long run lead to a pricing war amongst the airlines with potentially affecting the financial viability of the carrier
- **Poor fleet acquisition:** Acquisition of widebody aircraft such as Airbus A330s and Boeing 777 proved uneconomically later.
- **Higher fuel costs for the airlines:** Soaring oil costs might have also contributed to collapse of Jet Airways.
- **Rupee Depreciation:** the recent rupee's depreciation has had negative impact on the airline industry. About 25-30% of airline costs (excluding fuel) are dollar denominated. Example: aircraft lease rents and maintenance costs to ground handling and parking charges abroad.
- **Corporate mis-governance:** Many experts believe that company decision often lacks transparency. Company top management accused of making bad investments and failing to address the company's deteriorating financial predicament while borrowing heavily.

#### Impact of Jet crisis

- **Loss of jobs:** One of the biggest fallouts of Jet's collapse is the loss of approximately 16000 jobs.
- **Rise in Fare:** With Jet Airways grounding operations, the supply of airline seats has gone down. Given this, prices of other airlines are bound to go up in order to ensure that supply matches demand.

- **Lending to Airlines Will Be Further Constrained:** Airlines require large amounts of capital towards aircraft leases/purchases. With Jet Airways, banks would be reluctant to provide loan.
- **Risk Premiums Likely to Rise:** The Indian market has in the past witnessed an increase in risk premiums after the collapse of Kingfisher Airlines and it took several years to rebuild confidence. Situation is somehow similar.

### Steps to be taken

Government should take necessary steps to bailout Jet Airways from crisis. Some of the options available with government are

- **Takeover Jet Airways Management:** Government should form an expert management committee to take over Management of Jet Airways. This would improve the investors' confidence and reduce the domino effect on civil aviation sector.
- **Rationalize Airfare hike:** With the breakdown of Jet Airways there is high probability that air fare would rise. Government must take necessary steps to rationalize it to save the commuters.
- **Facilitate to move planes:** Government should act as a facilitator to move planes of the Jet Airways to other operator to recover loss.
- **Strong corporate governance law:** Government should take necessary steps to bring transparency in corporate decision making in order to avoid these situations.
- **Inclusion of aviation turbine fuel within GST:** This will help airlines to reduce their tax outgo as the new indirect tax system is without the cascading effect of taxation.

### Way Forward:

The entire Jet Airways story brings forth the crisis faced by civil aviation sector. It is reported that government has asked state-run banks to rescue privately held Jet Airways without pushing it into bankruptcy, to avert thousands of job losses.

But many experts believe that bailing out Jet Airways is not a viable option as government already has Air India to deal with, an airline that has losses of more than Rs 40,000 crore. Instead the government should focus on providing avenues for expansion of civil aviation. This will benefit the employees of Jet Airways, as competing airlines will need newer employees to fuel their expansion plans.

## 10. Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)

### Context:

The Corporate Affairs Ministry has withdrawn its directions issued last month, which restricted Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) from engaging in manufacturing activities. This had raised concerns in various sections of industry.

**About:**

- **What is it?** LLP is an alternative corporate business form that gives the benefits of limited liability of a company and the flexibility of a partnership. Hence LLP is called a hybrid between a company and a partnership.
- **Legislation in India:** All limited liability partnership is governed under the limited liability partnership act of 2008. The Corporate Affairs Ministry implements the Act.
- **LLP vs Traditional partnership firm:**
  - Under “traditional partnership firm”, every partner is liable, jointly with all the other partners and also severally for all acts of the firm done while he is a partner.
  - Under LLP structure, liability of the partner is limited to his agreed contribution. Thus, individual partners are shielded from joint liability created by another partner’s wrongful acts or misconduct.

**LLP vs a Company:**

- The internal governance structure of a company is regulated by statute (i.e. Companies Act, 1956) whereas for an LLP it would be by a contractual agreement between partners.
- The management-ownership divide inherent in a company is not there in a limited liability partnership.
- LLP will have more flexibility as compared to a company.
- LLP will have lesser compliance requirements as compared to a company.

