



## News Analysis (21 Apr, 2020)

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### Social Vaccine

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#### Why in News

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The Union Health Minister has recently asserted that **lockdowns** and **social distancing** are the most effective “**social vaccines**” available to fight the **pandemic (Covid-19)**.

#### Key Points

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- **Social Vaccine**

- It is a metaphor for a series of **social and behavioural measures** that governments can use to **raise public consciousness about unhealthy situations**.
- This is made possible through social mobilisation.
  - **Social mobilisation** is a process whereby people are organized in order to enable them to collectively think and act upon their development.
  - It can **empower populations** to resist unhealthy practices, increase resilience, and foster advocacy for change. This can ultimately **drive political will** to take action in the interests of society.
- A social vaccine **addresses barriers and facilitators of behaviour change** (attitudinal, social, cultural, or economic) and supplements **Information, Education, and Communication (IEC)** with targeted **Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)** strategies.
  - SBCC** is the strategic use of communication approaches to promote changes in knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs and behaviors.

- **Effectiveness of a social vaccine during Pandemic**
  - When applied to pandemics, the effectiveness of a social vaccine is **determined by the extent of dissemination and uptake of accurate information** about personal infection risk and methods to reduce the risk.
  - **Uganda and Thailand used SBCC strategies effectively during the HIV/AIDS pandemic** to bring down the incidence of HIV infection, **before Highly Active Antiretroviral Treatment (HAART) was introduced** in 1995.
  - These countries demonstrated how an effective social vaccine helped **“flatten the curve”** till effective treatments were discovered that dramatically reduced mortality, viral loads and infection transmission.
- **Social Vaccine amidst Covid-19**
  - The skills and experiences from controlling HIV/AIDS pandemic can be innovatively adapted for the current pandemic.
  - **Use of IEC and SBCC strategies:**
    - Maintaining physical distancing in social situations and wearing cloth masks or facial coverings in public by 100% of people is key to preventing infection along with regular disinfection of oneself and one’s surroundings.
    - **People are more likely to practise these behaviours if all leaders (without exception) promote them** publicly and consistently, the whole community believes in their importance, and if proper information, support, and materials are available and accessible.
    - **Building trust** is key if government-imposed mitigation strategies are to be embraced by the population.
- **Practising Social Mobilisation**

This will make people to hold leaders accountable to invest in: rapidly scaling-up testing; meeting the basic needs of vulnerable sections; not communalising or politicising the pandemic; providing adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to front-line workers in health, etc. and not compromising the privacy and dignity of infected individuals.

## **Role of Social Vaccine in Controlling HIV/AIDS Pandemic**

- **Outbreak of the Disease:** The **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** that causes the **Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** is believed to have made the zoonotic jump through chimpanzees on humans in Africa as early as the 1920s, but the HIV/AIDS epidemic was detected in 1981 and was a pandemic by 1985.
- **Panic Situation:** The cause was unknown (till 1984) and diagnostic tests were unavailable (till 1985). Since there was no treatment, a diagnosis of HIV infection was a death sentence.

- **Impact**
  - **Widespread fears** of infection rendered many infected people homeless and unemployed. Many were denied access to care.
  - **Stigma, discrimination and violence** towards infected individuals, their families, social groups (sex-workers, gay men, drug users, truck drivers, migrants), and even health workers, were common.
  - **Conspiracy theories, misinformation and unproven remedies** were widely propagated.
  - **The unpreparedness of health systems**, societal prejudices and socio-economic inequities were starkly exposed.
- **Use of Social Vaccine**
  - Reducing HIV transmission centred on acknowledging that everybody was potentially infected — even those apparently healthy — and that infection occurred predominantly through sexual transmission and intravenous drug use.
  - The **core preventive messages** involved being faithful to one sexual partner or having safe sex, etc. These measures conflicted with prevailing cultural, social, religious, behavioural and legal norms.
  - However, IEC and SBCC activities targeted (and partnered) individuals, families, community leaders, and social and health systems to change attitudes and behaviours. Religious and community leaders were key change agents.
    - Thailand used humour to defuse social taboos about publicly discussing sex.
    - Coercive or punitive methods acted counter-productive in controlling HIV/AIDS.
  - These strategies and advocacy against stigma and discrimination were also successfully adapted in India.

