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SEPTEMBER 2020



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IDSA SEPTEMBER 2020

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IDSA SEPTEMBER 2020

1. REGIONAL DISASTER RELIEF

MECHANISMS

What is the issue?

India needs to invest in regional disaster relief mechanisms for South Asian Region

What is the scope of Regional Disaster Relief Mechanism in SAR?

- South Asia is exposed to a variety of hazards due to the geo-climatic characteristics of the region.
- These hazards range earthquakes in the Himalayas, droughts and floods in the Plains, and cyclones in coastal areas that originate in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
- But more importantly, many countries in the region share common geological formations (Indian sub-continent) and river basins, and natural hazards frequently transcend national boundaries.

What are the issues in Regional Disaster Relief Mechanism?

- **Dormant Regional Institutions** - Despite having an official policy in the form of SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters (SARRND), no SAARC-level contingent has ever been deployed during emergencies in the region.
- Similarly, in BIMSTEC, although member-countries have shown a willingness to work together on relevant issues, there is a large gap to

fill in terms of establishing operating procedures for joint relief campaigns.

- **Reactive Approach** - The traditional approach to disasters in SAR has been to focus on responding to events and reconstructing damaged assets in the aftermath.
- By and large, the response of the major stakeholders has been reactive rather than proactive, and this approach has resulted in accumulated casualties and economic losses that were higher than necessary.
- Lack of Coordination - Ineffective regional disaster relief mechanisms result in an uncoordinated relief effort which hampers disaster recovery process.

What measures can be taken?

- **Risk Identification** - Any effective strategy to manage disaster risk must begin with an identification of the factors that cause disasters.
- Hazard mapping of the region will serve as the base layer of information and provides data on the probability of occurrence and intensity of a hazard event.
- Once disaster risks have been identified, they must be communicated in a manner that motivates individuals to increase their resilience to disasters.
- Governments, civil society, and the private sector can raise awareness of



risks and risk-mitigation principles at the national, regional, and community levels.

- **Risk Mitigation** - Reducing disaster risk calls for all stakeholders to alter their perceptions and prioritize resilience in a country's planning and development efforts.
- It comprises actions to prevent, mitigate, and prepare against the damaging impact of hazards and thus minimize the potential consequences on physical and human capital.
- In this context, SAR should devise and implement a regional disaster risk reduction mechanism based on Sendai Framework.
- Risk Financing and Transfer - In the developed world, risk transfer mechanisms such as insurance cover approximately 30% of economic losses.
- However, in most low-income countries including those in South Asia, these tools only cover 1% of losses.
- Hence, there is a need to develop risk transfer mechanisms in the SAR.
- Also, the World Bank's help can be leveraged to alleviate this burden and assist governments and their citizens to more effectively manage disaster risks.

emphasis on bilateral engagement with the affected country.

- Recently India's response was initiated through a regional framework (South Asian Cooperative for Environment Protection (SACEP)) for addressing environmental emergencies in the South Asian region.
- While this is a commendable initiative, there is still a long way to go towards building an effective regional disaster relief mechanism.
- Moreover, humanitarian emergencies due to climate uncertainty, in the South Asian region (SAR) are poised to grow.
- In this context, India being a responsible regional power, should invest in regional frameworks for disaster management and take the lead in setting up a road map for greater cooperation.
- Further, building capacities through training and joint exercises and coordinating comparative advantages for collective action will help India leverage goodwill among its neighbors through its disaster relief programmers.

What are the opportunities before India?

- Historically, a key feature of India's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) strategy has been the



2. ROLE OF INDIA IN AFGHAN PEACE TALKS

Why in news?

Recently, Intra-Afghan talks between the Taliban and the Afghan High Council for National Reconciliation (representative of Afghan Government) opened in Doha, Qatar.

What is brief of Intra-Afghan Talks?

- The initiation of intra-Afghan talks is a key element in the U.S.-Taliban peace deal signed in Doha on February 29 between the U.S and the Taliban.
- The US-Taliban peace deal was a three-way negotiation whereby the US negotiated with the Taliban who were brought to the negotiating table by Pakistan and this Doha outcome was to be accepted by the Afghan Government.
- There were four objectives of the deal:
 1. An end to violence by declaring a ceasefire.
 2. An intra-Afghan dialogue for a lasting peace.
 3. The Taliban cut ties with terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda.
 4. U.S. troop withdrawal by April 2021.
- Though the deal was to be held in march-April 2020, it got delayed due to disagreement on mutual release of prisoners by both Taliban and Afghan Government.
- Now as the Taliban have released 1,000 members of Afghan security

forces and the Afghan authorities have freed over 5,000 Taliban from their custody, it paved the way for Intra-Afghan talks and brought the prospect of peace in Afghanistan.