## **11. Banks Board Bureau**

**Context:**

The Banks Board Bureau (BBB) has identified 75 senior management officers of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to take over leadership role in the future.

**Key highlights of the BBBs activity report for the October 2018-March 2019 period:**

- It has identified 75 senior officers for leadership roles in nationalised banks take on the emerging challenges. Shortly, a globally ranked Indian institution will be identified where every year the identified personnel will undergo intensive training.
- It has made a case for giving a complete autonomy to banks to decide organisational structure for better efficiency.
- It also suggested revamping credit governance architecture in nationalised banks to minimise credit costs and enhance efficiency of credit allocation.

**BANKS BOARD BUREAU (BBB):****Background:**

- **2014:** The Committee to Review Governance of Boards of Banks in India (also known as PJ Nayak committee) recommended the creation of the Banks Board Bureau (BBB).
- **February 2016:** Prime Minister Modi approved the constitution of the BBB.
- **April 01, 2016:** BBB became functional.

**Composition:** It is a body of eminent professionals and officials currently headed by Bhanu Pratap Sharma (former Department of Personnel and Training secretary).

**Status:** It is an autonomous recommendatory body.

**Mandate:**

- To make recommendations to the Union government for appointment of whole-time directors as well as non-executive chairmen of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and Financial Institutions like government-owned insurance companies.
- To help Banks in developing strategies and capital raising plans.

# Geography and Environment

## 12. Unseasonal Rain

### Context:

Over 50 people were killed due to rain, coupled with thunderstorm and lightning in several parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra overnight. The unseasonal rain and storm also caused damage to property and crops in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

- The unseasonal rain was part of a western disturbance.

### What is Western Disturbance?

Western disturbances are a weather phenomenon whose arrival is associated with snow and rain in the Himalayas and parts of northwest India. They help sustain Himalayan glaciers and the local ecology and provide nourishment to winter crops. And although they lack the powerful 'punch' of the southwest monsoon, western disturbances also cause the occasional weather disruption, especially in the hilly regions of north India that are prone to landslides and flash floods.

- A western disturbance (WD) also begins as a low-pressure system; one that originates in the mid-latitude region near the Atlantic Ocean and Europe. "The low-pressure system typically forms over the Mediterranean Sea. It then hitches a ride eastwards on high-altitude westerly jet streams—massive ribbons of fast winds traversing the earth from west to east—picking up moisture from various sources including the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea and sometimes even the Arabian Sea.
- After covering thousands of miles, these moisture-laden WDs eventually come up against the mighty Himalayas and are blocked. As a consequence, the moisture gets trapped and precipitation is shed in the form of snow and rain over northwest India, and sometimes other parts of north India.

### How do they make their presence felt in north India?

- As mentioned earlier, western disturbances already carry with them moisture from the distant seas of Europe. In addition, they pick up moisture from the Arabian Sea and sometimes even the Indian Ocean due to a pre-existing sub-surface low over western India.
- Most of this moisture is shed when the WD reaches the western Himalayas in India—mainly in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand—between November and March. "The influence of WDs is strongest from December to February, when there can be as many as 5-6 WDs every month. After this period, their frequency drops to 1-2 every month," Dimri adds.
- WDs are also associated with cloudy skies and an increase in night-time temperatures in parts of north India. They can also cause strong





winds that help disperse suspended pollutants in the smog-filled cities of the region, including New Delhi.

- It is worth mentioning here that although the effects of WDs are rarely seen after spring (March-April), due to the northward movement of the jet stream above India, in some cases (which we will read about ahead), WDs can persist even outside the traditional winter months.

