



News Analysis (26 Oct, 2020)

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World Economic Outlook: IMF

Why in News

According to the **October update** of the World Economic Outlook 2020, India's **gross domestic product** (GDP) will witness a **contraction of over 10%**.

- This is more than the double of 4.5% contraction projected in the April edition.
- World Economic Outlook is a survey by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which is usually **published twice a year** in the months of **April and October**.

Key Points

- **Global growth** would **contract by 4.4% in 2020** and **bounce back to 5.2% in 2021**.
- **Indian economy**, severely hit by the pandemic, is projected to **contract by 10.3% in 2020**.

The spread of the Covid-19 and containment measures have severely **disrupted supply and demand** conditions in India.

- However, **India is likely to bounce back with an 8.8%** growth rate in **2021**, thus regaining the position of the fastest-growing emerging economy, **surpassing China's projected growth rate of 8.2%**.

Among the major economies, **China is the only country** to show a **positive growth rate** of 1.9% in 2020.

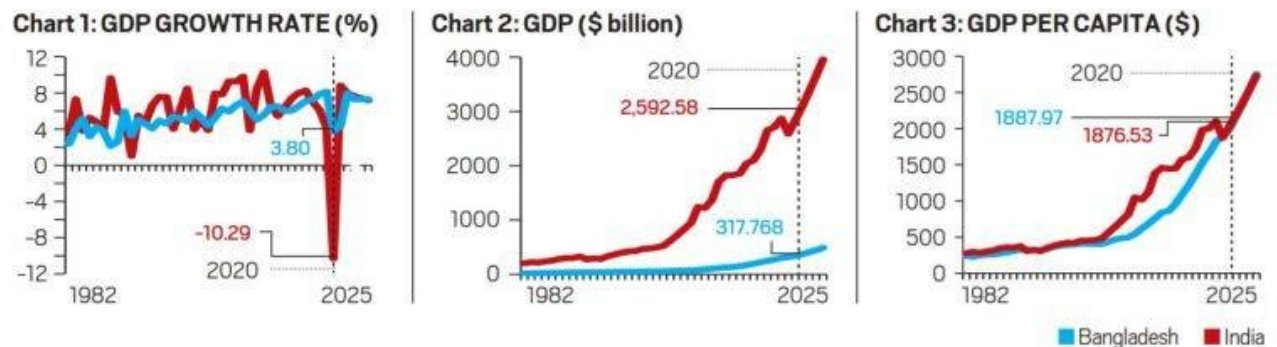
India-Bangladesh Difference

- **GDP Comparison:** According to the IMF's forecasts, Bangladesh's per capita GDP is expected to overtake India in 2020. **India is likely to grow faster in 2021** and in all likelihood again surge ahead.
- **Per Capita Income Comparison:** However, over the **five-year period ending in 2025**, Bangladesh's per capita GDP is expected to grow at a slightly higher pace, implying that **in 2025, its per capita income would be USD 2,756, marginally higher than that of India's at USD 2,729**.

Given **Bangladesh's lower population growth and faster economic growth**, India and Bangladesh are **likely to be neck and neck** for the foreseeable future in terms of per capita income.

- **Comparison Method:**
 - Typically, countries are compared on the basis of **GDP growth rate**, or on **absolute GDP**.
 - However, **per capita income** also involves another variable like the **overall population** and is arrived at **by dividing the total GDP by the total population**.
- **Major Trends:**

UPS AND DOWNS IN TWO ECONOMIES



- For the most part **since Bangladesh's independence**, on both these counts, **India's economy has been better** than Bangladesh's.
 - India's economy has **mostly been over 10 times the size of Bangladesh** and grown faster every year.
- In **1991**, when India was undergoing a severe **financial crisis** and grew by just above 1%, **Bangladesh's per capita GDP surged ahead** of India's. Since then, India again took the lead.
- There are **three reasons** why **India's per capita income has fallen below Bangladesh in 2020**. These are as below:
 - **Growth Rates: Since 2017 onwards, India's growth rate has decelerated sharply while Bangladesh's has become even faster.**
 - Bangladesh's economy has been clocking rapid GDP growth rates since 2004. However, this pace did not alter the relative positions of the two economies between 2004 and 2016 because India grew even faster than Bangladesh.
 - **Populations: Over the same period, India's population grew faster** (around 21%) than Bangladesh's population (just under 18%).
 - The **combined effect** of these two factors can be seen in how the **per capita GDP gap had closed considerably even before Covid-19**.
 - Bangladesh's per capita GDP was **merely half of India's in 2007** but this was just before the global financial crisis. It was **roughly 70% of India's in 2014** and this **gap closed rapidly** in the last few years.
 - **Impact of Covid-19: The most immediate factor** was the **relative impact of Covid-19** on the two economies in 2020.
 - While India's GDP is set to reduce by 10%, Bangladesh's is expected to grow by almost 4%.