What are present challenges in Afghanistan Peace?

- Speaking of Doha, Afghan Government held that more than 12,000 Afghans had been killed and another 15,000 injured since the end-February.
- The Taliban is calibrating its use of violence to harass and undermine the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and the Afghan government, but remain at a level it perceives is within the bounds of the agreement.
- This move would probably have encouraged U.S. troop withdrawal and set favorable conditions for a post-withdrawal Afghanistan.
- The report expressed skepticism about whether the Taliban had cut ties with Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups.
- A UN report concerning the Islamic State and al Qaeda concluded that Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent continues to operate under the Taliban umbrella.
- Further, there are many Taliban leaders who are under the most wanted list of the US.
- Therefore, given these conditions it may be difficult to reconcile peace in Afghanistan.



- This would destabilize the region after the US. Troop's withdrawal.

What is the role of India in the peace process?

- In the past, due to terror activities of the Taliban, India has been very critical of the Taliban coming into power and shown resistance to publicly dealing with the Taliban.
- Under the US-Taliban peace deal, the Taliban will be in the centre of power in Afghanistan, as the US forces withdraw from Afghanistan.
- In the present scenario, India has never announced its support for the U.S.-Taliban peace deal.
- Rather, India supports the Ashraf Ghani government and backs the idea of an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled process.
- Further, in order to provide legitimacy to recently held Afgan president elections, Ashraf Ghani entered into a power-sharing agreement with former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah.
- This agreement will inevitably further weaken Ashraf Ghani and subsequently undermines Indian interest in the region.
- Due to these factors, India's voice in the reconciliation process has been limited.
- In this context, India needs to strategically frame a policy to secure it's security and economic interests emanating from Afghanistan.

What are the opportunities before India in this regard?

- India must give a diplomatic push to a coalition of regional powers for ensuring peace in Afghanistan after US exit.
- In this pursuit, India should engage with regional power like Iran and Russia.
- Although, India and Iran may have differing views on the US presence there, but both are aware of the challenges once the Taliban gain authority and the current regime in Afghanistan weakens as a result.
- This dynamic is what makes Iran an indispensable partner for India as the US gradually winds down its troop presence in Afghanistan.
- Here India must reengage with Iran to ensure that China cannot be allowed to chip away at India's vital interests in its extended neighborhood.
- Engagement with Russia - Although Russia's interests in Afghanistan are in conflict with that of the US', its role in the regional security matrix is not of a disrupter, but of a balancer.
- Thus, India should engage Russia to play a key role in Afghanistan.
- But, here also an alliance-like relationship between Russia and China may jeopardize India's interests in Afghanistan.
- However, Russia does share with India a good relationship and can keep China in check.



- Besides convergence on regional security, India, Iran and Russia can develop cooperative mechanisms for commercial and economic ties with Afghanistan.

3. RETIREMENT OF ABE SHINZO

Why in news?

Abe Shinzo, one of post-war Japan's most consequential prime ministers, departs from office almost a year ahead of his scheduled term.

What lead to Abe's rise as one of prominent world leader?

- Abe hails from one of the most influential political dynasties in Japan.
- Abe presented incisive leadership while leading Japan through colossal structural challenges in its domestic landscape, in addition to reinventing its role in the international system.
- Abe came to power in 2012 following the chaos in crisis management over the triple disaster – the Great East Japan Earthquake, Tsunami, and the Fukushima nuclear meltdown, by the then Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration.
- He rose to the challenge and brought in political stability and steered Japanese politics away from the culture of revolving-door prime ministers and leadership deficit.
- Under Abe, Japan witnessed centralization of political power and

administration around the Kantei and the Cabinet.

- Abe has advanced two key national and international economic policies.
- **Abenomics** - with three arrows includes a bold monetary policy, flexible fiscal policy, and a growth strategy that promotes private-sector investment.
- **Trans Pacific Partnership** - as a key pillar for Abenomics and Japan's trade strategy aimed at capturing the economic growth of the Asia-Pacific and rebuilding Japan's economy.
- Abe's global leadership moment arrived once President Trump withdrew from TPP.
- He stepped in as the flag bearer of free trade, especially after effectively saving the TPP-11 and concluding the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union (EU) following Brexit.