## Way Forward

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- There is still no biomedical vaccine for HIV/AIDS. Considering the limited efficacy and uptake of influenza vaccines, vaccines for SARS-CoV-2/Covid-19 may not provide a panacea.
- Effective treatments to reduce deaths with Covid-19 may emerge, but till then, and even afterwards, **a social vaccine is needed.**
- A social vaccine **can build societal immunity** to the devastating effects of future pandemics by the lessons learned about addressing the root causes, and our responses to the current one.

**Source: TH**

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## Currency Exchange Rate Index

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## Why in News

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The **rupee has been losing value (or depreciating or weakening) against the dollar** over the past few months.

- The exchange rate of rupee is one of the markers to compare **Indian economy's competitiveness vis-a-vis other economies** (also amid **Covid-19** outbreak).
- **Another measure** for comparison is looking at the **growth rates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA)**.
- **High-frequency data like sales of automobiles** etc. can also be used as a proxy to compare economies.

## Key Points

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- **Exchange Rate**
  - The **price of one currency in terms of the other** is known as the exchange rate.
  - A currency's exchange rate vis-a-vis another currency reflects the relative demand among the holders of the two currencies.
  - **For e.g.** If the US dollar is stronger than the rupee (implying value of dollar is higher with respect to rupee), then it shows that the demand for dollars (by those holding rupee) is more than the demand for rupees (by those holding dollars).
  - This demand in turn **depends on the relative demand for the goods and services** of the two countries.

