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MONTHLY MAINSTORMING

NOVEMBER
2021

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MONTHLY MAINSTORMING

NOVEMBER 2021

G.S PAPER I

1. CULTURE

Buddhist pilgrimage centers can help India engage vigorously in its soft diplomacy which will have a influence on the other dimensions too. Explain

KEY POINTS

- The two-millennia old, shared Buddhist religious and cultural legacy between Buddhism's holy land India, and her seven Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) partner nations.
- India can leverage this astutely through people-to-people diplomacy between the SCO members.
- India hosted the Shared Buddhist Heritage virtual exhibition in New Delhi, where it showcased Buddhist art, tapestry, ritual objects from across this vast Eurasian region.
- India's internal Buddhist Circuit can connect to the larger circuit of developing Buddhist tourist sites in the Muslim majority Central Asian Republics (CARs) and those that are part of China's Belt & Road Initiative.
- An outstanding example of this process is the spread of Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism based on the concept of "mindfulness" or Dhyana founded in India around the 6th or 7th centuries.
- India's Buddhist Circuit including Lumbini in Nepal as a pilgrimage site holds out the tantalising potential given the almost ready international airport by Nepal there of seamlessly extending this circuit to India's neighbours.
- The idea of common cultural roots between people from these eight very diverse nations can be the bedrock of future planned institutions within the ambit of the SCO, like the proposed SCO University.

2. HISTORY

Recognition of Birsa Munda will create awareness regarding the contributions of tribal communities, their cultural heritage, traditions among the younger generation. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- Despite a place for tribals in Indian culture and history, the enactment of the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 by the British government, branded the very 'descendants' of Guha as criminals.
- The aim of commemorating the birthday of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas is to ensure that the freedom fighters from various tribal communities who fought for India's Independence get their rightful recognition.

- It will also ensure that the heritage, culture and the values of the 705 tribal communities (Scheduled Tribes) that constitute approximately 10% of our population is protected and is made accessible across the nation.
- Apart from political representation, it is also important to ensure that tribal communities see economic progress and better human development indicators.
- The biggest beneficiaries of this are the forest dwelling tribal communities who are now able to use such forest produce to make value-added utility products.
- The expansion of the Eklavya Model Residential Schools, from 90 new schools sanctioned in the UPA years to 472 new schools sanctioned since 2014, will ensure that tribal children will see better education outcomes.
- There are records of over 200 tribal freedom fighters across India who participated in about 85 instances of revolts and uprisings against colonial rule.

3. SOCIETY

Inclusive entrepreneurship today holds the promise of an exciting and uncharted future for social transformation in the country. Explain

KEY POINTS

- Despite the constitutional guarantee of equality, the mind space of Indian society is deeply entrenched in caste and its serpentine matrix.
- In a departure from the fixation on traditional parameters for the study of Dalit rights and empowerment, there is now a focus on how market forces can be expanded to address social exclusion.
- As per the reports by the MSME ministry, Dalit-owned ventures are still minimal in terms of numbers as well as revenue.
- Micro studies conducted all over India show that Dalits are still indentured to their traditional caste-assigned occupations, which are usually manual and low-paying.
- To overcome hindrances to the establishment of networks across various social groups, Dalit entrepreneurs take recourse to their internal ties and use them to sustain their economic gains.
- The District Industries Centre (DIC) stipulates that to nurture entrepreneurs, the government must increase the share of goods produced by Dalits in its procurement.
- State financial corporations have also been instructed to increase financial support to Scheduled Caste entrepreneurs.
- It is evident that despite the existence of government schemes and policies to support such initiatives, the actual benefit could never reach the beneficiaries due to the artificial inaccessibility created by inherent social and caste biases.

Explain the various governmental actions that are required to end the practice of child marriage in the country.

KEY POINTS

- Data from the fourth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS4) in 2015-16 shows that even before Covid, one in four girls in India was being married before 18.
- Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) have been the main policy instrument introduced by most states in the last two decades to end child marriage.
- Karnataka amended the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2017, declaring every child marriage void ab initio, making it a cognisable offence, and introducing a minimum period of rigorous imprisonment for all who enable a child marriage.
- These include expansion of secondary education, access to safe and affordable public transport, and support for young women to apply their education to earn a livelihood.
- Expansion of education goes beyond access. Girls must be able to attend school regularly, remain there, and achieve.
- Girls' clubs should be systematically formed in high school to provide informal social networks for group study, solidarity, and resilience.
- Teachers should hold regular gender equality conversations with high school girls and boys to shape progressive attitudes that will sustain into adulthood.
- Empowerment measures, too, are required to end child marriage, such as community engagement through programmes like Mahila Samakhya.
- Children's village assemblies in the 2.5 lakh gram panchayats across India can provide a platform for children to voice their concerns.

G.S PAPER II

4. POLITY

Without any 'quantifiable data' on a caste's backwardness relative to others, conferring quota amounts to giving reservation solely on the basis of caste. Evaluate with recent examples.

KEY POINTS

- An exclusive internal quota for a single caste group was always fraught with the danger of judicial invalidation.
- The court's foremost reason is that the State Assembly lacked the legislative competence to enact the law in February 2021, at a time when the Constitution 102nd Amendment, conferring exclusive power to identify backward classes on the President, was in force.
- That the Constitution 105th Amendment subsequently restored the States' powers to identify backward classes was not deemed relevant as, on the date of the enactment, the Assembly had been denuded of such power.

- The court also rejected the comparison with the sub-quotas enjoyed without hindrance by Backward Class Muslims and Arundhatiyars, a Scheduled Caste, noting that these two measures were backed by Census data and valid recommendations.
- What may cause some concern is that the court has said changes in the existing 69% quota classification cannot be made without amending the State's 1994 reservation protection law, which received the President's assent and was also included in the Ninth Schedule to put it beyond judicial review.
- Regimes in all States should focus on compiling credible data both on the backwardness of sections of society and their level of representation in public services and educational opportunities.

Collegium of judiciary in the country should suggest corrective actions to ensure transparency in transfer of judges. Explain

KEY POINTS

- Article 222 of the Constitution deals with the transfer of judges and states that the President may, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI), transfer a judge from one high court to another.
- This Article has been subject to extensive judicial review and interpretation and recalling the historical context may be helpful to understand its present-day usage and contours.
- While concurring with the majority, Justice P N Bhagwati held that the transfer of a judge from one court to another inflicts many injuries on the individual.
- In 1994, between the Second and Third Judges' cases, the K Ashok Reddy case was filed in the Supreme Court dealing specifically with the question of transfer of judges of high courts.
- Seeking inputs from a plurality of judges in the formation of the opinion of the CJI is itself an in-built check against the likelihood of arbitrariness or bias.
- The objective here is not to question the collective wisdom of the Collegium. But when the judiciary misses no opportunity to uphold the basic structure doctrine and preserve at all cost its independence, there is a need for transparency in judicial functioning to dispel all notions of favouritism.