### Why are strong WDs important for India?

- India is a rain-dependent country. And while the southwest monsoon covers most of India, some parts of north India don't get much rain from it. Instead, these regions depend on snow and rain from western disturbances during the Indian winter season from November to March.
- Precipitation from western disturbances replenishes the Himalayan glaciers, preserves the natural ecosystem, helps crops like wheat, and assists hydropower generation. Occasionally, however, strong WDs can also push further east into parts of the Indo-Gangetic plains.

### Conclusion:

"Availability of data on western disturbances is low. They are not tracked extensively in some of the countries they cross before reaching India. Thus, unlike tropical cyclones or monsoon depressions, there is no official end-to-end tracking of WDs. Besides, advection-based systems like WDs need different tracking mechanisms from convection-based ones, which those countries may not have,".

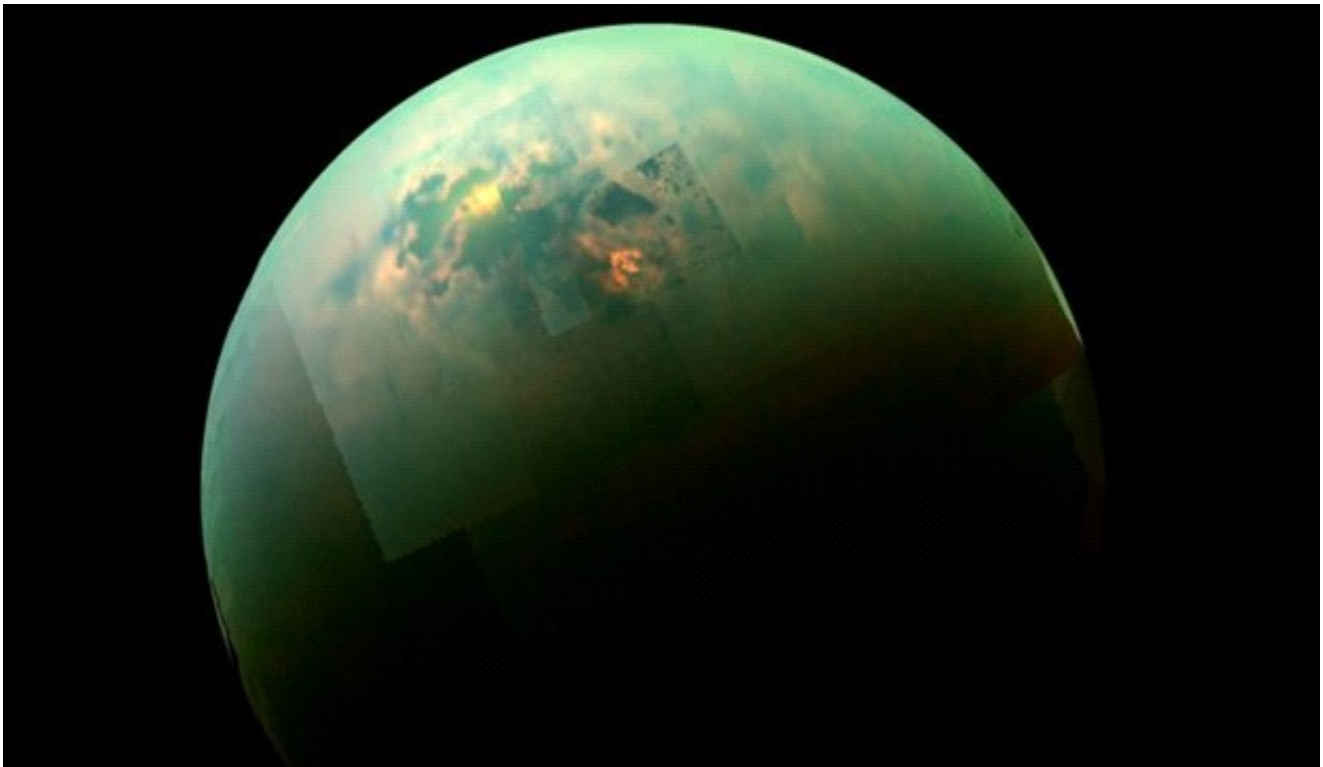
The lack of data and understanding of the mechanics of WDs has also led to debates about the impact of global warming and climate change on western disturbance formation and intensity. In an age where droughts,

crop failure and melting glaciers are becoming all too common, studying these linkages more closely will allow scientists to get deeper insights into western disturbances, how they may have changed over the years, and most importantly, what we can do about it.

