



News Analysis (04 Apr, 2020)

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Privacy Concern Over Aarogya Setu App

Why in News

Recently, legal experts raised concerns over the privacy policy of **Aarogya Setu app**, launched by the government, to allow people to assess if they are at a risk of contracting **Covid-19**.

They are of the view that there is a need for clarity on how the data collected by the app be stored and used by the government.

Aarogya Setu App

- Aarogya Setu app has been launched by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- It will help people in **identifying the risk of getting affected by the CoronaVirus**.
- It will calculate risk based on the **user's interaction with others**, using cutting edge **Bluetooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence**.
- Once installed in a smartphone, the app detects other nearby devices with Aarogya Setu installed.
- The App will help the Government take necessary timely steps for assessing risk of spread of COVID-19 infection, and ensuring isolation where required.

Key Issues

- The key issue is there is not enough information available on **what data will be collected, how long will it be stored and what uses it will be put to**.
- No specification on the issue of **how the government will use data if the data gets shared with the government of India**.

- On the data retention part, the app's privacy policy specifies only the data available on the app and does not specify for **how long the Government of India will retain server side data**.
- Additionally, there was also a **question of proportionality** with the app and whether it will be as effective as envisaged in containing the Covid-19 outbreak.
 - India's situation is different from countries like Singapore, where a good number of people have smartphones.
 - In India compared to its population, smartphone users are very less which means very few people will be able to download the app.

Way Forward

- The app privacy policy needs detailed clarification on data collection, its storage and uses.
- The Government of India must specify how it will deal with the app's data and how long it will retain the server side data.
- According to the Supreme Court in the **Puttaswamy judgement (2017)**, the right to privacy is a **fundamental right** and it is necessary to protect personal data as an essential facet of informational privacy.

Source: IE

National Security Act, 1980

Why in News

The Indore district administration invoked the **National Security Act (NSA), 1980**, against four persons accused of instigating residents of a locality to pelt stones and chase away health workers.

Health workers were in the locality to trace the contact history of a **Covid-19** patient.

About the National Security Act, 1980

- The NSA is a **preventive detention law**.
 - Preventive Detention involves the **detainment (containment) of a person in order to keep him/her from committing future crimes** and/or from escaping future prosecution.
 - **Article 22 (3) (b) of the Constitution** allows for preventive detention and restriction on personal liberty for reasons of state security and public order.
 - Further, **Article 22(4)** states that **no law providing for preventive detention shall authorise the detention of a person for a longer period than three months unless:**
 - An Advisory Board reports sufficient cause for extended detention. The **44th Amendment Act of 1978** has reduced the period of detention without obtaining the opinion of an advisory board from **three to two months**. However, this provision has not yet been brought into force, hence, the original period of three months still continues.
 - Such a person is **detained in accordance with the provisions of any law made by the Parliament**.
- **History**
 - Preventive detention laws in India date back to early days of the colonial era when the **Bengal Regulation III of 1818** was enacted to empower the government to arrest anyone for defence or maintenance of public order without giving the person recourse to judicial proceedings.
 - A century later, the British government enacted the **Rowlatt Acts of 1919** that allowed confinement of a suspect without trial.
 - Post-independence, India got its first preventive detention rule when the government of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru enacted the **Preventive Detention Act of 1950 (expired in 1969)**. The **NSA is a close iteration of the 1950 Act**.
- **Gives Power to the Government**
 - The NSA empowers the **Centre or a State government** to detain a person to prevent him from acting in any manner **prejudicial to national security**.
 - The government can also detain a person to prevent him from **disrupting public order** or for **maintenance of supplies and services essential** to the community.
- **Period of Confinement:** The maximum period for which one may be detained is **12 months**. But the term **can be extended** if the government finds fresh evidence.