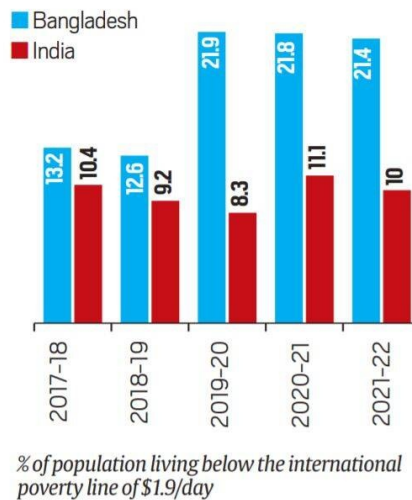
- **Reasons Behind Bangladesh's Fast Growth:**

- **Independence from Pakistan:** It gave Bangladesh a chance to start afresh on its economic and political identity.
- **Less Stringent Labour Laws:** Labour laws were not as stringent and its economy increasingly involved women in its labour force, seen by the **higher female participation**.
- **Role of Garment Industry in Exports:** A key driver of growth was the garment industry where women workers gave Bangladesh the edge to corner the global export markets from which China retreated.
- **Industry and Services Led GDP:** Structure of Bangladesh's economy is such that its GDP is led by the industrial sector, followed by the services sector and both these sectors create a lot of jobs and are **more remunerative than agriculture**.

India, on the other hand, has **struggled to boost its industrial sector** and has far too many **people still dependent on agriculture**.

- **Improved Social and Political Metrics:** Over the past two decades, Bangladesh has improved on several social and political metrics such as health, sanitation, financial inclusion, and women's political representation.
 - For example, despite a lower proportion of the population having access to basic sanitation, the **mortality rate attributed to unsafe water and sanitation in Bangladesh is much lower than in India**.
 - On financial inclusion, according to the World Bank Global Findex database, the **proportion of dormant bank accounts is quite small** when compared to India.
 - Bangladesh is also far ahead of India in the latest **gender parity rankings**. Out of 154 countries mapped, Bangladesh is in the top 50 while India is at 112.
 - Bangladesh with the 75th rank, is ahead of India, with 94th rank, in the **Global Hunger Index 2020**.

Chart 4: PREVALENCE OF POVERTY



- **India's Better Performance:**

- India's **level of poverty is much lower than that of Bangladesh's**. According to the World Bank, poverty in Bangladesh is **expected to increase substantially** in the short term, with the **highest impact on daily and self-employed workers** in the non-agricultural sector and salaried workers in the manufacturing sector.
- India is far ahead of Bangladesh **in basic education parameters** and that is what explains its higher rank in the **Human Development Index**.
- **India** stands at the **63rd rank** while **Bangladesh is at the 168th rank**, out of total **190 countries** in the **Ease of Doing Business 2020**.
- **India** is at the **48th position** while **Bangladesh** ranked **116th among 131 economies** in the **Global Innovation Index 2020**.

Way Forward

- Bangladesh's recent economic performance and its differences from India can be traced to the former's better export performance, especially in garments and apparel.
- India's exports have remained sluggish, which could provide the much-needed fillip to India's economy. However, this would require India to reverse its recent stance on trade, lower rather than raise tariffs, embrace free trade agreements, and seek greater integration with global supply chains.
- Wages in China are rising and countries like Bangladesh are all set to take advantage of this opportunity post-Covid-19. As companies try to hedge their supply chain risks, and shifts away from China intensify, this provides India yet another opportunity but it will require the government to pivot away from protectionism.

Source: IE

Compound Interest Waiver on Moratorium Loans

Why in News

Recently, the Government of India has announced the scheme for the **waiver of compound interest** that was payable by the borrower who had opted for **loan moratorium** between 1st March 2020, and 31st August 2020.

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** had in March 2020 offered a **three-month moratorium on loans**, enabling borrowers to defer repayments on EMIs and other loans. This was later **extended by another three months**, till 31st August 2020.
- The loan moratorium, and waiver of compound interest, was aimed at providing borrowers relief amid the economic impact of the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

Festive respite

Banks will credit compound interest levied on loans up to ₹2 crore between March 1 and August 31 back to borrowers by November 5

LOANS COVERED:

- Home
- Education
- Consumer durables
- Automobiles
- Credit card dues
- Loans to micro, small and medium enterprises



CONDITION: Aggregate of all outstanding loans must not exceed ₹2 crore

- Eligible borrowers will get benefit irrespective of whether they availed the moratorium or not
- Lenders have been asked to set up grievance redressal system for the scheme within a week
- The government will reimburse banks and NBFCs after they credit loan accounts and submit claims

Key Points

- **Compound Interest Waiver Scheme:**

Under this, the government will grant **eligible borrowers ex-gratia payment** of the difference between the compound interest and simple interest for the six-month moratorium period.