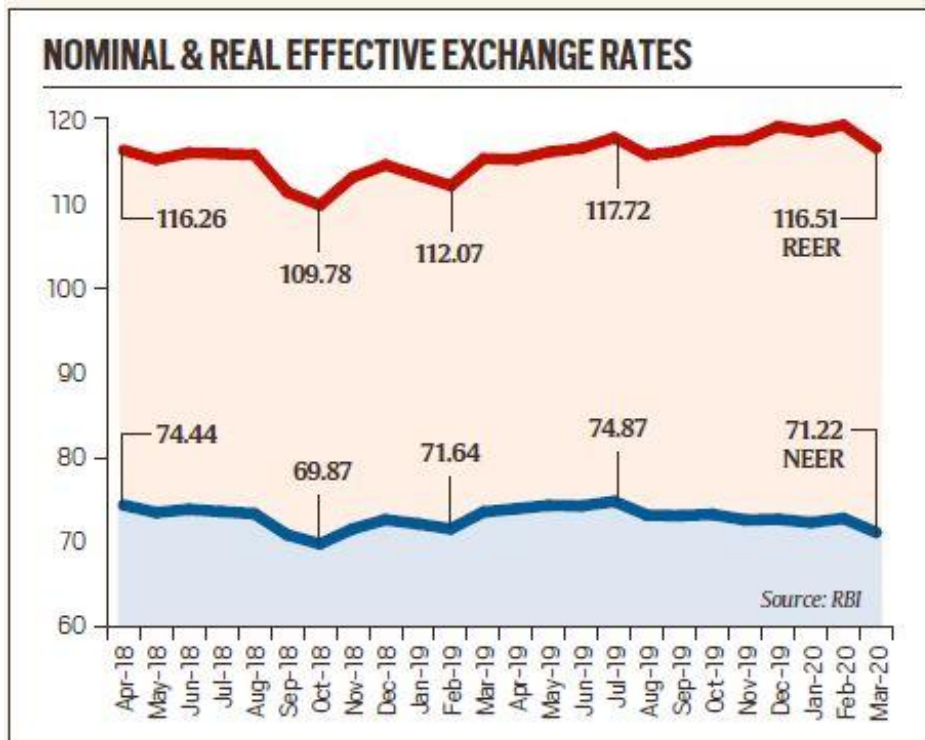
- **Index for Exchange Rate**

- Since a country interacts with many countries, it wants to **see the movement of the domestic currency relative to all other currencies in a single number** rather than by looking at bilateral rates.
- That is, it would want an index for the exchange rate against other currencies, **just as it uses a price index (CPI or WPI)** to show how the prices of goods in general have changed.
- The Reserve Bank of India tabulates the **rupee's Nominal Effective Exchange Rate (NEER)** in relation to the currencies of 36 trading partner countries.
  - This is a **weighted index** — that is, countries with **which India trades more are given a greater weight in the index.**
  - A **decrease** in this index denotes **depreciation in rupee's value** whereas an increase reflects appreciation.
- There is one more measure that is even better at capturing the actual change. This is called the **Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER)** and is essentially an **improvement over the NEER** because it also **takes into account the domestic inflation in the various economies.**
- The REER is the **weighted average of NEER adjusted by the ratio of domestic prices to foreign price.**

- **Impact of Inflation on Exchange Rate**

- Many factors affect the exchange rate between any two currencies ranging from the interest rates to political stability (less of either results in a weaker currency). Inflation is one of the most important factors.
- **Illustration:** Imagine that the Rupee-Dollar exchange rate was exactly 1 in the first year. This means that with Rs 100, one could buy something that was priced at \$100 in the US. But suppose the Indian inflation is 20% and the US inflation is zero. Then, in the second year, an Indian would need Rs 120 to buy the same item priced at \$100, and the rupee's exchange rate would depreciate (reduce in value) to 1.20.

- **Comparison between NEER and REER**



- As the chart shows, in **NEER terms**, the rupee has depreciated to its lowest level since November 2018. The rupee has been steadily losing value — **showing the Indian economy's reducing competitiveness**— since July 2019.
- In **REER terms** also, the **rupee has depreciated** in March and fallen to its lowest level since September 2019.
- The difference between trends of NEER and REER was **due to India's domestic retail inflation being lower relative to the other 36 countries**. As domestic inflation started rising, the REER, too, started depreciating like the NEER.

#### Note

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** is a measure of economic activity in a country. It is the total value of a country's annual output of goods and services. It gives the economic output from the consumers' side.
- **Gross Value Added (GVA)** is the sum of a country's GDP and net of subsidies and taxes in the economy. It provides the rupee value for the amount of goods and services produced in an economy after deducting the cost of inputs and raw materials that have gone into the production of those goods and services.

**Source: IE**

## India's New FDI Norms Violate WTO: China

Recently, China has accused India of violating the **World Trade Organization WTO's**

**“principle of non-discrimination”** after the **India tweaked its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy to make its approval mandatory for firms in neighbouring countries** to invest in Indian companies.

**India tweaked its FDI policy, 2017** days after China’s central bank, the People’s Bank of China (**PBoC**), **raised its shareholding in Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC)** to over 1% during the recent stock market slump.

## Key Points

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- **China’s Stand:** The **additional barriers** for investors **from neighbouring countries violate WTO’s principle of non-discrimination**, and go against the general trend of liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment.
  - India’s decision **do not conform to the consensus of G20 leaders and trade ministers** to realize a free, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable, and stable trade and investment environment, and to keep markets open.
  - The **principle of non-discrimination** stipulates that a member **shall not discriminate between products from different trading partners** (giving them equally **“most favoured-nation”** or MFN status); and between its own and foreign products.
- **India’s Stand:** The **amendments are not prohibiting investments**, It has just **changed the approval route** for these investments. There are **many sectors** in India that are already subject to this approval route.
  - India said countries like **Germany, Australia and Spain** have also tightened their foreign investment policies to **prevent hostile takeovers by overseas investors**.
  - India’s move is seen as **checking “opportunistic takeovers”** of Indian firms hit by the ongoing Covid outbreak and lockdown.

## Issues Involved

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- India’s new amendments to foreign investment **do not apply to all countries** but just those which **share borders with India**.
- There will be **different sets of procedures for the same set of investments** based on which country the company is investing from.

## Foreign direct investment (FDI)

- It is an investment from a party in one country into a business or corporation in another country with the intention of **establishing a lasting interest**.
- Lasting interest differentiates **FDI** from **foreign portfolio investments**, where investors passively hold securities from a foreign country.