- **No Basic Rights to People Detained under the NSA**, including:
 - The **right to be informed of the reason for the arrest** (Section 50 of the **Criminal Procedure Code -Cr.PC**).
 - Under the NSA, a person could be kept in the dark about the reasons for his arrest for up to five days, and in exceptional circumstances upto ten days.
 - Even when providing the grounds for arrest, the government can withhold information which it considers to be against public interest to disclose.
 - Sections 56 and 76 of the Cr. PC also provides that a **person has to be produced before a court within 24 hours of arrest**.
 - **Article 22(1) of the Constitution** says an arrested person cannot be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by, a legal practitioner of his choice.

Under the NSA, the arrested person is not entitled to the aid of any legal practitioner in any matter connected with the proceedings before an advisory board, which is constituted by the government for dealing with NSA cases.

Criticism Against the NSA Act

- **No Record of Detentions under the NSA:** The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, which collects and analyses crime data in the country, does not include cases under the NSA in its data as no FIRs are registered. Hence, no figures are available for the exact number of detentions under the NSA.
- In recent cases, different State governments have invoked the stringent provisions of the NSA to detain citizens for questionable offences.
- Some experts argue that the governments sometimes use the NSA as an **extra-judicial power**.
- NSA has come under wide criticism for its **misuse by the authorities**. Experts describe the validity of the Act even during peacetime as '**anachronism**'.

Way Forward

- It needs to be noted that the Act is 40 years old. Changes are required to ensure that the Act is not used arbitrarily. Arbitrary use of the Act hampers democracy and basic rights of an individual.
- Even, the Supreme Court has held that the law of preventive detention has to be strictly construed and meticulous compliance with the procedural safeguards, is mandatory and vital.

Source: TH

Impact of Economic Slowdown Due to Covid-19

Why in News

Amid the ongoing economic slowdown due to Covid-19 pandemic,

- the government witnessed a fall in tax collections.
- foreign investors sold over ₹1 lakh-crore securities in a month (March), for the first time in history.
- the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to shorten trading hours for foreign exchange and money markets products.

Fall in Tax Collections

- **Direct Tax Collections**
 - Direct tax is a tax paid directly by an individual or organization to the imposing entity. For example, income tax is a direct tax.
 - The government's net direct tax collections have **missed the downward revised target** for 2019-20 by Rs 1.42 lakh crore. The overall collection stood at Rs 10.27 lakh crore.
 - This is a **decline of over 8%** from previous year's receipts.
 - The contraction in direct tax collections in a financial year has been witnessed after a **gap of 20 years**. The Centre's direct tax receipts had last seen a year-on-year decline in 1998-99, when collections recorded a contraction of 3.5% in that financial year.
- **Indirect Tax Collections**
 - **Indirect tax** is a tax collected by one entity in the supply chain and paid to the government, but it is passed on to the consumer as part of the purchase price of a good or service. GST is an indirect tax.
 - The government has missed its **Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections target**.
 - The **reasons** that led to the fall in GST collections in March below the Rs 1 lakh crore mark are:
 - A drop of 7.8% in returns filing over last month.
 - 4% fall over last year in domestic revenue.
 - A sharp 23% fall in revenue from imports.
- **Consequences**
 - The government is likely to miss its revised **fiscal deficit** target of 3.8% for 2019-20.
 - The government's fiscal deficit during April-February increased to 135.2% of the revised estimate for the fiscal year 2019-20.

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) Sell Securities

- For the first time in the history of the Indian capital markets, **Foreign Portfolio Investors** (FPIs) have sold securities worth over ₹1 lakh crore in a single month (March 2020).
- As per data from **the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL)**,
 - The cumulative net outflow from the debt and equity segments was pegged at ₹1.18 lakh crore in March
 - This is more than double the previous high of ₹44,000 crore witnessed in June.
- **Reason:**

According to market participants, the ongoing **COVID-19** pandemic that has affected stocks worldwide is the primary reason for such record outflows as foreign investors move away from **riskier assets and emerging markets**.
- **Impact of the sales on Sensex:**
 - **Sensex** registered its worst monthly fall in over 11 years.
 - In March, the Sensex lost a little over 23% which was the highest since October 2008 when it fell 23.89%.
 - Currently, the Sensex after falling.
 - However, buying by **Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs)** has been acting as a strong counter force to the selling by foreign investors.