- **Ex-gratia payment** is the money which is paid due to moral obligation and not due to legal obligation.
- **Simple interest** is levied **only on the principal amount** of a loan or deposit. In contrast, **compound interest is levied on the principal amount and the interest** that accumulates on it in every period.

- **Eligibility:**
 - The scheme shall be applicable for **loans availed by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** as well as **loans to retail customers** for education, housing, consumer durables, automobiles, **provided a borrower has an aggregate outstanding loan of Rs. 2 crore or less**, from all such loans.
 - **Credit card dues** have also been included in the scheme's ambit.
 - The **loan interest waiver payment** shall be admissible, **irrespective of whether the borrower had availed the moratorium partly, fully, or not at all.**
 - However, this would only be permitted for **loan accounts that had not been reported as Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)** as on 29th February 2020.
 - A loan is recorded as a non-performing asset or NPA, 90 days after repayments become overdue.
- **Effect:**
 - The **amount saved** through loan interest waiver **will be very small.** This is because only the **interest that would have been charged on the interest of the original loan** during the six months moratorium period is waived off.
 - In other words, the **loan repayment will continue** and one will still need to pay the **simple interest** that would have paid if not opted for the loan moratorium.
 - It is only the compounding interest that goes off.
- **Implementation:**
 - Lenders have been asked to set up a grievance redressal mechanism for eligible borrowers under the scheme by 30th October 2020.
 - A mechanism has also been put in place for lenders to claim the amount back from the government. Lenders have to submit claims for reimbursement by 15th December 2020 through a special cell set up in the State Bank of India (SBI).

Source: TH

SOP for Adoption of Integrity Pact Amended: CVC

Why in News

Recently, the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** has amended the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on adoption of "**Integrity Pact**" in government organisations for procurement activities.

- The latest order revises the SOP issued in January 2017.
- The CVC also restricted the maximum tenure of **Integrity External Monitors (IEMs)** to three years in an organisation.

Integrity Pact

Integrity Pact is a **vigilance tool** that envisages an **agreement between the prospective vendors/bidders and the buyer**, committing both the parties **not to exercise any corrupt influence** on any aspect of the contract.

The pact also **ensures transparency, equity and competitiveness** in public procurement.

Integrity External Monitors

- The IEMs independently and objectively **review the documents to determine if the parties have complied with their obligations** under the pact.
- They may submit a report to the chief executive of the organisation concerned or directly to the **Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO)** and the **CVC**, if they find serious irregularities attracting the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 provisions.

Key Points

- **Choice of IEM:**
 - **Amended Provision:** It states that the **choice of IEM** should be restricted to officials from the government and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) who have retired from positions of the **level of Secretary** to the Central government or of equivalent pay scale.
 - The officials who retired as Chairman and Managing Directors (CMDs) of PSUs – Schedule 'A' companies and CMD/Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer levels in the Public Sector Banks (PSBs), insurance companies and financial institutions – should be at least of the level of **Additional Secretary** or its equivalent.
 - Officers of the Armed Forces who have retired from the **rank equivalent of General** may also be considered for appointment.
 - Preference would be given to persons who have worked in any other sector, other than their own, or have worked as Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) in any organisation.
 - **Earlier Provision:** Under the 2017 order, the officials who had retired from positions of the **level of Additional Secretary** to the Central government and above, or equivalent pay scale, were eligible for the PSUs, board level officers in Schedule 'A' companies, PSBs, insurance companies and financial institutions.

Officers of the Armed Forces who had retired from the **rank equivalent to Lieutenant-General** and above were considered for appointment.
- **Appointment as IEM:**
 - **Amended Provision:** It states that for appointment as IEM, the Ministry, department or organisation concerned has to forward a panel of suitable persons to the CVC, of those persons who are in the panel maintained by the CVC.
 - **Earlier Provision:** Under the 2017 order, the panel could include those already in the panel maintained by the CVC, or they could propose names of other suitable persons.
- **Tenure:**
 - **Amended Provision:** It states that the IEM will be appointed for a **period of three years** in an organisation.
 - **Earlier Provision:** The 2017 order stated that the **initial tenure of IEM would be three years** which could be **extended for another term of two years** on a request received by the CVC from the organisation concerned.

Central Vigilance Commission

- CVC is the apex vigilance institution, **free of control from any executive authority, monitoring all vigilance activity under the Central Government** and advising various authorities in Central Government organizations in planning, executing, reviewing and reforming their vigilance work.