- Foreign direct investment can be made by expanding one's business into a foreign country or by becoming the owner of a company in another country.
- **China's FDI in India**
  - China's FDI has grown five-fold since 2014 and, as of December 2019, its cumulative investment in India has exceeded \$8 billion.
  - A Brookings India paper pegs the total current and planned Chinese investment in India as being over \$26 billion.

## World Trade Organization

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.
- The Uruguay Round of **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, conducted from 1987 to 1994 culminated in the **Marrakesh agreement**, which established the WTO.
- The WTO has 164 members (including European Union) and 23 observer governments (like Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya etc).
- The WTO's global system lowers trade barriers through **negotiation** and operates under the **principle of non-discrimination**.

## Source:IE

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## 5th Annual Meeting of NDB

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **Union Minister of Finance** attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of **New Development Bank (NDB)** through **video-conference** in **New Delhi**.

### Key Highlights of the Meeting

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- **India appreciated NDB's efforts** in establishing itself as a **credible Global Financial Institution**, delivering its mandate successfully by taking a more sustainable and inclusive approach.
- NDB **fast-tracked financial assistance of about \$5 billion to BRICS countries** including **Emergency Assistance of \$1 billion to India** to combat **Covid-19 pandemic**.  
The assistance under this facility was **suggested** to be **enhanced to \$10 billion**.
- **Brazil thanked India for sending critical drugs** for timely management of **novel coronavirus** in Brazil.



- NDB was encouraged to take **appropriate actions to join the G-20 forum** along with other **Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and International Financial Institutions (IFIs)** like the **World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**, etc.
- India urged NDB to follow **novel practices in supporting the BRICS nations** for achieving their **Sustainable Development Goals**.
- **Measures taken by India** to respond to the health crisis and to mitigate its impact were highlighted. **Few of them are:**
  - **India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package: Allocation of \$2 Billion (₹15,000 crore)** by the Government of India for **strengthening the healthcare** system.
  - **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana:** Announcement of a scheme of social support measures amounting to **\$23 Billion (₹1.70 lakh crore)** to **alleviate the hardship of the poor and the vulnerable**.
  - **Insurance cover of \$67,000 (₹50 lakh) per person** to over 2.2 million **frontline health workers and others provision of relief** to firms in statutory and regulatory compliance matters
  - **Easing of monetary policy** by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and **three-month moratorium** on loan instalments.
  - Creation of a **Covid-19 Emergency Fund** for **SAARC** countries.
  - India's **efforts in supplying critical medicine to the countries in need (e.g. Operation Sanjeevani)**, to tackle the Covid-19.

## New Development Bank

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- It is a **multilateral development bank** jointly founded by the **BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)** at the **6<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil in 2014**.
- It was **formed to support** infrastructure and sustainable development efforts in BRICS and other underserved, emerging economies for faster development through innovation and cutting-edge technology.
- It is **headquartered** at **Shanghai, China**.
- In **2018**, the NDB received **observer status** in the **United Nations General Assembly**, establishing a firm basis for active and fruitful cooperation with the UN.
- **Objectives:**
  - Fostering development of member countries.
  - Supporting economic growth.
  - Promoting competitiveness and facilitating job creation.
  - Building a knowledge sharing platform among developing countries.
- To fulfill its purpose, the Bank **supports public or private projects** through **loans, guarantees, equity participation and other financial instruments**.
- NDB has so far **approved 14 projects in India** for an amount of \$4,183 million.

## Water Quality Improves in Yamuna

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### Why in News

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According to a report by the **Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC)**, the **quality of water in the river Yamuna has improved** along the Delhi stretch, compared to April 2019.

DPCC, along with the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** carried out the study after being asked by a **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** appointed monitoring committee.

Earlier, **less air pollution and improved air quality** were also noticed in various cities.

### Key Points

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- **Data Analysis:**

- DPCC collected **water samples from nine locations** along the Yamuna and **twenty locations of drains** and compared the different parameters with values from April 2019.
- According to the report, the **pollution has reduced between 18% to 21%** at various places.
- Five locations have shown **18%-33% reduction** in **Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) levels**. The rest of the locations have shown slight to considerable increase in BOD levels.

Four of the nine locations where **dissolved oxygen (DO)** was **nil in 2019** showed **DO levels of 2.3-4.8 mg/l** in 2020.