What are the unique achievements of the leader?

- Abe's bold leadership has successfully repositioned Japan to step up as a stabilizer in the system, promoter of rules and custodian of global commons.
- He made his mark as an astute statesman in international politics with intellectual bandwidth and a global vision to conceptualize grand strategic constructs such as the Free and Open Indo-Pacific anchored on universal values.



- He wove together the Quad which dominates the foreign and security policy lexicon in the power corridors of major capitals in the world including Washington DC, New Delhi and Canberra.
- He also demonstrated Japan's confidence in championing free trade and open markets refuting global trends against globalization.
- He succeeded in putting Japan back on the global strategic map by steering monumental policy shifts in the domains of national security, foreign policy and economics.
- Though he is leaving office before accomplishing some of the core agendas in his checklist, including
 1. Amendment to Article 9 of the post-war Constitution,
 2. Resolution of the North Korean abduction issue,
 3. Concluding a peace treaty with Russia.

What are his significant achievements?

- The Abe era will be underscored by his resolve to decisively define Japan's maiden national security strategy under the banner of Proactive Contribution to Peace.
- Even though his cherished ambition to amend the post-war constitution remained unfulfilled, he has worked relentlessly to reorient Japan's security policy.
- He is leaving behind a Japan whose evolving character as a security actor

is a key determinant in shaping the strategic equilibrium of the Indo-Pacific.

- Abe has also positioned Japan as a potent middle power invested in upholding an international order based on the rule of law, free trade, and multilateralism.
- As a key stakeholder in shaping the Indo-Pacific order, Abe emphasized on upholding a rules-based maritime order, pushing quality infrastructure financing, and championing trade liberalization.

What lies ahead for Japan?

- Leading Japan after Abe will demand statesmanship, political vision, and innovative policy responses.
- Amidst a pandemic, stable and strong leadership is critical to avoid political dysfunction when dealing with challenges across the spectrum of economics to demographics to national security.
- Japanese politics cannot afford to slide back to its legacy of revolving-door prime ministers and leadership deficit which will deeply impinge on key policy matters.
- Sustainable and effective political leadership is indispensable for good governance and in steering the country through its daunting demographic, economic, security and foreign policy challenges in the post-COVID order.



4. SCOPES AND CHALLENGES IN QUAD GROUPING

Why in news?

Second Ministerial meeting of Quad countries has been scheduled in Japan.

What is the significance of Quad grouping?

- 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 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 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).
- Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is the informal strategic dialogue between India, USA, Japan and Australia with a shared objective to support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region that China seeks to threaten.
- Quad is criticized by China as Asian version of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

What are the opportunities before India?

- Engaging with Quad may serve two geo-strategic goals of India viz. countering China's aggressive on border with India's assertive in the maritime domain and emerge as a net security provider in the region.
- **Checkmating China** - The maritime space is a lot more important to China than engaging in opportunistic land grab attempts in the Himalayas.
- A huge chunk of Chinese trade happens via the Indian oceanic routes that pass through maritime chokepoints.
- In the event of any Chinese aggression on borders, India by cooperation with Quad countries can potentially disrupt Chinese trade.
- Hence, unlike in the continental sphere where India seems facing a 'nutcracker like situation' due to China-Pakistan collusion, the maritime sphere is wide open to India to undertake coalition building, rule setting, and other forms of strategic exploration.
- **Emerging as a Net Security Provider** - There is a growing great power interest in the maritime sphere, especially with the arrival of the concept of 'Indo-Pacific'.
- For instance, many European countries have recently released their Indo-Pacific strategies.
- With India, located right at the center of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical



imagination can realize the vision of a 'broader Asia' that can extend its influence away from geographical boundaries.

- Moreover, India can build around collective action in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, monitoring shipping for search and rescue or anti-piracy operations, infrastructure assistance to climatically vulnerable states, connectivity initiatives and similar activities.
- Further, India with Quad countries can check imperialist policies of China in Indian Ocean region and ensure Security and growth for all in the region.

What are the major issues related with quad?