National Securities Depository Limited

- The enactment of **Depositories Act in August 1996** paved the way for establishment of NSDL in August 1996.
- It handles most of the securities held and settled in dematerialized form in the Indian capital market.
- NSDL works to support the investors and brokers in the capital market of the country.
- It aims at ensuring the safety and soundness of Indian marketplaces by developing settlement solutions that increase efficiency, minimize risk and reduce costs.

Domestic institutional investors

DIIs are those institutional investors which undertake investment in securities and other financial assets of the country they are based in.

DIIs include:

- Banks
- Insurance companies
- Mutual funds
- Domestic financial institutions.

Shortening of Trading Hours

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- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to shorten trading hours for foreign exchange and money markets products in the light of challenges posed by lockdown imposed to curb the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19).
 - The shortened hours, from 10 am to 2 pm (earlier 9 am to 5 pm), will be in place from April 7-17.
 - The new hours will be applicable to
 - Call/term money.
 - Market **repo in g-secs.**
 - Tri-party repo in g-secs.
 - Commercial Paper
 - Certificates of Deposit
 - Repo in corporate bonds.
 - Foreign currency and rupee trades.

Note:

- **Call Money** refers to the borrowing or lending of funds for 1 day.
- **Term money** refers to borrowing and lending of funds for a period of more than 14 days.
- **Commercial Paper (CP)** is a short-term debt instrument issued by companies to raise funds generally for a time period up to one year.
- A **Certificate of Deposit (CD)** is a product offered by banks and credit unions that provides an interest rate premium in exchange for the customer agreeing to leave a lump-sum deposit untouched for a predetermined period of time.

Source: IE

Harvesting Season & Covid-19 Lockdown

Why in News

Covid-19 lockdown has suspended the supply chain of **India's rice exports** as well as badly impacted lakhs of Odisha's tribals by **hampering the sale of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP)** being collected during March-June.

Key Points

- **Sale of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Hampered**
 - **Covid-19** lockdown has coincided with the harvesting season of **Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP)**. This has made the sale of NTFP impossible.
 - Forest products are seasonal in nature and the tribals earn their major incomes (60%-80%) in the months of March to June.
 - The **hard cash** earned during these months are critical for their sustenance during the monsoon season when employments dry up.
 - Major NTFPs collected during the summer season include **Wild honey, tamarind, mango, tendu leaves, sal leaves, sal seeds, mahua seeds, neem seeds, karanj (pongamia) seeds, mahua flowers and tejpatta (bay leaf)**.
 - As per conservative estimate, Odisha's NTFP market pegs at ₹5000 crore.
- **Suggestions**
 - The Odisha government should immediately establish and ensure collection centres function under the **Van Dhan Vikash Kendra scheme**.
The Van Dhan Vikas Kendras aim to boost the economic development of tribals involved in the collection of **Minor Forest Produce (MFP)** and provide a sustainable MFP-based livelihood in MFP-rich districts.
 - **Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation** of Odisha, which facilitates the marketing of tribal products, must also intervene.
- **Rice exports suspended on supply chain disruption:** Indian traders have stopped offering quotes to overseas buyers as they are not sure when they would be able to ship their cargoes.
 - Shipments have stalled as transport has become very difficult because of the lockdown.
 - About 400,000 tonnes of non-basmati rice and 100,000 tonnes of basmati rice, meant for March-April delivery, are either stuck at ports or in the pipeline due to the lockdown.
 - India's export volumes have fallen by four to five times.
 - The halt in Indian rice exports has allowed rival countries such as Thailand to raise shipments in the short term.
 - India mainly **exports non-basmati rice to Bangladesh, Nepal, Benin and Senegal**, and **premium basmati rice to Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq**.