5. GOVERNMENT POLICIES

MGNREGA's performance is possibly the most important proxy for the health of the informal economy. However, a number of issues affect its performance. Analyze.

KEY POINTS

- Not allocating adequate funds for MGNREGA in the Budget for the current financial year. According to the PAEG, the total budget allocation for MGNREGA this year was 34% less than the revised budget of the last financial year (2020-21).
- Funds remaining as of September end can cover at most 13 days of employment per household until the financial year ends in March.
- Another key takeaway is that inadequate allocation has a detrimental impact on people asking for a job.

- There are two important legislative provisions of MGNREGA. One, work should be provided within 15 days of demanding work failing which the workers are entitled to an unemployment allowance.
- workers should be paid within 15 days of completion of work, failing which they are entitled to compensation for the delays.
- Delays by caste over timewhich details how the payments were delayed by caste for each of the 10 states. Jharkhand, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh saw a particularly poor record of payments for non-SC, non-ST workers.
- The caste-based wage payments go against the universal nature of the programme, lead to more bureaucratic work at the lower levels and delays, and create unnecessary grievances.

All India Judicial Service (AIJS) on the lines of the central civil services has been debated for decades and remains contentious. Discuss.

KEY POINTS

- The central government is preparing to give a fresh push to the establishment of an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) on the lines of the central civil services.
- The AIJS is a reform push to centralise the recruitment of judges at the level of additional district judges and district judges for all states.
- Articles 233 and 234 of the Constitution of India deal with the appointment of district judges, and place it in the domain of the states.
- The idea was to ensure an efficient subordinate judiciary, to address structural issues such as varying pay and remuneration across states, to fill vacancies faster, and to ensure standard training across states.
- A centralised recruitment process is seen as an affront to federalism and an encroachment on the powers of states granted by the Constitution.
- This is the main contention of several states, which have also argued that central recruitment would not be able to address the unique concerns that individual states may have.
- The government has targeted the reform of lower judiciary in its effort to improve India's Ease of Doing Business ranking, as efficient dispute resolution is one of the key indices in determining the rank.

How does the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021 promise to unlock the next round of reforms the sector needs? Analyse

KEY POINTS

- Universal access to affordable, clean and modern energy is key to the wellbeing of a growing population besides enhancing industrial competitiveness.
- The Electricity Amendments Bill 2021 aims to reinvigorate the sector while focusing on the 4 Cs customer, competition, compliance and climate.



- The new Bill looks to tackle legacy issues responsible for this by proposing that retail tariffs be “cost-reflective”, i.e., should no longer incorporate subsidies, which states would pass onto customers via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- The government has also proposed a progressive reduction in cross-subsidy surcharges which should reduce the cost of commercial power, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of domestic industries as we look to build an Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- These reforms will also provide financial relief to the states burdened by discom resource crunch, while helping attract more investments due to reduced industrial tariff. DBT should ensure targeted subsidy, further easing the burden on states.
- Another key area of focus is compliance as the Bill seeks to strengthen and streamline various regulatory bodies, for better governance and faster dispute resolution.
- However, on ground implementation will be key and this will be possible only when the Centre actively engages with the states and takes them along in the true spirit of cooperative federalism.

Discuss the various implications associated with the repeal of farm laws by the Government of India.

KEY POINTS

- Prime Minister announced that the government will repeal the farm laws in the Winter Session of Parliament.
- Prime minister said that the government will constitute a committee comprising representatives of the Union and state governments, agri-experts and scientists to come up with a new package for farmers.
- The latest Situation Assessment Survey of the NSO reveals that the income of an average agri-household in India was only Rs 10,218 per month in 2018-19.
- The agitating farmer leaders and opposition parties will surely be emboldened because of this “victory”. Farmer leaders are already asking for the legal guarantee of MSPs for 23 agri-commodities.
- Their demand could increase to include a larger basket of commodities. Similarly, there could be demands to block the privatisation reforms of public sector enterprises Air India, for instance — or to scuttle any other reform for that matter.
- This competitive populism can give some succour to the poor in the short run, which they deserve, having suffered badly during the pandemic period.
- The most important lesson being that the process of economic reforms has to be more consultative, more transparent and better communicated to the potential beneficiaries.
- It is this inclusiveness that lies at the heart of democratic functioning of India. It takes time and humility to implement reforms, given the argumentative nature of our society. But doing so ensures that everyone wins.

Identify various constraints, challenges and offer relevant suggestions to improve the performance of Asset Reconstruction Companies.

KEY POINTS

- The newly-created National Asset Reconstruction Company (NARCL) in the public sector offers hopes for the faster clean up of lenders' balance sheets.
- This would be the 30th Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) in the business of resolving distressed assets, but the first in the public sector.
- The RBI has also launched a slew of measures during 2013-14 to resolve, reconstruct and restructure stressed assets. These too did not deliver and they were all abandoned subsequently.
- The top five ARCs account for over 70 per cent of the asset under management (AUM) and nearly 65 per cent of the capital.
- The IBC, introduced has succeeded in resolving a few large corporate borrowers with an average recovery of 45 per cent.
- But there is concern about the elevated haircuts — in some cases going up to 95 per cent.
- The NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) proves to be the choke point. It is the backbone of the IBC, but lamentably is starved of infrastructure and over 50 per cent (34 out of 63) of NCLT benches were bereft of regular judges.
- The IBC has made considerable progress in bringing about behavioural change in errant and wilful defaulters by forbidding them to take back distressed assets.

6. HEALTH

There is a need for the public-private health model in order to provide affordable as well as efficient healthcare in the country. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- The role of the government hospitals has been crucial in this pandemic, and they rose to the occasion admirably.
- However, the pandemic has also brought private health providers under scrutiny. Though they may be efficient and possess the latest technology, there are questions about affordability and, in certain instances, even ethics.
- The substantial investment for these hospitals is the infrastructure. The land and building in cities like Chennai are the primary reason for the prohibitive cost of private health providers.
- As a first step, the government provides the fundamental infrastructure, the land, buildings, and essential equipment.
- Then the supporting staff, nurses, and administrators, including high-level administration, for running the hospital can be subcontracted, as has been done for the conservancy work of Chennai Corporation.