It is an **independent** body and is **only responsible to the Parliament**.

- It was set up by the Government in February, 1964 on the recommendations of the Committee on Prevention of Corruption, headed by **K. Santhanam**.
- The Parliament enacted **Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003 (CVC Act)** conferring **statutory status** on the CVC.

Source: TH

Two New Ramsar Sites

Why in News

Recently, **Kabartal Wetland (Bihar)** and **Asan Conservation Reserve (Uttarakhand)** have been designated as **Ramsar sites**, making them ‘**Wetlands of International Importance**’.

- Earlier in 2020, India **designated 10 more wetlands as a Ramsar site**, taking the total number from 27 to 37.
- With 2 more inclusions, the **total number of Ramsar sites in India is 39**, the **highest in South Asia**.

Key Points

- **Kabartal Wetland:**
 - Also known as **Kanwar Jheel**, it covers 2,620 hectares of the Indo-Gangetic plains in the Begusarai district of Bihar.
 - It acts as a **vital flood buffer** for the region besides providing livelihood opportunities to local communities.
 - **Significant biodiversity** is present, with 165 plant species and 394 animal species recorded, including 221 bird species. It is also a **valuable site for fish biodiversity** with over 50 species documented.
 - It is an **important stopover along the Central Asian Flyway**, with 58 migratory waterbirds using it to rest and refuel.
 - **Five critically endangered species** inhabit the site, including **three vultures** – the **red-headed vulture** (*Sarcogyps calvus*), **white-rumped vulture** (*Gyps bengalensis*) and **Indian vulture** (*Gyps indicus*) – and two waterbirds, the **sociable lapwing** (*Vanellus gregarius*) and **Baer’s pochard** (*Aythya baeri*).
 - **Major threats** to the Site include water management activities such as drainage, water abstraction, damming and canalization.

- **Asan Conservation Reserve:**

- ACR is a **444-hectare stretch of the Asan River** running down to its confluence with the **Yamuna River** in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand. It is **Uttarakhand's first Ramsar Site**.

The damming of the River by the **Asan Barrage in 1967** resulted in siltation above the dam wall, which helped to create some of the Site's bird-friendly habitats.

- These habitats **support 330 species of birds** including the **critically endangered red-headed vulture** (*Sarcogyps calvus*), **white-rumped vulture** (*Gyps bengalensis*) and **Baer's pochard** (*Aythya baeri*).
- Other non-avian species present include **49 fish species**, one of these being the **endangered Putitora mahseer** (*Tor putitora*). Fish use the site for feeding, migration and spawning.

Ramsar Site

- **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is an **intergovernmental treaty** adopted in **1971** in the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.
- It **came into force for India on 1st February, 1982**. Those **wetlands which are of international importance** are declared as **Ramsar sites**.
- The **Convention's mission** is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".
- The **Montreux Record** is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. It is **maintained as part of the Ramsar List**.
 - At present, **two wetlands** of India are in Montreux Record: **Keoladeo National Park** (Rajasthan) and **Loktak Lake** (Manipur).
 - **Chilika Lake** (Odisha) was placed in the record but **later removed** from it.

Source: HT

CSIR-CMERI's Municipal Solid Waste Processing Facility

Why in News

Recently, the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute** (CSIR-CMERI) has developed a **Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Processing Facility (Decentralised Solid Waste Management Plant)** to solve the problem of waste management in India.

Key Points

- **Challenges in Waste Management:**

- With an **ever-increasing population** and **rapid pace of urbanisation**, India faces a huge challenge of waste management.
- The volume of waste is projected to **rise from the present 62 million tonnes to about 150 million tonnes by 2030**.
- **Indiscriminate dumping** of garbage at the current rate without appropriate scientific treatment would impose a huge **requirement of landfill area** per year.
- Studies suggest that the MSW generated in India mostly consists of a large fraction of **organic wastes** and their unscientific disposal produces **greenhouse gas** (GHG) emissions and other **air pollutants like methane** (CH₄).
- The **ineffective processing** of MSW also is the root **cause of many diseases** as the dumped landfills transform into **contamination hubs for pathogens, bacteria and viruses**.
- The most commonly used process "**composting**" also **does not yield impactful economic returns** for the entrepreneurs.
 - It requires more land space and labour, pasteurisation for effective disinfection and has restricted utilisation due to presence of heavy metals.
 - During the rainy season, managing it becomes difficult due to the presence of excessive moisture.

- **MSW Processing Facility:**

- It is developed following the **Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules 2016** prescribed by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- It has been developed with the **potential to scientifically manage the solid waste** including the **Covid-19 wastes**.