- **Labour issue**

- A severe shortage of labour, triggered by 21-day lockdown to deal with coronavirus pandemic, will impact harvesting of winter crops of India.
 - The northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh rely on farm labourers from eastern India for harvesting.
 - Most of the laborers returned home to their villages after the 21 day lockdown that began on March 25, fearing the virus and facing wage disruptions.
- Farmers worry that the unprecedented **labour shortage will make it tougher to get mechanical harvesters** to fields or even pluck by hand crops.
- **Late harvests mean lower yields, reduced returns**, and a smaller window to plant next season's crops.
- Farmers' next problem is the **struggle of taking produce to market**, with few trucks available to carry large volumes.
 - Most farmers sell produce only at wholesale markets which, in turn, depend on armies of labourers to unload, weigh and pack vast amounts of grain.
- This could also **delay farmers' payments for produce**.

Source: TH

Rise in Violence Against Women

Why in News

The **National Commission for Women (NCW)** has recorded a **more than twofold rise in gender-based violence**.

It has been argued that the national **lockdown** has left many people jobless, uncertain over salaries, in forced isolation and in stressed households which have resulted in a **steep rise in violence against women**.

Key Points

- **Data Analysis:**
 - **Total complaints-** Rose from 116 in the first week of March to 257 in the final week of March.
 - **Rape or attempt to rape-** Rose sharply from 2 to 13.
 - **Domestic violence-** Increased from 30 to 69 over the same comparative period.
 - **Police apathy towards women-** Almost threefold increase as the police are busy enforcing the lockdown to curb the spread of **Covid-19**.
 - **Right to live with dignity (Article 21)-** Rose to 77 from 35. Such cases could pertain to discrimination on the basis of gender, class or caste or all three of them combined.
 - These cases might be a **fragment of the actual number** as many women will not be able to reach out due to various reasons.
- **Possible Reasons:**
 - **Privacy:** Women are not be able to reach out because of restrictions on movement as well as a lack of privacy within homes. Women need privacy and certainty that they will not be discovered by their family but that becomes impossible in the presence of the entire house.
 - **Frustration among Males:** There is a lot of **anxiety in people's minds** about their jobs, salaries and livelihood. **Women become easy targets for men** for venting out their anger in **patriarchal societies**.
 - **Lockdown:** It has **restricted the movement** and closed women's avenues to escape violence such as by relocating to their natal homes or contacting the local police.
 - There is evidence that in situations of crisis or calamity there is an increase in violence against women.
- **Suggestions:**
 - The police do not seem the first port of call for victims of domestic violence and, therefore, **alternative arrangements** should be put in place.
 - The government should **ensure resources to help** women in **distress**, and put **health services** to women and abortion in the list of essential services.
 - **Inspiration** can be taken from **France** which announced that it would pay for 20,000 hotel bookings and contribute €1 million to organisations that fight domestic abuse as well as set up assistance points at supermarkets and pharmacies.

National Commission for Women

- It was set up as a **statutory body** in January 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- Its **mission** is to strive towards enabling women to achieve equality and equal participation in all spheres of life by securing her due rights and entitlements through suitable policy formulation, legislative measures, etc.

- Its **functions** are to:
 - Review the **constitutional and legal safeguards for women.**
 - Recommend remedial legislative measures.
 - Facilitate redressal of grievances.
 - Advise the Government on all policy matters affecting women.

Source: TH

EIA Not Needed for Bulk Drug Makers

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has exempted manufacturers of bulk drugs and intermediates from **Environment Impact Assessment** (EIA) till 30th September as an interim measure.

It was done to **expedite clearances** to such manufacturers and intermediaries which are making medicines related to **Covid-19.**

Environment Impact Assessment

- It is a process of **evaluating the likely environmental impacts** of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse.
- **The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** defines EIA as a tool used to identify the environmental, social and economic impacts of a project prior to decision-making.
- It **aims** to predict environmental impacts at an early stage in project planning and design, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts, shape projects to suit the local environment and present the predictions and options to decision-makers.
- Environment Impact Assessment in India is **statutorily backed** by the **Environment Protection Act, 1986** which contains various provisions on its methodology and process.

Key Points

- All proposals for projects or activities in respect of **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients** (API, also called **Bulk Drugs**), received up to the 30th September 2020, shall be appraised as **Category B2 projects**, provided that any subsequent amendment or expansion or change in product mix, after the 30th September 2020, shall be considered as per the provisions in force at that time.