- **Undefined Vision** - Despite the potential for cooperation, the Quad remains a mechanism without a defined strategic mission.
- **Maritime Dominated** - The entire focus on the Indo-Pacific makes the Quad a maritime, rather than a land-based grouping, raising questions whether the cooperation extends to the Asia-Pacific and Eurasian regions.
- **India's Aversion of Alliance System** -The fact that India is the only member that is averse to a treaty alliance system, has slowed down the progress of building a stronger Quadrilateral engagement.

- **Need For Clear Vision** - The Quad nations need to better explain the Indo-Pacific Vision in an overarching framework with the objective of advancing everyone's economic and security interests.
- This will reassure the littoral States that the Quad will be a factor for regional benefit, and a far cry from Chinese allegations that it is some sort of a military alliance.
- The forthcoming Ministerial meetings can be an opportunity to define the idea and chart a future path.
- **Expanding Quad** - India has many other partners in the Indo-Pacific, therefore India should pitch for countries like Indonesia, Singapore to be invited to join in the future.
- **Need for a Maritime Doctrine** -India should develop a comprehensive vision on the Indo-Pacific which would ideate on the current and future maritime challenges, consolidate its military and non-military tools, and engage its strategic partners.

5. CHANGING BALANCE OF POWER

What is the issue?

China's ascent to great power status has altered the power equation that had existed in the 1990s between China and India and China and the United States (US).



What was growth trajectory of China?

- In 1990, China's GDP of US\$ 360 billion was roughly equivalent to that of India's.
- Now, it is some five times larger at \$14-plus trillion.
- With respect to the United States, China's GDP in 1990 was 20 times smaller, whereas today that gap stands narrowed to 1.5 times smaller.
- The remarkable increase in the size of China's economy enabled it to step up allocations for its armed forces and enhance their technological capabilities.
- At an estimated US\$ 266.5 billion, China's defence expenditure is some four times larger than India's and nearly a third of America's.
- This alteration in the power equation has pushed China's relationships with India and the United States into a state of disequilibrium.

What are hegemonic outcomes of china's growth?

- In the wake of the power gap that has yawned between China and India during the last decade or so, China is keen to transform the erstwhile co-equal relationship into a hierarchical one.
- Whereas China's objective until recently was to tie India down within South Asia through support for Pakistan, it is now determined to supplant India as the leading power in the Indian subcontinent as well as

become a predominant power in the Indian Ocean Region.

- Evidence in this regard include:
 1. Construction of strategic roads and ports in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka which could potentially be used for Chinese purposes as the episode involving the debt-trapping of Sri Lanka into leasing Hambantota Port demonstrated.
 2. Construction of the overland China-Pakistan Economic Corridor from Kashgar in Xinjiang to Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, and loud thinking by Chinese analysts about positioning a PLA Navy task force at Gwadar.
 3. Articulation of the PLA Navy's two-ocean strategy to include the Indian Ocean, acquisition of a base at Djibouti, and the real possibility of acquiring "additional overseas military logistics facilities to support naval, air, and ground forces" in several countries in the Indian Ocean Region
- With respect to the United States, the changed power equation has led China to articulate the need for a new type of great power relations entailing respect for the other state's core interests in its home region:
 1. China respecting American interests in the Americas and the Eastern Pacific, and the United



States respecting Chinese interests in the Western Pacific and Asia.

2. In effect, China would refrain from intervening in the Americas and the Eastern Pacific in return for America abandoning its security commitments to East and Southeast Asian countries as well as accepting Chinese sovereignty over some 80 per cent of the South China Sea.

What lies ahead for India?

- India and America are, however, not willing to accept a redefinition of their relationships with China entailing the abandonment of their respective long-held national interests.
- The international political system does not have a legal or institutional mechanism to effect such a redefinition of inter-state relations in tandem with changes in the balance of power between them.
- Thus a new Cold War may be said to be emerging between China and the United States driven by the irreconcilable interests detailed above.
- Over the last 10 years or so, America has been gearing itself up to tackle the China challenge.
- Some sections of Indian political and intellectual opinion warn against India taking sides in this new Cold War.
- They advocate the virtues of nonalignment and highlight the wisdom of reprising another version of the policy.

- Thus the key to success in this power struggle would be a strategy that mobilizes national resources, fosters diplomatic and military coordination, and rallies international opinion against China's pursuit of socialist imperialism.

6. INDO-BANGLADESH TIES AND TEESTA RIVER DISPUTE

Why in news?

India-Bangladesh relations in recent times have been touted as one of India's best with any country in South Asia.

What are recent developments in Indo-Bangladesh Relationship?