- the requirement for regular lab tests such as blood tests, ECG, X-rays, etc., can be allocated to an accredited laboratory.
- Finally, specialised equipment such as CT-scan, MRI, etc., can be run by another set of private professionals who are not paid by the government but by the patient for the services rendered.
- The patient is the “customer” in this “business model” and pays reasonable rent to the government for all the infrastructures used, pays the service providers and the treating doctors.

Project Sampoorna’s success in reducing child malnutrition is a model that can be easily implemented anywhere in the country. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- The project has resulted in the reduction of malnutrition in children using near zero economic investment. Sampoorna is in tandem with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.
- It was during Poshan Maah (Nutrition Month) in September 2020 that 2,416 children were identified to be malnourished in the lush green Brahmaputra valley district of Bongaigaon.
- The National Family Health Survey (NHFS)-5 has documented that the number of children under five who are stunted, wasted, underweight and the number of anaemic women and children in the district are higher than the national average — anaemia being a major determinant of maternal and child health.
- The highest risk factor for high risk pregnancy is anaemia which is usually nutritional.
- Bongaigaon has 1,116 Anganwadis with a total of 63,041 children below five. The massive exercise of plotting their weights and heights in World Health Organization growth charts revealed a total of 2,416 malnourished children.
- The major hindrance to the project was patriarchy. Mothers had to be empowered financially for sustained results.
- Children who had not improved were checked and treated by doctors under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK). UNICEF, IIT Guwahati, Tezpur University and the Social Welfare Department lent their support in periodic course correction.

As the non-communicable diseases shows the rising trend, India needs palliative care to handle the impending crisis. Elaborate

KEY POINTS

- In India, those with family members who are hospitalised with serious health-related suffering continue to agonise over how they can ensure a dignified end for them.
- In 1990, the WHO had defined palliative care as “the active total care of patients whose disease is not responsive to curative treatment.
- Palliative care is almost non-existent at the grassroots in India. There is a lack of trained personnel, restricted access to opioids for pain control.

- Palliative care respects patient autonomy. It requires end-of-life conversations to ascertain the wishes of the person who is dying and those of the family.
- Training professionals and working in a collaborative manner with those in the field of palliative care is the way forward. This is why people must make a living will and designate a surrogate who will take decisions on their behalf should they be incapacitated.
- In the Indian situation, not only should patients be referred to the palliative care team early to ensure a better quality of life, but the continued survival and safety of members of the family left behind is also a concern.
- Their rehabilitation is consequently also a part of palliative care. It will bring peace to a dying patient, who seeks assurance that his or her family will be safe and able to cope.

The outcomes of National Family Health Survey-5 should be used to improve various social development indices. Explain

KEY POINTS

- While the results of the NFHS are usually mixed, and improvements in certain sectors ride along with stagnation and deterioration in other sectors, this year, there have been radical improvements in maternal and child health, sex ratio and population control.
- India has achieved a total fertility rate of 2.0, dropping further from the figure of 2.2 during NFHS-4, indicating that India has contained the population explosion.
- Policies, some even coercive, as in the case of the family planning sector, seem to have borne fruit, years after they were implemented.
- Having measured blood sugar and hypertension in the population for the first time, NFHS-5 highlighted the looming threat from lifestyle diseases.
- This massive exercise that covered, this year, over six lakh households across the country, aims at providing data that will help shape the policies in a manner that will correct deficiencies, and ensure equitable access to services
- States need to treat it as such, and while they might dispute some assessments, the greater idea is to recognise it as a matrix to work on, to improve the development indicators further.
- Meanwhile, the Centre too must not treat it as a mere stocktaking exercise, but harness the opportunities the NFHS provides for launching reform or re-assessing certain policies without using it as a political tool in a federal set up.

7. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

If the Indo-Pacific is about Delhi's new maritime geopolitics, Eurasia policy involves the recalibration of India's continental strategy. Examine

KEY POINTS

- As in the Indo-Pacific, so in Eurasia, there is no shared international understanding of what constitutes the region.
- If the Indo-Pacific describes the long stretch of tropical waters from the east coast of Africa to the central Pacific, Eurasia is the name of a tectonic plate that lies under much of what we know as Europe and Asia.
- The most important development in Eurasia today is the dramatic rise of China and its growing strategic assertiveness, expanding economic power and rising political influence.
- Beijing's muscular approach to the long and disputed border with Bhutan and India, its quest for a security presence in Tajikistan, the active search for a larger role in Afghanistan, and a greater say in the affairs of the broader sub-Himalayan region are only one part of the story.
- As the world's second-largest economy, China's commercial influence is felt across the world. Physical proximity multiplies China's economic impact on the inner Asian regions.
- The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is just the beginning of a long-overdue redefinition of US global strategic priorities.
- India's Eurasian policy must necessarily involve greater engagement with both the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.
- The current flux in Eurasian geopolitics will lessen some of the current contradictions and generate some new antinomies in the days ahead.

Discuss the domains that will lend additional strength to the foundation of a Indo-US partnership.

KEY POINTS

- When the history of the 21st century is written, India and the United States and the strategic alliance they forge should play starring roles.
- The grand strategic ambitions of the relationship may in fact depend substantially on how well they collaborate in two areas to which their joint attention is only belatedly turning — climate and trade.
- The first presents an existential threat while the second is too often dismissed as a secondary consideration, even dispensable in the name of pursuing larger strategic interests.
- For example, India and the U.S. could find opportunities to align their climate and trade approaches better, starting with a resolution of their disputes in the World Trade Organization (WTO) on solar panels.
- As they have dithered in pursuing cases in the WTO and settling them, China has effectively captured the global market, leaving each dependent on a source they view as a threat.

- India currently bans imports of fuel ethanol even as it seeks to ramp up its own ethanol blend mandates and build a domestic sector that can join the U.S. and Brazil in exporting to the world.
- Shared strategic interests will be undermined if India and the U.S. cannot jointly map coordinated policies on climate and trade.

Regional connectivity in Bay of Bengal nations will help India to handle Chinese geo-political influence. Do you agree with this view? Explain

KEY POINTS

- The Bay of Bengal (BoB) is gaining economic and strategic relevance as a significant sub-region within the Indo-Pacific. It increasingly matters in global strategic competition.
- This is in sharp contrast to China, which, in recent years, has built a significant presence in the Bay of Bengal and its resident nations with connectivity projects and infrastructure finance.
- Building infrastructure in this region faces governance and operational challenges, including small-scale insurgencies, migration, environmental stress, and crime.
- Chinese projects connect to one another, from rail to the road to the port. An example is the proposed 2,800 km railway line connecting Kunming to Kolkata via Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- Strong Bhutan-India hydropower ties, evident from the large concentration of hydropower projects in Bhutan and power transmission lines taking this power to India, offer a blueprint for the rest of the region.
- Successful tech entrepreneurs are big backers of new start-ups this category of investors needs to be created. The tech sector is also less impacted by systemic inefficiencies that plague physical infrastructure.
- Bay of Bengal nations, for their part, must set up a SPV to build a Bay of Bengal Power Grid with regional governments as shareholders. This can serve as a template for cooperation in other infrastructure projects.