- Rules notified under the **Environment Protection Act, 1986** classify projects into **three categories**:
 - **Category A Projects**- These are appraised by the Union Ministry.
 - **Category B Projects**- These are appraised by the states.
 - **Category B2 Projects**- These are projects which are exempted from EIA and public hearings.
- The drug production and availability to reduce the impact of the **Novel CoronaVirus** are to be ensured as part of a **comprehensive and robust system to handle** the outbreak.

Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients

- These are **significant ingredients** in the manufacture of drugs.
- The **Hubei province of China** is the hub of the API manufacturing industry.
- India is **heavily import-dependent for APIs from China**.
- Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved **two schemes**, namely the scheme on **Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks and Production Linked Incentive (PLI)** Scheme to promote domestic manufacturing of critical Key Starting Materials/Drug Intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients in the country.

Source: FE

New Features Added to e-NAM

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** has launched three new features of the **National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)** Platform.

- The new features will strengthen agriculture marketing by **reducing farmers' need to physically go to wholesale mandis** for selling their harvested produce.
- It is an important move at a time when there is a critical need to **decongest mandis** to effectively fight against **Covid-19**.

Key Points

- **Integration of Negotiable Warehouse Receipt System (e-NWRs) Module with e-NAM**
 - Under it, a **warehouse trading module with payment feature** is launched.
 - It will enable small and marginal farmers to directly trade their stored produce from selected **Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) registered warehouses** which are declared deemed market by the State.
 - Farmers will be able to place their produce in WDRA accredited warehouses.
 - Telangana (14 warehouses) and Andhra Pradesh (23 warehouses) have already declared designated warehouses as deemed markets.
 - **Benefits:**
 - Depositor can save the logistics expenses and will have better income.
 - Farmers can sell the produce across the Nation at better price without the hassle of going to mandi.
 - Farmers with their produce in WDRA accredited warehouses can avail the benefit of pledge loan, if required.
 - Price stabilization by matching supply and demand through time and place utility.
- **FPO trading Module**
 - It will enable **Farmer Producers' Organisations (FPOs)** to upload the picture of their produce and quality parameters from their premise/collection centres for bidding.
 - Distant bidders can visualise the produce before bidding by seeing the pictures and quality.
 - After successful bidding, FPOs can deliver the produce from their premises or by bringing it to mandi.
 - **Benefits:**
 - This will decongest mandis and also reduce the hassle.
 - This will help FPOs by reducing logistics costs and enhance their bargaining power.
 - Facilitates FPOs to avail online payment facility with ease of doing business.

- **Launch of Logistic Module**

- A provision has been made for **linking large logistic aggregator** platforms providing choices to users.
 - Presently, e-NAM provides a database of **individual transporters** to the traders.
- Traders will be able to use the link to navigate to the logistics provider's website and select appropriate services.
- With these additions, more than 3,75,000 number of trucks from large logistic providers would be added for logistic purpose.
- **Benefits:**
 - This will help in seamless transportation of agri-produce.
 - This will promote inter-state trade by providing online transport facilities for distant buyers.

e-NAM

- It was launched on 14th April 2016 as a **pan-India electronic trade portal** linking **Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs)** across the States.
- It provides for contactless remote bidding and mobile-based anytime payment for which traders do not need to either visit mandis or banks for the same.
- Already 585 mandis in 16 States and 2 Union Territories have been integrated on e-NAM portal and will be soon expanded to cover additional 415 mandis, which will take the total number of e-NAM mandis to 1,000.

Negotiable Warehouse Receipt System

- It was launched in **2011** but the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**.
- Farmers can **seek loans from banks against the warehouse receipts** issued to them against their storage.
- These **receipts issued by the warehouses registered with the WDRA** would become a fully negotiable instrument backed by a Central legislation.
- The **Electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (e-NWR) System** was launched in **2017**.

Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority

- It was constituted on 26th October 2010 under the **Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007**.
- It is a **statutory authority** under the Department of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India.
- It is headquartered in **New Delhi**.