### 13. Liquid methane on Titan

#### Context:

NASA's Cassini spacecraft gathered radar data revealing that the small liquid lakes in Titan's northern hemisphere are surprisingly deep, perched atop hills and filled with methane.



#### Details of the Mission

- The new findings, published recently in Nature Astronomy, are the first confirmation of just how deep some of Titan's lakes are (more than 300 feet, or 100 meters) and of their composition.
- They provide new information about the way liquid methane rains on, evaporates from and seeps into Titan — the only planetary body in our solar system other than Earth known to have stable liquid on its surface.
- Scientists have known that Titan's hydrologic cycle works similarly to Earth's — with one major difference. Instead of water evaporating from seas, forming clouds and rain, Titan does it all with methane and ethane. We tend to think of these hydrocarbons as a gas on Earth, unless they're pressurized in a tank.
- But Titan is so cold that they behave as liquids, like gasoline at room temperature on our planet.
- Scientists have known that the much larger northern seas are filled with methane, but finding the smaller northern lakes filled mostly with methane was a surprise.

- Previously, Cassini data measured Ontario Lacus, the only major lake in Titan's southern hemisphere. There they found a roughly equal mix of methane and ethane. Ethane is slightly heavier than methane, with more carbon and hydrogen atoms in its makeup.

### **About Cassini Mission**

- Launched in 1997, the Cassini mission is a cooperation between NASA, the European Space Agency and the Italian Space Agency.
- It has sent back thousands of stunning images and made numerous discoveries about the ringed planet and its moons.
- Cassini–Huygens is an unmanned spacecraft sent to the planet Saturn.
- Cassini is the fourth space probe to visit Saturn and the first to enter orbit. Its design includes a Saturn orbiter and a lander for the moon Titan.
- The lander, called Huygens, landed on Titan in 2005.



## Science and Technology

### 14. Measles

#### Context:

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) analysis, Measles cases worldwide rose by 300% during the first three months of 2019 compared with the same period last year, amid growing concerns over the impact of anti-vaccination campaigns, particularly spread through social media.

#### Eliminating the disease

- Measles, identified by typical clinical symptoms could cause diarrhoea, pneumonia and infection in the brain, spreads fast

- Children given MR vaccine develop lifelong immunity

- Even those who had taken the vaccination should be part of the drive

- WHO has recommended it as a safe vaccine, but the Health Department has made arrangements to observe children for half an hour for any allergic reaction

- Vaccine can be taken in schools, anganwadis or fixed government healthcare institutions

#### About:

- Measles is a highly contagious viral disease.
- It is transmitted via droplets from the nose, mouth or throat of infected persons.
- Initial symptoms include high fever, a runny nose and bloodshot eyes. Several days later, a rash develops, starting on the face and upper neck and gradually spreading downwards.
- It can cause life-threatening complications including encephalitis (an infection that leads to swelling of the brain), severe diarrhoea and dehydration, pneumonia, ear infections and permanent vision loss.
- The disease is preventable through two doses of a safe and effective vaccine.

#### MMR Vaccine (Measles, Mumps and Rubella Vaccine)

The MMR vaccine gives protection against three serious diseases : **measles, mumps, and rubella**. Before the introduction of vaccines, all three diseases were extremely common and most people had them at some point, usually as children. Although many people survived without long-term effects, others were left with serious disabilities and some children died.

### Measles & Rubella Initiative (M&RI):

- M&RI is a partnership formed in 2001 of the American Red Cross, CDC, the United Nations Foundation, UNICEF and World Health Organization (WHO).
- It is committed to achieving the Global Vaccine Action Plan goal of measles and rubella elimination in at least five WHO regions by 2020.