Why has India taken a firm stand against the plurilateral agreement on investment facilitation at the World Trade Organization? Analyse

KEY POINTS

- A group of over 100 WTO member countries are deliberating on a proposal to have a plurilateral agreement on investment facilitation to be finalised at this ministerial conference.
- The agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development being negotiated by a group of over 100 WTO members under a plurilateral mode has been evolving and the visible result
- India's reservations against the investment facilitation discussions on the sidelines of the WTO are twofold: (a) Investment doesn't belong to the WTO: To the extent investment is related to trade it is already included in the TRIMs agreement and under mode 3 related to FDI in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).
- India has naturally not participated in the discussions and has not formally commented on the successive texts.

- A close look at the likely provisions, however, indicates the following: (a) The phrase ‘investment facilitation for development’ is evidently a misnomer.
- The proposed agreement would be too burdensome for developing countries and LDCs, because nearly all of the obligations that may be created are on host countries.
- The objective of the proponents now is evidently to hoist investment on the WTO agenda in an elementary and apparently harmless form as investment facilitation.

The fragmentation of the World Trade Organization’s rule-making function via Joint Initiatives is a real threat to the long-term continuity of WTO. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- The WTO’s 12th ministerial conference (MC-12) will commence in Geneva on November 30. At stake is the relevance of this multilateral organisation in an increasingly fragmented world.
- “Consensus” has been the fundamental norm for WTO decision-making. An important theoretical underpinning of this principle is that it provides the ability for all countries, irrespective of economic heft, to express dissent.
- Projected as joint initiatives (JIs) among interested members, these groups have focused on negotiations in the areas of domestic regulation (DR), e-commerce, investment facilitation and MSMEs.
- While clear legal pathways having been identified by participating members for incorporating the negotiated disciplines on services DR into WTO commitments on a “most favoured nation” (MFN) basis.
- JIs have, however, gathered momentum, and not just in terms of number of members but also in terms of the amount of trade they represent; of the 164 WTO members, 136 are participating in the JI on investment facilitation, 86 in e-commerce, 65 in services DR, and 70 in MSMEs.
- This needs to be by ensuring that any new rules are based on WTO’s core principle of multilateral decision-making. This may also require consideration of the fact that the very principles of multilateralism can be used to insist that JIs need to be negotiated at the multilateral level.

G.S PAPER III

8. INDIAN ECONOMY

Automation is the fourth irreversible trend after globalization, digitization, and mobility. Discuss the measures to be incorporated into the process framework to make the trends sustainable.

KEY POINTS

- Automation is the fourth irreversible trend after globalization, digitization and mobility.
- According to a report by McKinsey, around 88% of finance and insurance executives, and 76% of IT executives reported an increased implementation of automation since the pandemic.

- , intelligent automation (IA) adds cognitive technologies to ensure enterprise-wide business process automation.
- This helps employees focus on high-value work, while also lowering costs, improving efficiency and managing dynamic customer needs.
- IA is seen as the main driver for digital transformation since IA processes unstructured data, handles exceptions and learns continuously.
- A top-down approach for creating a “fully automated enterprise” is seen as a strategic business enabler by many companies that want to retain their competitive advantage.
- IA utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) capabilities to work with unstructured, non-standardized and dynamic data.
- The automation journey begins to function like a flywheel, which is scalable, where continued use of automation generates ideas that expand automation quickly for enterprises.
- When an organization uses a hybrid approach to determine what to automate, a feedback loop is created that amplifies use cases and drives adoption.
- Low-code platforms employ visual, drag-and-drop techniques instead of traditional lines of programming, and offer authorizations and access controls by default.

The volatility of cryptocurrencies makes them remain only as speculative assets and not a medium of exchange. Analyze

KEY POINTS

- Bitcoin and other private cryptocurrencies have been on a bull run recently. Unlike previous rallies, the current rally in bitcoin has witnessed the increasing participation of retail investors in India.
- The most important feature of cryptocurrencies that is flaunted by their enthusiasts is their limited supply.
- Stocks and bonds, for instance, possess exchange value that is based on the expected future cash flow from these assets.
- Commodities such as oil and steel possess use value because these assets are used to run vehicles and build real estate.
- The monopoly that governments (and central banks) possess over the issuance of money is at the root of their power and influence.
- This allows governments to fund their budget deficits, particularly during times of crises such as the current pandemic when tax revenues have taken an unprecedented hit.
- In essence, monopoly control over money allows governments to indirectly tax citizens by increasing the supply of currencies, thus devaluing them.
- China recently imposed a complete ban on all cryptocurrencies and plans to issue its own central bank-issued digital currency.

- Private alternatives to fiat currencies offer people greater choice in what currencies they choose to use as a medium of exchange.

As India is considered as a new manufacturing hub of the world, a robust corporate bond market is the need of the hour. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- According to Crisil, outstanding corporate bond market in India is expected to double and reach Rs 65-70 lakh crore by 2025.
- Further, the Indian bond market has been dominated by sovereign bonds and the corporate bond market has a smaller share (27 per cent) during the last decade.
- This calls for a power shift since an efficient corporate bond market complements a sound banking system and provides an alternative source of finance to the real sector, diversifies risks (mitigating asset-liability mismatches), and reduces financial sector fragility.
- Financial literacy and education: According to a survey conducted by Standard & Poor's in 2015, over 76 per cent of adults in India do not even understand the basic financial concepts like interest rate, inflation, and exchange rate.
- Credit guarantee enhancement: As on date, credit guarantee fund scheme exists for MSMEs (Micro Small & Medium Enterprises) to extend collateral-free credit.
- Maintaining price stability: The government's massive public debt needs to be gradually downsized for effective transmission of monetary policy in order to crowd in private investment. This will reduce inflation, and the cost of borrowing of the corporates, and lead to higher real returns to the investors.
- Functional autonomy: Stakeholders such as independent directors, and credit rating agencies should have functional independence to improve corporate governance.