- Since January 2009, when India-Bangladesh relations entered a new phase, both countries have managed to solve a number of vexed issues, which appear simple once they have been resolved.
- Issues such as the land and maritime border disputes¹ were sorted out at considerable disadvantage to New Delhi.
- In the land border dispute, India lost 10,000 acres of land while in the maritime dispute the United Nations (UN) tribunal awarded Dhaka 19,467 sq. km of the 25,602 sq. km sea area of Bay of Bengal.
- India could have chosen not to abide by the verdict of the UN tribunal as has been done by China in the case of South China Sea.



- India, however, chose to ignore the disadvantages in the interest of building a friendly and sustainable relationship with Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh cooperated with India in sorting out security issues in the Northeast.
- India's northeastern region had been plagued by insurgency for a number of years and many insurgent leaders took shelter in Bangladesh earlier.
- Post improvement in relations, Bangladesh handed over these leaders and shut down their training camps.
- It also took the remarkable step of granting a trans-shipment facility to India to transport goods through Bangladesh to the Northeastern states.
- Clearly, the intention for a friendly relationship was visible on both sides.

What are the existing issues that needs to be addressed?

- **Teesta River Water** - The issue of Teesta river water could not be solved because of the non-cooperation of the West Bengal Government.
- Water is a state subject in India.
- Hence, for a bilateral agreement on the sharing of Teesta waters, the support of the West Bengal Government would also be needed.
- The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, appeared unwilling to oblige the Central government in this regard.

- The Teesta is an important river for Bangladesh. It helps in irrigation in the northern parts of Bangladesh, which is often considered as the granary of the country.
- As no agreement has taken place on the sharing of Teesta river waters, the Bangladesh Government now wants to go for an alternative.
- It wants to manage the water of its side by building a reservoir so that it could use it in an optimum manner and all through the year.
- To complete this project, Dhaka in early August 2020 sought financial assistance of nearly \$1 billion from Beijing.

What are the concerns in Sino-Bangladesh Relations?

- Bangladesh enjoys a close relationship with China and there is bipartisan consensus over the approach to be taken towards it.
- China is Bangladesh's main arms supplier, investor and trade partner.
- It has invested large sums in Bangladesh on a string of power and infrastructure projects.
- Between 2008 and 2018, China supplied weapons worth \$1.93 billion to Bangladesh.
- This constitutes 71.8 per cent of Bangladesh's military acquisitions over this period and makes China the biggest supplier of arms to Dhaka.
- Although Bangladesh's dependence on China has increased, it has always



tried to balance its relationship with India and China.

- It has also sought funding for the management and restoration of the Teesta River.

What lies ahead for India?

- India should not have problems if Bangladesh wants to manage its side of the water of the Teesta River.
- If an agreement is reached between India and Bangladesh at a later date, it would only make the situation better for India.

Founding Fathers of NAM

Drawing on the principles agreed at the Bandung Conference in 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement was established in 1961 in Belgrade, SR Serbia, and Yugoslavia through an initiative of the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, Indonesian President Sukarno, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito.

- However, even if that does not happen, Bangladesh would feel less aggrieved as it would have water on its side at its disposal.
- Beijing, however, is likely to use the opportunity to blunt the resentment of Bangladesh over the damming of Brahmaputra.
- In any case, it is unlikely that either India's or Bangladesh's protests will have much impact and stop China in its endeavor.

- The pro-Chinese constituency in Bangladesh would also use it to present Beijing in a positive light.
- Thus India has to remain careful of both China and Pakistan, who would like to wean South Asian countries away from India.

7. INDIA AND NAM

Why in news?

India's External Affairs Minister recent stated that "non-alignment was a term of a particular era and a particular...geopolitical landscape".

What is the core idea of NAM?

- Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a forum of 120 developing world states that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.
- After the United Nations, it is the largest grouping of states worldwide.
- This led to the first Conference of Heads of State or Governments of Non-Aligned Countries.
- The term non-aligned movement first appears in the fifth conference in 1976, where participating countries are denoted as "members of the movement".
- The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement represent nearly two-thirds of the United Nations' members and contain 55% of the world population.
- Membership is particularly concentrated in countries considered to be developing or part of the Third



World, though the Non-Aligned Movement also has a number of developed nations.

What is the comment of External affairs minister (EAM) on NAM?