## 15. Genome Sequencing

### Context:

In an indigenous genetic mapping effort, nearly 1,000 rural youth from the length and breadth of India will have their genomes sequenced by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The project aims at educating a generation of students on the “usefulness” of genomics.



- Globally, many countries have undertaken genome sequencing of a sample of their citizens to determine unique genetic traits, susceptibility (and resilience) to disease. This is the first time that such a large sample of Indians will be recruited for a detailed study.
- The project is an adjunct to a much larger government-led programme, still in the works, to sequence at least 10,000 Indian genomes.
- Typically, those recruited as part of genome-sample collections are representative of the country's population diversity. In this case, the bulk of them will be college students, both men and women, and pursuing degrees in the life sciences or biology.
- **Genome:** A genome is an organism's complete set of Deoxyribo Nucleic Acid (DNA). Each genome contains all of the information needed to build and maintain that organism.
- **Human genome:** The human genome has about 3.2 billion base pairs.
- **Genome sequencing:** It means determining the exact order of the base pairs in a segment of DNA.

### About Human Genome Project:

- The Human Genome Project (HGP) was a large, international and multi-institutional effort that took 13 years [1990-2003] and \$2.7 billion to

produce a blueprint of the sequence of genes and spaces between genes that make up a typical human genome.

- Fast forward to 2016 and another project, called the Human Genome Project-write (HGP-write), now underway to synthesize a human genome from scratch.
- The original HGP was a “read” in that it used chemicals and instruments to decipher the genome for the first time. The new project, its proponents say, is to write or build an artificial human genome with sophisticated bioengineering tools.
- The potential benefits of HGP-write to India include providing new solutions to diseases like malaria, dengue and chikungunya.
- The tools, techniques and technologies that are going to be developed through HGP-write will be universally applicable to all organisms, especially at an earlier stage for organisms with smaller genomes (for example, viruses), towards building individual genes and genomes efficiently and in an inexpensive manner.

### **Benefits:**

- Malaria, dengue and chikungunya are all mosquito-borne diseases caused by protozoan parasites (malaria) or viruses (dengue and chikungunya).
- One of the strategies against combating these deadly diseases could be to introduce sterile mosquitoes into the environment, incapable of producing offspring after mating with their wild type mates and/or by building pathogen resistance in mosquitoes, both by genome engineering.
- Results from the initial experiments following field trials to release sterile mosquitoes have been very encouraging.
- Tools generated through HGP-write may aid this process by making synthetic vector genomes incapable of hosting the parasite and/or the virus.
- Another area where HGP-write can revolutionize health care is vaccine development.
- The traditional way to developing vaccines is time consuming and expensive. One can accelerate the process tremendously by producing viruses synthetically and then use those for vaccine development.
- This, in addition to saving lives, can add to our economy, where India is already an acknowledged world leader.
- Apart from providing tools to combating diseases, there are other benefits of participating in HGP-write. Big projects require large funding and it's better for India to share the cost and risks (technical, scientific and financial) with other countries in executing such large projects.
- Additionally, projects like HGP-write will provide Indian scientists



access to knowledge and expertise of a renowned group of global thought leaders.

**Concerns:**

- While HGP-write will bring much hope to India, there are potential concerns that need thorough discussion and consultations with experts from various fields. They range from the ethical to the scientific.
- There are genuine fears among a section of the society that one day, humans will be able to play god by synthesizing new genomes that may create new creatures, akin to zombies of apocalyptic sci-fi, with potential for misuse.
- For example, sterile, genetically-rewritten mosquitoes could create imbalances in ecological niches and wipe out entire populations of insects.
- Then there are the unintended side-effects of releasing modified mosquitoes into the wild, who which could transfer their genes to non-target species.
- Designing tighter and high containment-level field trials are essential to control this.
- The correct answer may not be to eliminate the mosquito population but to make the mosquito either harmless or an unviable host for deadly pathogens.