Do you think that the country has reached the stage where it can make major contributions to global growth? Examine

KEY POINTS

- In India's battle with Covid-19, recovery was largely under-predicted and financial sector distress over-predicted.
- The inference from better-than-expected outcomes is that supply-side reforms have reached a threshold that allows higher growth and low real rates aligned with surplus liquidity to raise demand and output.
- Among these constraints are commodity price shocks and other supply-side bottlenecks, financial inadequacies and macroeconomic volatility.
- More than fundamental reforms, sustaining Indian growth requires continued fiscal supply-side action that reduces costs of doing business and therefore inflation.

- This allows monetary policy to keep real interests at a level that stimulates demand.
- Such monetary-fiscal coordination works best in Indian conditions of migration to higher productivity employment amid supply bottlenecks.
- Covid-19 induced supply chain diversification, together with the government's PLI scheme and other incentives for firms may help India create jobs in labour intensive manufacturing that it has so far missed.
- Monetary transmission to output is effective, with the share of retail loans growing. Housing and consumer durable loans are reviving as well as investment in specific sectors.
- The sheer size and diversity of a \$2 trillion economy creates much more depth and resilience and the ability to absorb shocks, with the appropriate countercyclical policy.

The monetary policy of India must prepare and anticipate for the challenges posed by the crypto currencies. Evaluate

KEY POINTS

- The ongoing technological revolution has meant that "digital money" one manifestation of which are cryptocurrencies.
- Widespread adoption of privately issued digital currencies as a medium of exchange will have much the same impact.
- The larger the monetary base they cannibalise, the less potent will be domestic monetary policy in responding to business cycle needs and external shocks.
- The intellectual case for Bitcoin stemmed from the fear of debasement of fiat currencies through an unprecedented expansion of G3 central bank balance sheets after the global financial crisis.
- As the IMF points out, if cryptos are only used for "niche purposes" narrow cross-country transfers and remittances which are then quickly converted back into local fiat currencies, the implications for monetary policy will be contained.
- The greater the substitution into digital currencies the more the loss of seigniorage revenues to governments from the monopoly issuance of fiat currency.
- Separately, fiscal revenues can also be adversely impacted by the increased tax evasion opportunities that crypto-currencies can facilitate.
- All told, the macro implications of widespread crypto adoption are complex and interlinked. But the true macro challenge will emerge and compound if and when unbacked private digital currencies are seen as viable mediums of exchange.

The launch of the Retail Direct Scheme by the Reserve Bank of India enables broad-basing participation in the sovereign bond market by the investors. Explain

KEY POINTS

- The launch of the Retail Direct Scheme by the Reserve Bank of India appears to be aimed at broad-basing participation in the sovereign bond market to improve the demand for these securities.
- The Retail Direct Scheme is an additional channel now available to retail investors, but it is quite similar to the exchange route.
- The central bank is inviting small investors to open a retail direct gilt account with it through an online portal.
- Clearing Corporation of India Ltd is to act as the aggregator of these bids and participate in the auction. Retail investors are being asked to access secondary market through the NDS-OM platform.
- Government bonds carry interest rate risk and can result in capital loss, if they are not held till maturity.
- Small investors find it relatively harder to understand debt securities when compared to equities as data on retail holding in mutual funds reveal.
- The Centre should run an awareness campaign on government bonds, educating investors about the interest rate risk as well as their superiority as long-term investments.
- Offering income tax deductions for these instruments or to make tax treatment of direct gilt investing similar to taxation of debt mutual funds.

The latest trend regarding Goods and Services Tax collection indicates improvement in economic revival in the country. Analyse

KEY POINTS

- Goods and Services Tax is one of the major sources of revenue for the States as it contributes to nearly one-third of their own tax revenues.
- Struck by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent prolonged lockdown, States saw a precipitous fall in the GST collection in the first quarter of 2020-21 (April-June).
- States that were badly hit in terms of GST collection are Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. Kerala suffered the worst.
- States that have done remarkably well in terms of GST growth are Gujarat, West Bengal, and Punjab (each more than 110 per cent), while Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, and Odisha (each less than 75 per cent) have performed poorly.
- Besides the “base effect” and higher economic growth, measures like anti-evasion activities including detecting the incidence of fake input tax credit and action against fake billers.
- Although growth in the collection has bounced back for most States, one year of negative growth in GST collection has had a severe consequence on GST compensation.
- The Union government has been also falling short of collection and, more importantly, revenue collections from the GST compensation cess are falling drastically short of demand for the compensation amount.

- As States' fiscal resources dry up, the impact is felt instantly on their capital expenditure followed by other developmental expenditures.

For better digital lending, Reserve bank of India must arm itself with necessary technology and technical expertise to track lending applications. Examine

KEY POINTS

- It is critical digital apps continue to lend so, since penetration of formal finance in the country is abysmally low and, by one estimate, is probably less than 10% of the demand.
- RBI's working group has done well to recommend the creation of a nodal agency to verify the technological credentials of all lending apps and also dedicated legislation to curb illegal lending.
- The disbursements and repayments must be made directly into the bank accounts of borrowers and lenders so that there is a proper trail of transactions.
- If prepaid instruments are used, these must be preceded by proper know your customer (KYC) processes.
- Importantly, lending by regulated entities (REs) through lending apps must be reported to credit bureaus; there needs to be a record of credit flows.
- The working group has done well to say that all data must be stored in servers in India. That is a justified requirement given the enormous value of the information being gathered by these lenders.
- The several instances of lenders using coercive tactics to recover loans may also have prompted such detailed guidelines.
- It is now up to digital apps to play by the rules and self-regulate themselves. As the universe of fintech grows, RBI must arm itself with the necessary technology and technical expertise needed to track lending apps on a real-time basis.

Do you think that potential of e commerce is powering the inclusive job ecosystem in the country? Explain

KEY POINTS

- As of 2021, the number of internet connections in India stood at around 760 million, driven by the 'Digital India' programme.
- Additionally, smartphone shipments in India increased by around 10 per cent to reach 60 million units in the first quarter of FY22, driven by positive shipments of all smartphone vendors in the market.
- The rise in online businesses and e-tail has also been accelerated by the growth of fintech and digital payments with multitude of platforms filling the supply gap such as MobiKwik, Paytm, PhonePe and others.
- The government guidelines on allowing 100 per cent FDI in B2B e-commerce as well as the automatic route in the marketplace e-commerce model offer a positive business environment.
- E-commerce and consumer internet companies in India received more than \$4.32 billion from private equity and venture capital players, which will further support and consolidate the industry.

- New e-commerce and social commerce start-ups are coming up to fulfil the e-commerce and online shopping demand in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.
- This transformation calls for skilled IT and ITes professionals, data scientists, warehouse workers, supply chain managers, delivery persons, customer service executives, and call centre operators.
- The growth in the e-commerce sector will also boost employment, increase revenues from exports, increase tax collection by exchequers, and provide better products and services to customers in the long-term.