The facility is equipped with special disinfection capabilities to help break the Covid-19 chain through **UV-C lights** and hot-air convection methods.
- The plant is **self-sufficient** in terms of energy requirement through the installation of roof-mounted solar panels, which can also feed the surplus energy supply onto a mini-grid.
- **Objectives:**
 - To unburden the common households from the segregation responsibilities through advanced segregation techniques.
 - To achieve decentralised decimation of solid wastes.
 - To help create value-added end-products from abundantly available redundant stuff such as dry leaves, dry grass, etc.
- **Mechanism:**

The **mechanised segregation system segregates solid waste** into metallic waste (metal body, metal container, etc.), biodegradable waste (foods, vegetables, fruits, grass, etc.), non-biodegradable waste (plastics, packaging material, pouches, bottles etc.) and inert wastes (glass, stones etc.).
- **Significance:**
 - It opens up the opportunities to realise the dream of generating **100 GW Solar Power by 2022** and a city with a "Zero-Waste and Zero-Landfill Ecology".
 - It may become a source of job creation through both process-engagement and manufacturing, which can help support the **Micro Small Enterprises** (MSEs) and various start-ups across the nation.

Various Waste Disposal Methods

- **Bio-degradable Waste Disposal:**

- The bio-degradable component of the waste is **decomposed in an anaerobic environment** popularly known as **bio-gasification**.
- In this process, biogas is liberated through the conversion of organic matter and the biogas can be **used as fuel for cooking** or can also be utilised in a **gas engine for the generation of electricity**.
- The **residual slurry** from the biogas plant is converted to **compost** in a natural process known as **vermicomposting** by introducing earthworms. The vermicompost is **utilised in organic farming**.

- **Biomass Waste Disposal:**

- Biomass waste such as **dry leaves, dead branches, dry grass** etc. are disposed of by **first shredding** it to suitable size followed by **mixing with the slurry of the biogas digester**.
- This mixture is the feedstock for **briquette** (compressed block of coal dust or other combustible material), which is utilised as fuel for cooking and in gasifier for production of **syngas** (or **synthesis gas**), utilised in a gas engine for electricity generation.
Syngas is a **fuel gas mixture** consisting primarily of hydrogen, carbon monoxide, and very often some carbon dioxide.

- **Polymer Waste Disposal:**

- The polymer waste **consisting of plastics** is being disposed of through **pyrolysis**, in which the polymer waste is **heated to a temperature of 400-600°C in an anaerobic environment in presence of a suitable catalyst**.
- The volatile matter from the polymer waste comes out as a result of heating which on condensation gives **pyrolysis oil**.
- The non-condensed syngas and crude pyrolysis oil after purification are **reused for heating purposes** and it helps in obtaining self-sustainability.
- The **solid residue known as char** is mixed with the biogas slurry for production of briquette.

- **Sanitary Waste Disposal:**

- The sanitary items including masks, sanitary napkins, diapers etc. are **disposed-off utilising high-temperature plasma gasification**.
- The plasma gasification process uses **electricity to generate high-temperature plasma arc** (above 3000°C) inside the plasma reactor which **converts the waste into syngas and the residual ash** can be mixed with cement for preparation of recycled bricks.

However, this technology is **not economically viable** as energy requirements for waste treatment using this technology is very high.

Source: PIB

Draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019

Why in News

Recently, **Facebook India's policy head has appeared** before the **30-member Joint Committee of Parliament** which is examining the **draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019.**

However, **Amazon has declined to appear** on the ground of risky travel amidst the **pandemic.**

Key Points

- Amazon, Twitter, Facebook, Google and Paytm are among the companies from whom the committee has **sought views on data security and protection** amid concerns that the **privacy of users is being “compromised” for commercial interest.**
 - Facebook was interrogated on how it targets audiences, their data storage model and transfer of data, etc.
 - **Amazon's refusal** amounts to a **breach of parliamentary privilege** and the panel is **unanimous about taking coercive action** if no one from the company appears on the next date.