- However, the **Yamuna has still not met** the “**water quality criteria**”.

- **Reasons:**

- **Lockdown:** Earlier, a **Delhi Jal Board (DJB) report** had also highlighted the improved quality of water due to the **lockdown** (to curb the **Covid-19**).
- **Increased Flow: Haryana has increased the discharge of water** which has also contributed to less pollution **due to dilution of fresh water**.

### Biochemical Oxygen Demand

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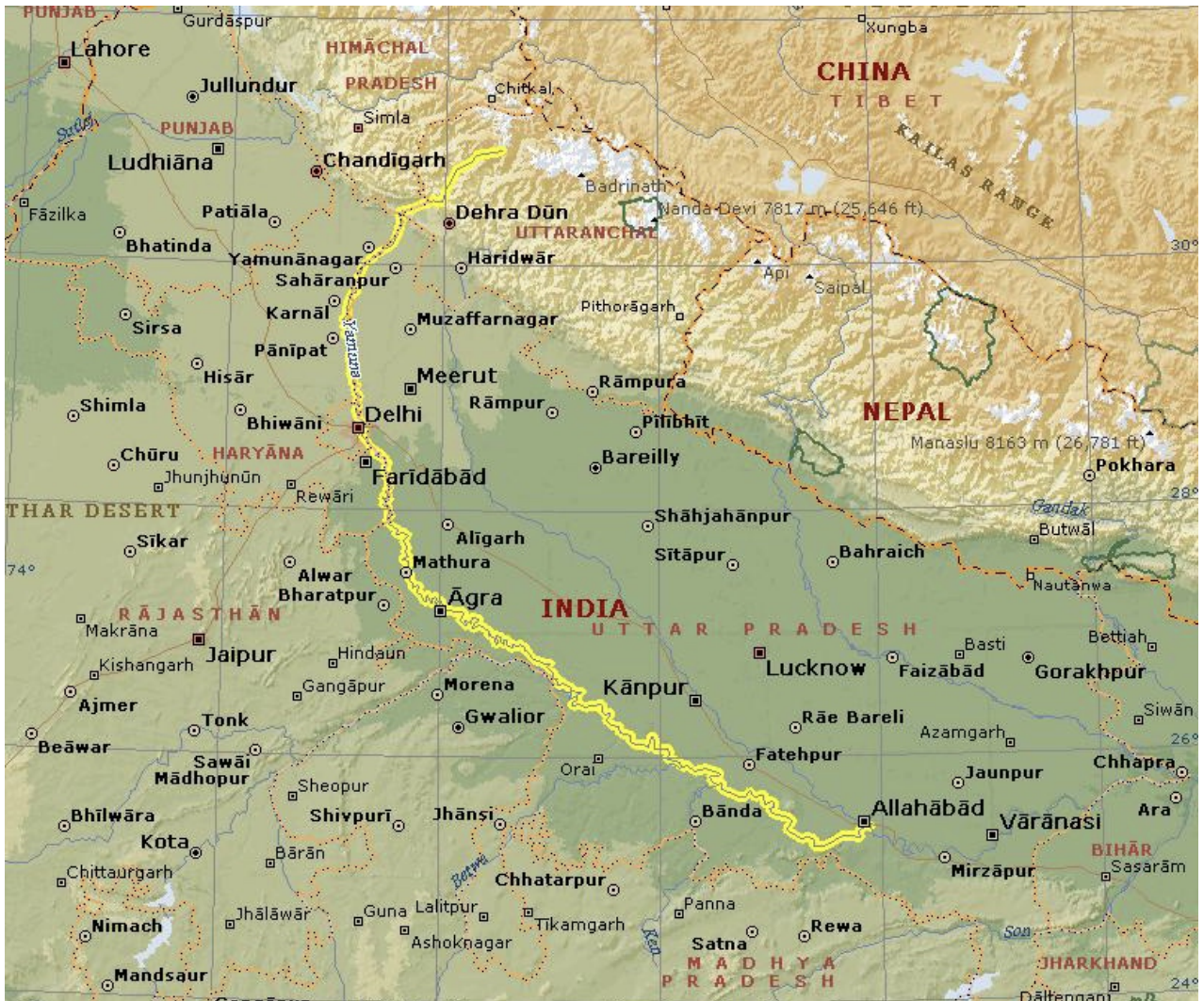
- It is the amount of **dissolved oxygen needed by microorganisms to decompose organic matter** (waste or pollutants) under **aerobic reaction** (in the presence of oxygen).