Discuss the implications of using Insolvency bankruptcy code against state government owned electricity distribution companies.

KEY POINTS

- States have strong incentives to favour important political constituencies by charging lower tariffs, selectively enforcing against unauthorised use etc.
- A recent Niti Aayog report argues that privatisation would be difficult when a discom's service area is more rural.
- Given the tariff differential and difficulty of billing, collection, and in some cases, metering, the cost of servicing rural and agricultural consumers becomes commercially challenging.
- Policymakers need to also think through the interplay between the electricity regulators and the insolvency tribunal.
- For instance, the US bankruptcy code explicitly preserves the regulatory agencies' rate-setting authority under a plan of reorganisation. There is no similar provision in the IBC.
- Insolvency of such utility service providers may need special treatment to ensure continuity of supply.
- Wide-scale disruption of such services could have disastrous consequences for an economy. For this reason, the UK restricts the rights of energy suppliers and their creditors to initiate insolvency proceedings.
- If that is not feasible, Ofgem or the Secretary of State may apply to the court to initiate a special administration regime that ensures continuity of supply.
- Comparable institutional safeguards may be required in India, while being mindful of state capacity constraints. The policy solutions that emerge should be informed by foreign precedents but rooted in Indian realities.

9. AGRICULTURE

Agro-ecology is not just a set of agricultural practices, it focuses on changing social relations and empowering farmers. Analyse

KEY POINTS

- India is a subtropical country with 15 agro-climatic zones and primarily dependent on the south-west monsoon.

- Of India's 329 million hectares of geographical area, nearly 140 million hectares are net sown area and out of it 70 million hectares is rain-fed.
- The average size of Indian farm holding is about one hectare. Rain-fed areas produce nearly 90 per cent of millets, 80 per cent of oilseeds and pulses, 60 per cent of cotton and support nearly 40 per cent of our population and 60 per cent of our livestock.
- Agro-ecology celebrates crop diversity but main food staples of the world are: rice, wheat, maize, cassava, potato etc., when there are nearly 30,000 edible plants.
- It seeks low energy external inputs, agro-ecological services as enterprises, soil covered for a large period of time through multiple cropping, niche crops and regional markets.
- Rain-fed areas are ecologically fragile and hence vulnerable to climate change and they are also largely inhabited by poorer farmers.
- Introducing agro-ecology in rain-fed areas could thus be a good policy option. The design elements of such interventions must start from seeds and end with markets.
- Codifying endemic land races, collecting their seeds, creating a repository of indigenous knowledge curated from formal and civil society, improving land races through plant-selection or plant-breeding.

How does the agricultural startup can shift from government-controlled agricultural markets towards more demand-driven digital markets? Explain

KEY POINTS

- Startups are creating a buzz in India by raising large sums, despite many of them currently making losses.
- This is because they disrupt the traditional system of doing business and leapfrog to efficiency, winning the trust of potential investors.
- The agritech startups have a growing footprint. Dehaat is present in Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh, working with 6,50,000 farmers through 1,890 Dehaat Centres.
- The startups have had a demonstrated impact. Ninjacart reduced wastage to 4 per cent compared to up to 25 per cent in traditional chains through demand-driven harvest schedule.
- Logistics optimisation enabled delivery in less than 12 hours at one-third the cost in traditional chains. Farmers' net incomes are reported to have increased by 20 per cent.
- Agritech startups-led e-commerce platforms have the potential to steer the shift from government-controlled agricultural markets towards more demand-driven digital markets.
- The startup-FPO partnership can be further strengthened by incentivising the FPOs under the central government's programme to add 10,000 new FPOs by 2024.

- This will also enable the government and policymakers to leverage the existing agritech pool and co-create solutions for shared value. If policies, institutions and partnerships can harness the current momentum, the startup ecosystem can be the next-generation technology revolution in the agrifood sector.

Setting up of a Minimum Support Price panel (MSP) and the Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) can transform the Indian Agriculture in various ways. Explain

KEY POINTS

- Prime Minister announced the setting up of a panel to deal with issues concerning minimum support price (MSP) and the introduction of zero budget natural farming. The move should be welcomed on various counts.
- it marks the Centre's resolve to keep the farm reform agenda alive despite the resolute opposition by farmers from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh.
- The intent to include central and State government representatives, farmers, scientists and economists on the panel will add to its credibility.
- A reconceptualisation of MSP is a must. Though meant for 23 crops, wheat and rice account for most of the budgetary outlay.
- Clearly, price support is restricted to a region — Punjab and Haryana and skewed in favour of two crops.
- Punjab and Haryana need to be weaned away from rice towards pulses, horticulture and oilseeds, with the help of regulated private trade and contract farming, while the MSP budget can be spread more evenly across regions and crops.
- Above all, farming needs serious infrastructure inputs in the form of storage and warehousing, for which stockholding limits can act as a deterrent.
- The focus in agriculture should be on boosting infrastructure and marketing, and accepting that institutions of yesteryear have now ceased to deliver.

10. ENERGY

The right financial and investment climate for renewable energy is a pre-requisite for achieving intended climate goals of the country. Analyze

KEY POINTS

- Prime Minister 'Panchamrit' pledge at the UN-led COP 26 meet in Glasgow, Scotland, includes Net-zero by 2070, 500 GW fossil fuels by 2030, reducing carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes, cutting carbon intensity by 45 per cent and climate finance
- India's primary energy consumption will grow 156 per cent by 2040 (BP Energy Outlook, 2019). India will also account for 25 per cent of the rise in global energy use by 2040.

- Despite the recent strides in renewable energy, India still largely depends upon coal (around 55%) and oil (30%) for energy sources. The share of hydroelectricity in India's energy mix has been slowing. But the share of solar and wind has accelerated over last two decades.
- A solar power plant offers good option for electrification in hilly regions, forests, deserts and islands where other resources are neither available nor viable.
- The government has been promoting renewables since Electricity Act 2003. Subsequently National Electricity Policy, 2005; National Clean Energy Fund, 2010; revised tariff policy 2016.
- Further, the National Bio-fuels Policy 2018 targets 20 per cent blending of ethanol in petrol and 5 per cent blending of biodiesel in diesel by 2030.
- The developed countries and multilateral organisations should share responsibility and help India achieve its pledges within the timeframe.