**Way Forward:**

There are other prosaic but nevertheless complex concerns about synthetic genes and genomes in the area of intellectual property rights. As per sections 3(c) and 3(j) of the Indian Patents Act, 1970, “the mere discovery of a scientific principle or the formulation of an abstract theory or discovery of any living thing or non-living substance occurring in nature” and “plants and animals in whole or any part thereof other than microorganism” are not patentable. No matter what the concerns are — and all those listed are valid — the answer is not to shy away from participating in science-led activities but to do it correctly from the beginning within a transparent policy framework.

**16. Special properties of River Ganga**

According to the study, ‘Assessment of Water Quality and Sediment To Understand Special Properties of River Ganga,’ Ganga river water contains a significantly higher proportion of organisms with antibacterial properties.

**About:**

- **Name of Study:** Assessment of Water Quality and Sediment To Understand Special Properties of River Ganga.
- **Bodies involved:** The study was commissioned by the Union Water Resources Ministry and was conducted by the Nagpur-based National

Environmental Engineering and Research Institute (NEERI), a CSIR lab.

- **Objective of study:** To probe the “unique properties” of the Ganga (About 200 years ago British colonial scientists suggested that the Ganga may contain unique microbial life, which makes it relatively more resilient to putrefaction).

**Findings of the study:**

- Ganga river water — particularly in its upper Himalayan stretches — contains a significantly higher proportion of organisms with antibacterial properties as compared to other Indian rivers.
- In the river Ganga, the bacteriophages were detected to be approximately 3 times more in proportion than bacterial isolates.

**Significance:** The super-phage isolated from Ganga and decoded for its lysine gene and cloned to produce lysine protein at IIT Roorkee holds great potential as an antibacterial pharmaceutical.

**Bacteriophages:**

- A bacteriophage literally means “bacteria eater,” is a type of virus that destroys bacteria.
- All bacteriophages are composed of a nucleic acid molecule that is surrounded by a protein structure. A bacteriophage attaches itself to a susceptible bacterium and destroys their host cell.

## Miscellaneous

### 17. Mahavir Jayanti

#### Context:

President Ram Nath Kovind greeted the people on the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti which is being celebrated across the country with traditional fervor.

#### About Lord Mahavir:

- Mahavir is also known as Vardhamana.
- He was the 24<sup>th</sup> tirthankara who revived Jainism.
- He was born in 6th century BC into a royal Kshatriya family in present-day Bihar, India.
- He left home at the age of 30 and became an ascetic. He practiced intense meditation for 12 years, after which he attained Kevala Jnana (omniscience).
- After attaining Kevala Jnana, Mahavira taught that observance of the five vows of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (chastity), and aparigraha (non-attachment) is necessary for spiritual liberation.
- He attained nirvana at the age of 72, and his body was cremated.
- Mahavira's teachings were compiled by Indrabhuti Gautama (his chief disciple) as the Jain Agamas.

In 468 B.C., Mahavira passed away at Pawapuri at the age of 72 years. He spent 30 years of his life in preaching his teachings. Four **doctrines** of Parsvanath are “

- Non-injury to living beings,
- Speaking the truth,
- Non-possession of property, and
- Not stealing.

#### Teachings of Jainism

- Mahavira rejected Vedic principles.
- He did not believe in God's existence. According to him, the universe is a product of the natural phenomenon of cause and effect.
- He believed in Karma and transmigration of the soul. The body dies but the soul does not.
- One will be punished or rewarded as per one's karma.
- Advocated a life of austerity and non-violence.