- **Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019:**

- It is commonly referred to as the “**Privacy Bill**” and intends to **protect individual rights by regulating the collection, movement, and processing of data** that is personal, or which can identify the individual.
 - The Bill derives its inspiration from a **previous draft version prepared by a committee headed by retired Justice B N Srikrishna.**
- In **December 2019, Parliament approved sending it to the joint committee.**
- The Bill gives the government **powers to authorise the transfer of certain types of personal data overseas** and has given **exceptions allowing government agencies to collect personal data** of citizens.
- The Bill **divides the data into three categories and mandates their storage** depending upon the type.
 - **Personal Data:** Data from which an individual can be identified like name, address, etc.
 - **Sensitive Personal Data:** Some types of personal data like financial, health-related, sexual orientation, biometric, genetic, transgender status, caste, religious belief, and more.
 - It needs to be **stored only in India and can be processed abroad only under certain conditions** including **approval of the Data Protection Agency (DPA).**
 - **Critical Personal Data:** Anything that the government at any time can deem critical, such as military or national security data.
 - It **must be stored and processed in India only.**
- It **removes the requirement of data mirroring** (in case of personal data). **Only individual consent for data transfer abroad is required.**
 - **Data mirroring** is the act of copying data from one location to a storage device in real-time.
 - In the earlier version, the Bill **enabled the transfer of personal data outside India**, with a subcategory of **SPD having to be mirrored** in the country (i.e. a **copy will have to be kept in the country**).
- It **mandates data fiduciaries to provide the government with any non-personal data when demanded.**
 - Non-personal data refers to anonymised data, such as traffic patterns or demographic data.
 - The previous draft did not apply to this type of data, which many **companies use to fund their business model.**
 - **Data Fiduciary:** It may be a **service provider who collects, stores and uses data** in the course of providing such goods and services.
- The Bill **requires companies and social media intermediaries**, which are “significant data fiduciaries”, to **enable users in India to voluntarily verify their accounts.**
 - It would be visible in a “**demonstrable and visible mark of verification**, which shall be visible to all users of the service”.
 - This intends to **decrease the anonymity** of users and **prevent trolling.**

- **Advantages:**
 - **Data localisation** can help law-enforcement agencies access data for investigations and enforcement and also **increase the ability** of the government to **tax internet giants**.
 - Instances of cyber-attacks (for example, **Spyware Pegasus**) and surveillance can be checked.
 - **Social media**, which is sometimes used to spread fake news, can be **monitored and checked**, preventing emerging national threats in time.
 - A strong data protection legislation will also **help to enforce data sovereignty**.
- **Disadvantages:**
 - Many contend that the **physical location of the data is not relevant** in the cyber world as the **encryption keys may still be out of reach** of national agencies.
 - **National security or reasonable purposes** are **open-ended and subjective terms**, which may lead to intrusion of the state into the private lives of citizens.
 - the protectionist policy of data localisation as they are afraid it would have a **domino effect in other countries** as well.
 - Also, it may **backfire on India's own young startups** that are attempting global growth, or **on larger firms that process foreign data in India**.

Source: TH

New Abortion Laws in Poland

Why in News

Recently, **women in Poland** have been protesting a court ruling that drastically restricts their **right to access safe and legal abortions**.

Key Points

- **Poland's Abortion Laws:**
 - The existing **1993 abortion law permits the termination of pregnancy on the grounds of foetal defects**.
 - These are **already considered some of the strictest laws in Europe** and after the enactment of the court's decision, **abortions will only be permitted in cases of rape, incest, or if there is a threat to the mother's life**.
- **Background:**
 - **Poland's Constitutional Tribunal** ruled that an **existing law** was **unconstitutional** because the **Polish constitution assures a right to life** and the abortion based on a foetal malfunction was a directly forbidden form of discrimination.
 - Tribunal held that **permitting abortions** in the case of foetal deformities **legalised "eugenic practices** with regard to an unborn child, thus denying it the respect and protection of human dignity."
 - **Eugenics** is the **practice or advocacy of improving the human species** by selectively mating people with specific desirable hereditary traits.
 - It **aims to reduce human suffering** by "breeding out" disease, disabilities and so-called undesirable characteristics from the human population.

- **Similar Instances:**
 - **Earlier in 2016** too, thousands of women went on strike in **protest against a draft law for a complete ban on abortions.**
 - The draft law was **proposed by an anti-abortion citizens' group** and was initially **supported by the Catholic Church.** It **suggested stringent punishments** like jail upto 5 years for the women and also the doctors performing the abortion.
 - However, the **Church later backed out** when bishops said they **could not support the proposal to jail women who underwent an abortion.**
- **Implications of the Latest Ruling:**
 - Fewer than 2,000 legal abortions are carried out in Poland each year, a **majority of which are due to foetal defects.** So the ruling **essentially translates to a near complete ban** on abortions in the country.
 - Abortions in cases of rape, incest or where there is a threat to the mother's life account for **merely 2% of all legal terminations.**
 - An estimated **80,000 to 1,20,000 Polish women either go abroad or seek illegal abortions every year** due to the country's **strict laws** or the **stigma** associated with it.
 - It is feared that the **number could surge even further** if terminations due to malformed fetuses are outlawed.
- **Global Reactions:**

Regional and global organisations like the **Council of Europe, Amnesty International, the Center for Reproductive Rights and Human Rights Watch** criticised the ruling.

Abortion

It is defined as the **termination of pregnancy by various methods**, including **medical surgery** before the fetus is able to sustain independent life.