- The Act provides for the establishment of the WDRA to exercise the powers conferred on it and to perform the functions assigned to it under the Act, Rules and Regulations for the development and regulation of warehouses, negotiability of warehouse receipts and promote orderly growth of the warehousing business in the country.

Source: PIB

National Investigation Agency

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) was constituted under the **National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008**.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- It is a central agency to **investigate and prosecute offences** related to terrorism and certain other Act **post-2008 Mumbai terror attacks** such as:
 - Affecting the **sovereignty, security and integrity of India**, security of State, friendly relations with foreign States.
 - Against **atomic and nuclear facilities**.
 - Smuggling in High-Quality **Counterfeit Indian Currency**.
- It **implements international treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions** of the United Nations, its agencies and other international organisations.
- It's objective is also to **combat terror in India**. It acts as the **Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency**.
 - Assist all States and other investigating agencies in the **investigation of terrorist cases**.
 - **Build a database** of all terrorist-related information and share the database available with the States and other agencies.
 - Study and analyse laws relating to terrorism in other countries and regularly **evaluate the adequacy of existing laws** in India and propose changes as and when necessary.
 - To execute in-depth professional investigation **of scheduled offences** using the latest scientific methods of investigation.

Scheduled Offences

- The schedule to the Act specifies a **list of offences** which are to be investigated and prosecuted by the NIA.
- These include offences under Acts such as the **Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967**.

Mandate of NIA

- The cases are assigned to the NIA by the Central Government in accordance with **section VI of the NIA Act, 2008.**
- The investigation of the cases is done by the Agency **independently.**
- After investigation, the cases are placed before **the NIA Special Court.**
- It is empowered to deal **with terror-related crimes across states without special permission from the states.**

Recent Amendments

The various features or provisions of the **NIA (Amendment) ACT, 2019** are as follows:

- It applied the provisions of the NIA Act **also to persons who commit a scheduled offence beyond India** against Indian citizens or affecting the interest of India.
- It provided that the officers of the NIA shall have the similar powers, duties, privies and liabilities being exercised by the **police officers in connection with the investigation of offences,** not only in India but also outside India.
- It empowered the central government, with respect to a scheduled offence committed outside India, to direct the NIA to register the case and take up investigation as if **such offence had taken place in India.**
- It provided that the central government and the state governments may designate **Sessions Courts as Special Courts for conducting the trial of offences** under the NIA Act.
- It inserted certain new offences in the **Schedule of the NIA Act.** Consequently, the NIA is also empowered to probe the offences relating to
 - human trafficking,
 - counterfeit currency or bank notes,
 - manufacture or sale of prohibited arms,
 - cyber-terrorism and
 - explosive substances.

Issues in the Recent Amendments

- Under schedule VII of the Constitution, the maintenance of **public order and police forces are matters of state list.**

However, **Criminal law forms part of the concurrent list** and national security comes under the domains of the union list.
- The Central government gets the authority to have the NIA take over the investigation of crimes, which involve allegations of human trafficking, offences under the Explosives Act, and certain offences under the Arms Act.

However, **not every criminal offence in the above act is a threat to national security and sovereignty** and consequently, states have the competence to deal with the same.

- The Amendment Bill puts **Section 66F of the Information Technology Act, 2000** into the Schedule listing offences. Section 66F deals with **cyber terrorism**.
But India **does not have a data protection act** and there is **no definition of cyber terrorism**.
- The amendment to the NIA Act also gives the agency authority to investigate crimes committed by persons which are against Indian citizens or **“affecting the interest of India”**.
 - However, the term “affecting the interest of India” is **undefined** and can be **misused by governments** to curb freedom of speech and expression.
 - Further, the laws, under which the NIA has the authority to investigate, themselves **do not mention “affecting the interest of India” as an offence**.

Source: TH

Covid-19 Community Mobility Report: Google

Why in News

Google has released **‘COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports’**. These reports aim to provide insights into what has changed in response to policies aimed at combating **COVID-19**.