- Stressed on equality but did not reject the caste system, unlike Buddhism. But he also said that man may be 'good' or 'bad' as per his actions and not birth.
- Asceticism was taken to a great length. Starvation, nudity and self-mortification were expounded.
- Two elements of the world: Jiva (conscious) and Atma (unconscious).
- **Triratnas of Jainism:**

### 1. Right faith

### 2. Right knowledge

### 3. Right conduct (observance of five vows)

- Ahimsa (non-violence)
- Satya (truth)
- Asteya (no stealing)
- Parigraha (no acquiring property)
- Brahmacharya (abstinence)

## 18. Asian Tea Alliance (ATA)

The Asian Tea Alliance (ATA), a union of five tea-growing and consuming countries, was launched in Guizhou in China.

### About:

- **Members of the alliance:** Indian Tea Association, China Tea Marketing Association, Indonesian Tea Marketing Association, Sri Lanka Tea Board and Japan Tea Association.
- **Mandate:** Enhancing tea trade, cultural exchanges, technology exchanges as well as enhancing global consumption of tea, while creating a sustainability agenda for the future of Asian tea.
- **Background:** The forging of this alliance comes in the aftermath of the signing of a MoU in December 2018 between the Indian Tea Association and China Tea Marketing Association to promote green and black tea consumption in major tea markets of Europe, the U.S., Russia and West Asia, besides India and China.

### Tea and India: Key facts

- **Global share:** India is the **second largest producer** of tea (after China) and the **largest consumer of tea** in the world.
- **Largest tea cultivating states are (in descending order):** Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

### Tea Varieties grown in India:

- Darjeeling, Assam, Dooars and Terai, Kangra, Nilgiri, Annamalais, Wayanaad, Karnataka, Munnar and Travancore.

- Of these, Darjeeling tea (the **first GI tagged product in India**) and Kangra Tea, have received the **Geographical Indication Tag**.

**Bagan-time:** Tea gardens in Assam follow Bagan-time, which is an hour ahead of the Indian Standard Time (IST).

### **Tea Board of India:**

- **History:** It is a statutory body established in 1954 under the Tea Act in 1953.
- **Objective:** To promote the cultivation, processing, and domestic trade as well as export of tea from India.
- **Parent Ministry:** Union Ministry of Commerce.
- **HQ:** Kolkata.

## **19. HAJ**

Saudi Arabia has issued a formal order increasing the Haj quota of India to 2 lakhs from 1.75 lakhs.

### **About:**

- This is the third hike in three consecutive years.
- **Background:** In February this year, the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at a meeting with Prime Minister Modi had announced that Indian Haj quota would be increased by 25 thousand.
- **Significance of Decision:** The decision will ensure that all the Haj applicants from big states like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar can embark pilgrimage this year as their waiting lists have been cleared due to the increase in quota.

### **Haj:**

- The Haj is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Kaaba, the 'House of God', in the holiest city for Muslims i.e. Mecca, Saudi Arabia.
- It is one of the five pillars of Islam, alongside Shahadah, Salat, Zakat and Sawm.
- It is a mandatory religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by all adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking it.
- The rites of Hajj are performed over five or six days, beginning on the eighth and ending on the thirteenth day of Dhu al-Hijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar.
- **Mehram:** As many as 2,340 Indian Muslim women will go to Haj 2019 without "Mehram" (male companion). In 2017, Govt of India lifted ban on women going to Haj without Mehram, which resulted into about 1300 Indian Muslim women went on Haj 2018 without any male companion.

- **Haj Subsidy:** In 2018, for the first time after the Independence, Muslims from India performed Haj without any subsidy.

## 20. RAAVANA-1

Sri Lanka's first satellite 'Raavana-1' was launched into space from NASA's Flight Facility on Virginia's east shore.

### About:

- **Mission Objective:** Its camera mission is to capture images of Sri Lanka and its neighbouring countries.
- **Features:** 'Raavana 1' weights around 1.05 kg and the lifespan of the satellite is around one and a half years.
- **Bodies involved:** The satellite was designed and built at the Kyushu Institute of Technology in Japan by two Sri Lankan research engineers.



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105



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144



149



187



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360



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