India needs to expand its energy basket and re-strategize its energy policy by adopting a more integrated approach. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- India strongly believes that the pricing of liquid hydrocarbons should be reasonable, responsible and be determined by market forces.
- India has repeatedly expressed concern at supply of oil being artificially adjusted below demand levels by oil producing countries, leading to rising prices and negative attendant consequences.
- The cost at which Indian refiners sourced their crude oil averaged \$82.11 a barrel, the price was at about \$80.70 a barrel.
- We need to invest more and fast in our crude oil storage capacity, considering our dependence on petroleum products is only going to grow over the next two decades.
- Geopolitical realities in Asia and in the Indian Ocean are getting more alarming by the day, challenging our energy security in terms of maritime supply routes and lines.
- The twin imperatives of growing uncertainties over security of supply and India's rapidly rising oil demand and import dependence make it crucial for the country to hold at least a month or two of needs in reserve.
- If India wants to use SPR to moderate prices when other avenues of relief are shut or simply as leverage against OPEC.
- Five million barrels is a token gesture, it won't move the needle on global supply.

11. S & T

5G and Internet of Things technologies could yield high carbon emissions savings in the country. Do you agree with this view? Comment

KEY POINTS

- With respect to high-speed communications and 5G, this term can be understood to refer to the networks enhanced ability to transmit bits from one node to another while minimising waste.
- At COP26, along with targets to achieve net zero carbon by 2070, and reduce emissions intensity by 45 per cent, India has set the ambitious target to reduce total projected carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes (BT) by 2030.
- By enabling the deployment of sophisticated AI and IoT networks at scale, 5G will make electrical grids more efficient, drive significant reductions in greenhouse emissions, as well as enable and optimise the integration of greater amounts of renewable energy.
- A recent report from Ericsson highlights the immense benefits, it reveals that 5G and IoT could yield carbon emissions savings of as much as 15 per cent.
- As part of a technology upgrade, Ameresco, a Massachusetts-based company, discovered that replacing an old steam plant with a fully automated plant supported by 20,000 solar modules and its own microgrid reduced energy use by over 75 per cent.
- Notable controlled experiments, deployments and proof of concepts also reveal how the way 5G is deployed has a significant effect on its emission profile.

Indian stack experience can help the country to become one of the largest digital markets in the world. Elaborate

KEY POINTS

- The Minister of Commerce and Industry recently highlighted that India is poised to become one of the largest digital markets in the world on the back of an unprecedented 87 per cent fintech adoption rate as against the global average of 64 per cent.
- The ever-improving India Stack the world's only public digital platform, that enables digital services and commerce puts us in front of the race.
- The absence of legacy systems options that require behaviour change amongst both vendors and customers who resist change has allowed India to leapfrog to mobile payment systems in banking.
- The elements of the country's public digital platform that form the India Stack are unique. Consisting of Aadhaar biometrics, United Payment Interface (UPI), e-Sign and e-KYC, and Aadhaar Enabled Payment Systems (AEPS) it is the only public platform that we know of in the world that combines all these elements.
- Mid-size and start-up companies in India can scale up through India's public digital platforms and compete with the 'Reliance's' of the world.

- For example, it can be used in combining healthcare needs with insurance dissemination in a seamless way ambulance services with insights from e-KYC can take patients to the right hospital emergency room and admissions can be manage in minutes.

12. DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The government can create a guarantee fund for insurers incurring catastrophic losses on account of natural disasters. Elaborate

KEY POINTS

- One of the major findings of the recently released All-India Debt and Investment Survey (NSS 77th Round) by the National Statistical Office is the pronounced inequality in the distribution of assets, both in rural and urban areas.
- In urban areas, the inequality was more visible than that in rural areas with the top 10 per cent owning 56 per cent of assets and bottom 50 per cent owning merely 6 per cent.
- Frequent natural catastrophes constitute one of the main reasons for exacerbation of inequality in asset distribution in India.
- India is vulnerable to almost all types of natural catastrophes: floods, tropical cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, droughts, landslides and hail.
- The government, private agencies (including NGOs) and global agencies help mitigate the after-effects of natural calamities.
- However, during such crises, no resource can be said as adequate. Therefore, households also have to do their bit, and one of the productive means is to protect their lives and assets from damages via insurance cover.
- Low insurance penetration in India must be addressed primarily by motivating people not to become fatalistic and increasing their insurance awareness and literacy.
- IRDAI and insurers should formulate a framework with weather module-based and parametric insurance solutions to bring adequate financial relief to end-users.

13. INTERNAL SECURITY

The existence of peace at the Indo – Myanmar border is critical for the livelihoods of tribal people in the hill areas of Manipur. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- The ambush on a convoy of the 46 Assam Rifles (AR) on the Indo-Myanmar border, which killed five AR personnel including its commanding officer.

- The fact that this ambush was mounted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), one of the seven banned armed groups in Manipur, along with the Manipur Naga People's Front (MNPF), speaks to the fragility of the peace fostered by India's counterinsurgency (COIN) strategies.
- The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), arguably the most authoritative source on insurgency-related conflicts, was sanguine in its recent assessment.
- An ill-equipped police force of 50-60 headed by an inspector, complemented by a company each of the Indian Reserve Battalion and AR, seems inadequate to maintain "law and order" as well as regulate cross-border trade and movements.
- The PLA knows that the land-owning system in the hills is inhospitable to its interests in securing formal ownership rights the Centre's ban makes matters more difficult for it.
- India needs to recalibrate its relations with Bangladesh and Myanmar to effectively deal with outfits such as the PLA and UNLF.
- There is also a compelling need to modernise intelligence gathering and military/police infrastructure.
- It also needs to be realised that the failure to bring the PLA and UNLF to the negotiating peace table will not only perpetuate the security dilemma and make the power dynamics in the Indo-Myanmar.

14. ENVIRONMENT

The complexity and scale of the water crisis in India call for a locus-specific response. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- Seeing India's looming water crisis through the locus of 'urban' and 'rural' not only allows a better grasp of the causative factors but also enables a stronger grip on the strategies to be deployed to reverse the water crisis.
- In the rural areas, 80%-90% of the drinking water and 75% of the water used for agriculture is drawn from groundwater sources.
- In urban areas, 50%-60% of the water supply is drawn from groundwater sources, whereas the remaining is sourced from surface water resources such as rivers, often located afar, in addition to lakes, tanks and reservoirs.
- If the Government is serious about addressing the water crisis in urban areas, the Ministry of Water Resources must reconfigure its relationship with other Ministries and Departments (Urban Development, Local Self-Government and Environment).
- Such an approach to water conservation again beckons new configurations between sectors and disciplines.
- At the sectoral level, the Ministries and Departments of water resources must coordinate efforts with their counterparts in agriculture, the environment and rural development for greater convergence to achieve water and food security.
- Instead the aim should be towards protecting and conserving water resources on the one hand and minimising and enhancing efficiency of water usage on the other.