- The reports **cover 131 countries** and chart movement trends over time by geography, across different categories of places such as retail and recreation, groceries and pharmacies, parks, transit stations, workplaces, and residential.
- The report comes at a time when communities across the globe are looking at measures such as **social distancing** as a key action to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The company said it adopted technical measures to ensure that no individual could be identified through the new reports. The reports have been **developed according to the company’s stringent privacy protocols and policies**.
- Google is an **American search engine company founded in 1998** by Serge Brin and Larry Page. It is a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc.

Finding Related to India

- In the wake of the **March 22 'Janata Curfew'** and the subsequent ongoing **21-day nationwide lockdown**, **public movement in India** at areas with restaurants, pharmacies, parks and workplaces had declined while movement in residential areas had increased.

- The data is **based on the 5-week period Jan 3–Feb 6, 2020** and the **first few days of the lockdown period**.
- There has been a **dip of 77% in mobility trends** for places like restaurants, cafes, shopping centres and movie theaters and a **65% drop at grocery markets**, food warehouses, farmers' markets and pharmacies.
- A **57% fall for places like public beaches** and gardens, a **71% decline at public transport hubs** and a **47% drop for places of work**.
- However, the **mobility trends in the places of residence category** showed an **increase of 22%**.
- These reports will **help support decisions about how to manage the COVID-19 pandemic**. For example, the information could help officials understand changes in essential trips that can shape recommendations on business hours or inform delivery service offerings.

Movement Across Other Countries

- Reports compared traffic from Feb 16 to March 29 to retail and recreational venues, train and bus stations, grocery stores and workplaces with a five-week period (Jan 3-Feb 6).
- **Italy and Spain**, two of the hardest-hit countries, both saw visits to retail and recreation locations such as **restaurants and movie theaters fall 94%**.
- The **United Kingdom, France and Philippines** had **declines of more than 80%**.
- In Japan and Sweden, where authorities have not imposed harsh restrictions, visits to retail and recreation sites **fell by roughly only a quarter**.
- While in South Korea, which has successfully contained a large outbreak through aggressive testing and **contact tracing**, the **decline was just 19%**.
- There were **no reports for China and Iran**, where Google services are blocked.

Source: TH

Amendments to the J&K Order

Why in News

The **Ministry of Home Affairs** has amended the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Order-2020**.

The Order was issued by the Ministry on 31st March, 2020.

Key Amendments

- **Protection to domiciles to “any post”** in the government **including senior level positions in Group A and Group B category**. This reserves all jobs in the Union Territory for only its domiciles.
Earlier the protection to domiciles was **provided only in Group D** and entry level non-gazetted government posts. This opened all other government posts to anyone from the rest of the country.
- The amended order also **removed the clause** that any person fulfilling the criteria of domicile eligibility will “deemed to be” a domicile. The **power to issue domicile certificates has been given to “tahsildar”**.

Criteria for Domiciles in J&K

- Someone who has **resided for a period of 15 years** in the UT of J&K, or
- Someone who has **studied for a period of seven years and appeared in Class 10th/12th examination** in an educational institution located in the UT of J&K, or
- Someone who is **registered as a migrant** by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants).
- **Children** of Central government officials, All India Services, PSUs, autonomous body of Centre, Public Sector Banks, officials of statutory bodies, Central Universities, recognised research institutes of **Centre who shall have served in J&K**.
- **Children of such residents of J&K who reside outside J&K** in connection with their employment or business or other professional or vocational reasons but **their parents fulfil any of the conditions provided**.

Source: TH

Corona Bonds

Why in News

Recently, the Italian Prime Minister has proposed Corona bonds to be issued by **European Union (EU)** to deal with the situation created by **Covid-19**.

Key Points

- Corona bonds are **joint debt issued to member states** of the EU.
- This would be **mutualised debt, taken collectively by all member states** of the EU.
- The funds would come from the **European Investment Bank**.
- Countries like **Italy, Spain** which have suffered huge deaths due to Covid-19 are demanding such kind of economic measures from the EU to meet the extraordinary situation.

- However, **Germany, Netherlands, Austria and Finland**, also known as the "**Frugal Four**", the fiscally conservative EU states have opposed such type of idea.

Source: IE