Abortion Laws in India

- Abortions in India are regulated by the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971.**
- Under the law (**section 3** of the MTP Act 1971), the **doctor can perform an abortion in the following conditions:**
 - If the pregnancy would be **harmful to the life of the patient** or **affects her physical or mental health.** The doctor will need to consider the circumstances of the patient to figure out if the pregnancy will harm her mental health, on a case to case basis.
 - If there is a good chance that the **child would suffer from physical or mental abnormalities** which would leave him or her seriously handicapped.
 - If pregnancy occurred as a **result of a failure of contraception** (only applicable to married women).
 - If pregnancy is a **result of sexual assault or rape.**

- **Termination of Pregnancy:**
 - If the pregnancy has **not exceeded 12 weeks, only one doctor** is needed to sign-off.
 - If the pregnancy **has exceeded 12 weeks and is below 24 weeks, two doctors** are needed.
 - The **gestation period does not matter** if a doctor feels that an immediate abortion must be conducted **to save the life of the patient.**
 - The doctor who determines if it is necessary to perform an abortion and performs it **needs to be a ‘registered medical practitioner’ under the law.**
- In **January 2020**, the Union Cabinet approved **amendments to the MTP Act**, allowing women to seek abortions as part of the reproductive right and gender justice.
- The amendment **raised the upper limit of MTP from 20 weeks to 24 weeks** for women including rape survivors, victims of incest, differently-abled women and minors.

Source: IE

India’s First Seaplane Project

Why in News

India's first seaplane service in Gujarat, is set to start from **31st October 2020**, the birth anniversary of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, with the aim of providing **air connectivity** between the **Sabarmati Riverfront** in Ahmedabad and the **Statue of Unity** in Kevadia.

- The seaplane will be **operated by SpiceJet**. It is a **19-seater seaplane**, which will be able to accommodate 14 passengers.
- In the next phase, **Dharoi dam** (Mehsana district) **will connect Ambaji and Shatrunjay dam** (Bhavnagar district) and **Tapi** district.

Key Points



- **Seaplane:**
 - A seaplane is a **fixed-wing aeroplane** designed for **taking off and landing on water**.
 - There are **two main types of seaplanes: flying boats** (often called hull seaplanes) and **floatplanes**.
 - A **flying boat** is a fixed-winged seaplane with a hull, allowing it to land on water, that usually has no type of landing gear to allow operation on land. It **differs from a floatplane** as it uses a purpose-designed fuselage which can float, granting the aircraft buoyancy
 - The bottom of a **flying boat's fuselage is its main landing gear**. This is usually supplemented with smaller floats near the wingtips, called wing or tip floats.
 - The **hull of a flying boat holds the crew, passengers, and cargo**; it has many features in common with the hull of a ship or a boat.
 - A **floatplane** is supported on the water by **pontoons**, called **floats**.
- **Countries that Operate Seaplanes:**
 - Seaplanes are operational in countries like the Philippines, Canada, Australia, the United States, Finland, the United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, United Arab Emirates, Italy, Maldives and Hongkong.
 - In India, **Jal Hans**, a commercial seaplane service based in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was launched as a **pilot project** in December 2010 with a capacity of 10 passengers.
- **India's Seaplane Project:**
 - As per the **direction of the Centre**, the **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** requested state governments of Gujarat, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and the administration of Andaman & Nicobar **to propose potential locations for setting up water airports** to boost the tourism sector.
 - In 2019, the **Centre approved flights from six water airports** that include Shatrunjay Dam (Gujarat), Guwahati riverfront and Umrangso reservoir (Assam) and Nagarjuna Sagar (Andhra Pradesh), under the **third round of Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik** (UDAN) scheme.
 - The routes awarded for seaplane operations include **Sabarmati riverfront to Statue of Unity and Shatrunjay Dam; Guwahati riverfront to Umrango reservoir, Jorhat and Shillong** (Meghalaya) and **Nagarjuna Sagar to Vijayawada and Hyderabad** (Telangana).
 - **Agatti, Kavaratti and Minicoy islands of Lakshadweep** have also been proposed to be connected through the seaplane project under the **fourth round of UDAN scheme**.
- **Benefit:**
 - The project will lead to an **increase in tourism and hotel business** at local level. It will also serve **employment to local people**.
 - Establishment of water airports will contribute to an increase in the level of current **social infrastructural facilities** at the proposed sites.

- **Impact on Environment:**

- **Negative:** Experts are of the opinion that the activities proposed under the water airport project may have a similar type of impact as that of an airport.

However, the water airport is not a listed project/activity in the Schedule to the **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006** nor in **EIA draft 2020**.