- The **more organic matter** there is (e.g., in sewage and polluted bodies of water), the **greater is the BOD**; and the **greater the BOD**, the **lower the amount of dissolved oxygen** available for higher animals such as fishes.
  - A **higher BOD level means that more oxygen is needed** to decompose a large quantity of organic matter present in the water.
  - So, a **higher value** of BOD means that the **water is more polluted**.
- The BOD is therefore a **reliable gauge of the organic pollution** of a water body.
- One of the main reasons for **treating wastewater prior to its discharge into a water resource** is to **lower its BOD** i.e. to reduce its need of oxygen and thereby lessen its demand from the streams, lakes, rivers, or estuaries into which it is released.
- **Dissolved Oxygen:**
  - It is the **amount of dissolved oxygen present in the water** which is needed for aquatic life to survive. The **quality of water increases with an increase in DO levels**.
  - A DO level of **5 mg/l or above** is the recommended level for **bathing in a river**.

## Yamuna

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- The river Yamuna, a **major tributary of river Ganges**, originates from the **Yamunotri glacier** near **Bandarpoonch peaks** in the **Mussoorie range of the lower Himalayas** at an **elevation of about 6387 meters above mean sea level** in **Uttarkashi** district of **Uttarakhand**.
- It **meets the Ganges** at the **Sangam (where Kumbh mela is held) in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh** after flowing through **Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi**.
- **Length:** 1376 km
- **Important Dam:** Lakhwar-Vyasi Dam (Uttarakhand), Tajewala Barrage Dam (Haryana) etc.
- **Important Tributaries:** **Chambal**, Sindh, **Betwa and Ken**.



**Source: TH**

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## Blood Shortage Due to Lockdown

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### Why in News

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Due to **Covid-19 lockdown** hospitals across India are **facing acute shortage of blood** and have started contacting individual blood donors to meet the demand.

### Key Points

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- Hospitals are calling listed donors and those with rare blood groups to come in and donate.
- The **Indian Red Cross Society Blood Bank** has also noted that there is a drop in blood collection. The crisis is such that there is a shortage of the most **commonly seen B-positive blood group**.

- According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)** recommendation, **blood requirement of 1% of a country's population** be used as an estimate of its **blood needs**.  
By this measure, **India was short of 1.9 million units of blood** as per data presented to the Lok Sabha **in 2018**.
- **Worst Hit Due to Blood Shortage:**
  - Patients requiring **dialysis, having blood disorders, and pregnant women** are the worst hit due to blood shortage.
  - Patients from **small cities and villages** are also the worst hit.
- **Thalassemics Fearful**  
Thalassemia patients need repeated blood transfusions to survive. Many thalassemics take blood for their transfusions from the Indian Red Cross Society Blood Bank, whose camps are being cancelled.
- According to the **National Blood Transfusion Council**, there are 2,023 blood banks in India, which receive 78% of their blood supply from voluntary donors.

## Issues Involved

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- Due to lockdown **blood banks collection camps are cancelled**.
- **Donors are hesitant to travel** to hospitals to donate blood amid strict lockdown.  
Also, **donor passes had not been made** by some hospitals, which is adding to the problem.
- **Transportation almost closed** due to lockdown.

## Government Initiative

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- The **Health Ministry** has asked hospitals to start working on **ensuring sufficient stock of blood for transfusion** by promoting voluntary blood donors and utilising various services like mobile blood collection vans with the help of the Indian Red Cross Society.
- It has asked the Indian Red Cross Society to **send mobile blood collection vans to the premises of regular blood donors** to facilitate them for blood donation.

## Thalassemia

- It is a **blood disorder passed down through families (inherited)** in which the body makes an **abnormal form or inadequate amount of hemoglobin**.
- Thalassemia is caused by mutations in the gene that make hemoglobin.
- The disorder results in large numbers of red blood cells being destroyed, which leads to **anemia**.
- Hemoglobin is the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen.