- It could be viewed as an iteration of the notion about non-alignment movement (NAM) being a relic of the Cold War-era world order.
- It can also be seen as the recognition that the world has since moved towards a polycentric system with a handful of great powers competing to enhance their spheres of influence and establish their hegemony.
- It was also in a tone that the fundamental objective of being non-aligned in the bygone era - when states breaking free of colonial shackles were being sucked into a new form of global politics - was the conviction of the leadership that it will be in the best interests of the country.

What is the significance of Non-alignment?

- Actual relevance of Non-Alignment was in determining the space for India and the third world in the Cold War spectrum from the early 1960s, when the superpower competition began to acquire numerous dimensions of conflict, cooperation and détente.
- Furthermore, after its initial mobilization as an anti-imperial voice, the movement was about the struggles of members to engage and reconcile

with the normative structuring of the global order by the superpowers.

- India's non-aligned postures, for that matter, remained contested and subjected to varied interpretations as it evolved in the next four decades of pivoting India's foreign policy.
- Jawaharlal lal Nehru had two streams of thought on the virtues of being non-aligned
 - (a) As a model of third world self-sufficiency bereft of influence of imperialism or colonialism,
 - (b) As a platform to safeguard the interests of those who wished not to align with the superpowers in their rivalry.
- It was later evolved as a bridge between two hostile ideological blocs, and a policy of independence to judge issues on its merits irrespective of external pressure.
- In fact, most Western analyses of non-alignment treated it in relation to the bipolar world: as an effort to mediate superpower rivalries or to prevent global war, a repudiation of traditional machinery of power politics, reactive diplomacy, representing a posture of moral superiority, substituting balance of power model, etc.
- The inherent scope for flexible policymaking was also abundantly evident during the non-alignment decades when India engaged in realist statecraft involving both superpowers with significant policy swings that



could easily fall between neutrality and alignment.

8. OFB CORPORATIZATION

What is the issue?

Poor workmanship, deteriorating quality issues and lack of professionalism have plagued the workings of the Ordnance Factories (OFs).

What are the recent issues in OFBs?

- In 2019 at the Mahajan Field Firing Range, a burst cartridge QF 40mm HE, used in L/70 Air Defence (AD) gun, grievously injured a crew of five, including one officer.
- The L/70 ammunition was originally procured from Sweden and was being produced by the OF, after incorporating a series of safety mechanisms.
- The inquiry revealed that the accident took place due to the bursting of the shell.
- The OF have been producing this ammunition for nearly half a century.
- The OF should have developed technologies which would have replaced manual handling and achieved a “zero defect” product.
- Yet, in the accident quoted above, it appears there was quality compromise both by the OF and the DGQA team.
- Both the agencies instead accused the user of having mishandled the ammunition, notwithstanding the fact that the inbuilt safeties are supposed

to cater to war conditions and nothing would happen to ammunition even if dropped by mistake.

- Such incidents involving OF products are, unfortunately, a repetitive phenomenon.

What are the organizational issues found in OFBs?

- The performance of the OF needs to be evaluated against the backdrop of the objectives set for them, which include the following:
 1. To supply quality arms, ammunition, tanks, military equipment, weapon systems, etc., to the armed forces;
 2. To modernize production facilities to improve quality;
 3. To equip themselves with technologies through transfer of technology (ToT) and in-house research and development (R&D); and
 4. To meet customer satisfaction and expand the consumer base.
- The OF have failed on all four counts by miles. Neither is there any quality control nor have steps been taken to modernize the product profile.
- Time delays are exorbitantly high, overheads as a percentage of cost exceeds 25 per cent, and the cost of final products are more than what is available in the open market while the exports achieved over the years are insignificant.



- The OF spend on R&D is next to nothing.
- The OF filed for just one intellectual property right (IPR) patent in 2016-2017 and none in 2017-2018.

What measures are needed?

- Government of India in May 2020 announced corporatization of the OFs.
 - Some suggestions that the government could follow post-corporatization include
1. Permitting the lateral entry of professionals with proficiency to head the OFs.
 2. Ensure in-house R&D.
 3. Form joint ventures (JV) with private industry.

4. Weed out inefficient workers.
 5. Close down OFs which focus on manufacture of low technology items or those that are easily available in open market.
 6. Disinvest and monetize to raise capital for modernization, etc.
- The OFs are a strategic asset that would definitely flourish post “modification and modernization”.
 - They should fulfil the desire for indigenization but, at the same time, help achieve US\$ 5 billion export target by 2025.