- **Positive:** During seaplane operations, there will be **turbulence** created in the water while takeoff and landing of seaplanes.

This will **lead to mixing of oxygen in the water**, which will have a positive impact on the aquatic ecosystem near seaplane operations increasing oxygen content and decreasing carbon content in this system.

UDAN Scheme

- **Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN)** was launched as a **regional connectivity scheme** under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** in 2016.
- The objective of the scheme is **to create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes** so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
- The scheme **envisages providing connectivity to un-served and underserved airports of the country** through the revival of existing air-strips and airports. The scheme is **operational for a period of 10 years**.

Under-served airports are those which do not have more than one flight a day, while un-served airports are those where there are no operations.

- UDAN 3.0 and UDAN 4.0 aim to include Seaplanes for connecting water airports.

Source: IE

Kisan Suryodaya Yojana: Gujarat

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister has launched the '**Kisan Suryodaya Yojana**' aimed at providing **day-time electricity to farmers in Gujarat** for irrigation and farming purposes.

The Prime Minister also launched a **2.3 km-long ropeway project on Mount Girnar** in Junagadh city, a major pilgrimage site.

Key Points

Kisan Suryodaya Yojana:

- **Rs. 3,500 crore** will be spent over the **next three years** for providing solar power to farmers for irrigation during daytime (5 AM to 9 PM).
- About **3,500 circuit kilometers (CKM) of new transmission lines** will be laid.
- **10 districts** including Dahod, Gir-Somnath and Tapi have been selected under the Scheme for 2020-21. The remaining districts will be covered in a phase-wise manner by 2022-23.
- **Significance:**
 - It would help in the **expansion of micro irrigation** in the state. Micro irrigation is defined as the frequent application of small quantities of water directly above and below the soil surface; usually as discrete drops, continuous drops or tiny streams through emitters placed along a water delivery line.
 - It would complement irrigation projects of the State- **Sujalam Sufalam** and **SAUNI (Saurashtra-Narmada Avtaran Irrigation) yojana**.
 - It would **complement central government initiatives** like **neem coating urea, Soil Health Cards, KUSUM Yojana**, etc.
 - India has now reached **5th position in the world** in the last few years in **solar power** and is advancing fast. Further, it has given the world the plan of '**One Sun, One World, One Grid**'.

Note

- On the **Kisan Suryodaya scheme**, the PM emphasised that farmers should save water and adopt the mantra '**per drop, more crop**'.
- With the objective of "per drop, more crop", **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)** was also **launched in 2015**.
- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** being implemented to expand cultivated areas with assured irrigation, reduce wastage of water and improve water use efficiency and ensure "**Har Khet Ko Paani**".
- It was conceived by amalgamating ongoing schemes viz.
 - **Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP)** of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation (now Ministry of Jal Shakti),
 - **Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)** of Ministry of Rural Development and
 - **On Farm Water Management (OFWM)** of Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC).
- The scheme is implemented by the **Ministries of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Jal Shakti and Rural Development**.

Ropeway Project on Mount Girnar:

- The 2.3 km- long ropeway project is being touted as the **longest temple ropeway in Asia**.
Mount Girnar has **Gorakhnath peak, Guru Dattatreya peak and a Jain temple**.
- It is the **fourth ropeway in Gujarat** along with Banaskantha, Pavagadh and Satpura.
- It will give a **boost to adventure activities as well as tourism** in the state.
Sites like **Shivarajpur beach** which has got **blue flag certification** and **Statue of Unity**, provides a lot of employment opportunities to the locals.

Source: TH

Indira Rasoi Yojana: Rajasthan

Why in News

Recently, over 50 lakh people have benefited from **Indira Rasoi Yojana** (a kitchen scheme), in Rajasthan. The scheme was launched in August 2020.

Key Points

- **Aim:** To **provide nutritious food to the poor and needy** twice a day at concessional rates.
 - Under the scheme, each plate serves 100 grams of pulses and vegetables each, 250 grams of chapati and pickles.
 - It aligns with the **World Food Day's 2020 theme** to grow, nourish and sustain together.
- **Implementation:** The **local voluntary organisations** have been roped in for establishing the centres near the places such as bus stands, railway stations and hospitals and for successful implementation of the scheme.
- **Background:** The current Rajasthan government scrapped the previous **Annapurna Rasoi Yojana** which was offering breakfast and lunch on the lines of Tamil Nadu's Amma Unavagam (mother's canteen).
- **Monitoring:** A **committee headed by the District Collector** will be monitoring the implementation of the scheme. A **special app** has also been created for monitoring the food quality.
- **Target:** The scheme targets to serve 1.34 lakh people per day in the state. Till now the scheme has benefitted 50.30 lakh persons across the State.

Source: TH