Is India's commitment to hit net-zero emissions only by 2070 a lethargic move or grounded in the reality of climate justice?

KEY POINTS

- There's one that sums up India's approach to the climate problem achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.
- For the world to achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050, it is necessary that the advanced economies get there well before that while giving the emerging economies and the less developed countries more time to make the transition.
- India's other commitments to be achieved by 2030 appear ambitious, notably the one to meet 50 per cent of its energy requirements from renewable sources by 2030.
- The target of creating 500 GW capacity in non-fossil fuels seems achievable, given that solar, wind and hydel power collectively account for a capacity of about 150 GW.
- If India does not walk the talk, it may lose traction on the world stage not least because it is the third largest emitter after US and China, even if its per capita levels are modest.
- It has resolved to increase its coal production from 730 million tonnes a year in 2019 to 1,149 million tonnes in 2024.
- A review of this target may be called for, in view of the falling cost of renewables and the global research in storage technologies. While coal remains the baseload option, its share in power output should fall from current levels of 75 per cent to effect the desired transition.

In the context of renewable energy and a net-zero target, there is a gap between the announcements and the ground reality. Do you agree with this view? Critically analyze

KEY POINTS

- COP 26 in Glasgow, Prime Minister announced that India has set a target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2070.
- India also updated its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) that have to be met by 2030.
- At the COP 21 in Paris, India, the third-largest emitter of carbon dioxide behind China and the US, made similar ambitious announcements and aimed to reduce the economy-wide emissions intensity by 33-35 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030.
- In the transport sector, India has targeted a 30 per cent share of electric vehicles (EV) in new sales for 2030.
- The Climate Action Tracker, an independent scientific analysis that tracks government climate action against the Paris Agreement targets, deems India's performance as "highly insufficient" simply because coal represents about 70 per cent of the country's energy supply.
- This means if the growth rate of the economy remains the same, the country's carbon dioxide emissions will double to 5 Gt by 2040. India's share of global emissions will increase from 7 per cent today to 14 per cent by 2040.

- Indian officials argue that Western countries are historically responsible for climate change, India's per capita emissions remain very low, growth is the country's priority.

The entire urban watershed needs to be reformed in order to adopt the erratic climate conditions in the country. Explain

KEY POINTS

- As monsoon floods raged across the subcontinent, IPCC's 6th Assessment Report (AR6) was published.
- The report noted the increasing frequency of heavy precipitation events since the 1950s and inferred that they were being driven by human-induced climate change.
- Urban drainage, if it was to do justice to its etymology, would turn cities into sieves that allowed water to soak and pass through.
- This required safeguarding the numerous natural watercourses threading the city as they drain water away and sustain fragile groundwater aquifers.
- The apathy for restoring disappearing urban waterways, stands in stark contrast to the Indian government's recent obsession with reviving ancient rivers.
- Poor design and corruption inseparable bedfellows in South Asian urban planning significantly contribute to urban floods.
- In most South Asian countries, however, either design guidelines are missing, or the outlets are too small to accommodate peak flow.
- Ever since concretisation became shorthand for urbanisation, rainfall in a changing climate no longer finds its way towards subterranean capillaries or surface water bodies.
- To heal the hydrophobia that has shaped our urban experience, we need to move away from land-centric urbanisation and recognise cities as waterscapes.

Despite challenges, One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG) represents the vision that should be guiding coordinated global action on climate change. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG) the India-proposed global solar grid linking 140 nations expected to get adopted at the CoP26 represents the kind of vision that should be guiding coordinated global action on climate change.
- The initiative now has two champions, with the UK signing on recently, merging its Green Grid Initiative to OSOWOG.
- One Sun aims to harness solar energy from across the globe, as the Earth completes its axial rotation.
- Feasibility and other aspects of the proposal will be discussed once the studies commissioned by the International Solar Alliance (ISA) are out.

- OSOWOG will be executed in three phases, the first involving connecting West Asia, South Asia and South East Asia, Africa brought online along with its power pools in the second and the rest of the world in the third.
- If the latter turns out to be the reality, it is difficult to be optimistic about OSOWOG. After the decades spent developing multilateral institutions, faith in them is now shaky, WHO and the World Bank being glaring examples.
- Other than that, costs of transnational supply, including through on-surface/undersea cables will be something that many countries may not be ready to swallow just yet. For OSOWOG to shine, such clouds must part.

India needs long-term planning processes for de-carbonization of economy. Do you agree with this view? Comment

KEY POINTS

- Prime Minister's announcement of enhanced targets for climate action by India, particularly for achieving net-zero emissions by 2070, has highlighted the importance of long-term planning for decarbonising the economy.
- Until now, the Government of India has responded to unprecedented changes in the energy sector, particularly rapid reductions in the cost of renewable energy (RE) based power, with dramatic enhancements in the targets for RE.
- Changes will be required to long-term planning processes. By 2070, there will be many changes in technology, environmental conditions, and the economy.
- For setting interim targets and monitoring progress, an autonomous and technically credible agency, like the Climate Change Committee (CCC) in the UK, should be set up.
- The shorter-term targets announced by the PM to be reached by 2030 refer mostly to the power sector. This is appropriate because it is the biggest source of GHG emissions and also the easiest one to decarbonise.
- In order to decarbonise the power sector, it would be best to have a single emissions-related objective so that an optimal strategy can be developed to achieve the objective at the lowest cost.
- The reduced flexibility could also stymie the development and deployment of emerging technologies such as battery storage and small modular nuclear reactors.

The importance of carbon markets can increase rapidly after the Conference of parties 26 Glasgow meet. Examine

KEY POINTS

- Soon after the 200-odd countries signed the Paris Agreement in December 2015, governments began making rules for operationalising the agreement.
- First, whether or not the old carbon credits (certified carbon emissions, or CERs) issued under an earlier regime the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol are still valid.
- The second issue pertained to 'double counting'. If an emission reduction takes place in one country and another entity in another country buys the carbon credits.



- The third issue related to a fee levied on each carbon trading transaction to feed a fund to help poor countries adapt to the vagaries of the warming world.
- There was an agreement that there would be no double counting. It has been left to the respective government to decide which activity (project) would go towards extinguishing its own commitment and which would be for tradable carbon credits.
- On 'share of proceeds', it was agreed that 5 per cent of the proceeds of market transactions would be levied and put into a fund.
- There is no fee for bilateral transactions, but countries are "encouraged" to voluntarily give. Switzerland has agreed to put \$25million into the Adaptation Fund.



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