## Indian Red Cross Society

- Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) was established in 1920 under the **Indian Red Cross Society Act**.
- The **President of India is the President** and the **Union Health Minister is the Chairman of the Society**.
- The Indian Red Cross is a **voluntary humanitarian organization** providing relief in times of disasters/emergencies and promotes health & care of the vulnerable people and communities.
- The **Mission** of the Indian Red Cross is to inspire, encourage and initiate at all times all forms of humanitarian activities so that human suffering can be minimized and even prevented and thus contribute to creating more congenial climate for peace.
- It is a leading member of the largest independent humanitarian organization in the world, the **International Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement**.
- The movement has three main components,
  - International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC),
  - 192 National Societies and International Federation of Red Cross
  - Red Crescent Societies.

## National Blood Transfusion Council

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- The National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC) was constituted in **1996 under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **Objective:** To **promote voluntary blood donation, ensure safe blood transfusion, provide infrastructure** to blood centres, **develop human resources** and **formulate and implement the Blood Policy**.
- NBTC is the **apex body** in relation to all matters pertaining to **operation of blood centres**.
- The NBTC is the central body that coordinates the State Blood Transfusion Councils (SBTCs) and also ensures involvement of other Ministries and other health programmes for various activities related to **Blood Transfusion Services (BTS)**.

**Source:TH**

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## SWAYAM and SWAYAM Prabha

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Union Minister for Human Resource Development held a detailed **review** of the National online education platform **SWAYAM** and the 32 Direct-to-Home (DTH) Television Education Channels **SWAYAM Prabha**.

### Key Points

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- **Translation to Regional Language:** All the SWAYAM Courses and SWAYAM Prabha videos to be translated to ten regional languages in a time-bound manner.
  - **Acceptance of SWAYAM Credits:** It has also been decided that **University Grants Commission (UGC)** and **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** will follow up with Universities and institutions to accept SWAYAM credits.

This will enable students to do part of their course through Massive open online courses (MOOC) and part in various colleges.
  - **Incentives to Faculties:** To encourage faculty to provide more courses under SWAYAM, it has been decided to provide appropriate incentives for their career.

## SWAYAM

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- **Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM)**, was launched on July 9, 2017 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development **to provide one integrated platform and portal for online courses.**
- This covers all higher education subjects and skill sector courses.
- The objective is **to ensure that every student in the country has access to the best quality higher education at the affordable cost.**
- Academicians from hundreds of institutions throughout the country are involved in developing & delivering **Massive open online courses (MOOCs)** through SWAYAM in almost all disciplines from senior schooling to Post Graduation.

## SWAYAM Prabha

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- It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Human Resources Development** to provide **32 High Quality Educational Channels** through DTH across the length and breadth of the country on 24X7 basis.
- It has **curriculum-based course content** covering diverse disciplines.
- This is primarily **aimed** at making **quality learning resources** accessible to remote areas where internet availability is still a challenge.
- The DTH channels are using the **GSAT-15 satellite** for programme telecasts.

## University Grants Commission

- It came into existence on 28<sup>th</sup> December, **1953** and became a **statutory** body by an **Act of Parliament in 1956**, for the **coordination, determination and maintenance of standards** of teaching, examination and research in university education.
- The head office of the UGC is located in **New Delhi**.

**Source: PIB**

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# Civil Services Day

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- Every year, **21<sup>st</sup> April** is celebrated as the **Civil Services Day** by the Government of India.
- It is celebrated as an **occasion for the civil servants** to rededicate themselves to the causes of citizens and renew their commitments to public service and excellence in work.
- The **date is chosen to commemorate** the day when the first Home Minister of Independent India, **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the probationers of Administrative Services Officers in 1947 at Metcalf House, Delhi.**  
He referred to **civil servants** as the **'Steel Frame of India'**.
- The **first function on civil services day** was held in **Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi in 2006.**
- On this day, the **Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration** are presented to Districts/Implementing Units for implementation of Priority programme and innovation categories.  
These awards bring together civil servants to connect with each other and learn the good practices being implemented across the nation in the field of public grievance.

## Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

- He was born on **31<sup>st</sup> October, 1875** in **Nadiad, Gujarat.**
- He was the **first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister** of independent India.
- He played an important role in the **integration of many Indian princely states** to make an **Indian federation.**
  - At the time of independence, he played a key role in convincing several princely states to align with the Indian Union.
  - He also worked hard as a **social leader for the independence** of India.
- **Women of Bardoli** bestowed the title **'Sardar'** on Vallabhbhai Patel, which means 'a Chief or a Leader'.
- He is recognized as the real unifier of India for his colossal contribution to integrate and make India a united (**Ek Bharat**) and an independent nation.
- He requested the people of India to live together by uniting in order to create **Shresth Bharat** (Foremost India).
- He is also remembered as the **'Patron saint of India's civil servants'** as he **established the modern all-India services system.**
- The **Statue of Unity** at Kevadiya in Narmada district of Gujarat was built in his honour.

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## Unified Commanders Conference



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## Why in News

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The **Unified Commanders Conference (UCC)** which was scheduled to be held on 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2020 has been postponed in the wake of the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

## Key Points

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- It is the **annual meeting of three armed force services** (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the **Ministry of Defence** to plan India's **long term security**.
- It provides a **platform for discussions at the apex Level on all the Joint Issues** and **enables stock taking of the previous year** and **planning the way ahead for the next year**.
- It is **chaired by the Defence Minister, Minister of State (Defence)** and also **attended by** the ministry top officials, **National Security Advisor (NSA)**, **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**, service chiefs and senior officers of the three services.

## National Security Advisor

- The National Security Advisor **acts as the secretary of the National Security Council (NSC)** of India and is also the **primary advisor to the Prime Minister**.
- The current National Security Advisor is **Ajit Doval**.

## National Security Council

- It is a **three-tiered organization** that **oversees political, economic, energy and security issues of strategic concern**.
  - India formed it in **1999**, where all aspects of national security are deliberated upon by it.
  - NSC acts as the **apex body, headed by the Prime Minister**.  
It operates **within the executive office of the Prime Minister of India**, liaising between the government's executive branch and the intelligence services, advising leadership on intelligence and security issues.
  - The Ministers of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs and Finance are its **members**.
  - NSC comprises of the three tier structure- **Strategic Policy Group (SPG)**, the **National Security Advisory Board (NSAB)** and the **National Security Council Secretariat**.
    - The SPG chaired by the Cabinet Secretary is the principal forum for **inter-ministerial coordination and integration** of the relevant inputs.
    - The NSAB **undertakes long-term analysis and provides perspectives** on issues of national security.
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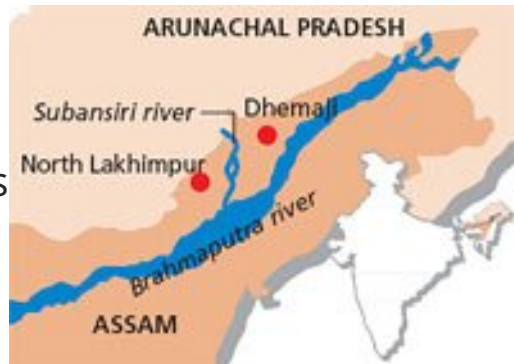
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## Why in News

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The **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** constructed the **Daporijo bridge** over **Subansiri river** in **Arunachal Pradesh** in a **record span of just 27 days**.

### Key Points



- The bridge is of utmost importance in strategic connectivity as it **links roads leading upto the Line of Actual Control (LAC)** between India and China.
- **Subansiri River**
  - Subansiri River (**gold river**), originates in the **Tibet Plateau** and **enters India through Miri hills in Arunachal Pradesh**.
  - It is the **largest tributary of Brahmaputra River**.

### Border Roads Organisation

- It was **conceived and raised in 1960** by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for coordinating the speedy development of a network of roads in the North and the North Eastern border regions of the country.
- It works under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Defence**.
- BRO is regarded as a symbol of nation-building, national integration and an inseparable component in maintaining the security and integrity of the country.
- It has diversified into a large spectrum of construction and development works comprising airfields, building projects, defence works and tunneling and has endeared itself to the people.

**Source: TH**

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