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1. The sum and substance of the EU's china

What is the News?

- EU's Dilemmas - China

Introduction

- China and the European Union (EU) jointly account for nearly 35% of global GDP in PPP terms.

China is responsible for European prosperity? - Example

- Between 1995 and 2012, Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, enhanced its industrial value by 37%, the largest chunk of which came from supply chains not in the United States but in China.

Red flags for Europe: (Before the Pandemic)

- China's efforts to cultivate separate European sub-constituencies like the 16+1 Format with the Central and Eastern European States + meetings with the Nordics and the Southern European
- Sailing of the PLA Navy into the Baltic Sea for joint exercises with Russia in 2017
- Targeted acquisition of key high-technology companies such as Kuka in Germany + key ports like Piraeus in Greece

Other Red Flags

- Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean

Red Flags (After the Pandemic)

- South China Sea + Line of Actual Control + Hong Kong- gained - European eyeballs
- "Foreign actors and certain third countries, in particular Russia and China, have engaged in targeted influence operations and disinformation campaigns around COVID-19 in the EU, its neighbourhood and globally, seeking to undermine democratic debate and exacerbate social polarisation, and improve their own image in the COVID 19 context." -- EU Saying

Initial European Focus

- market access + industrial subsidies + over-capacity in steel & hi-tech industries + IPR + security, resilience and stability of digital networks with China

Post Pandemic

- Despite all ties EU will not follow the U.S. in 'de-coupling' or join an 'against-China' camp.
- How to balance economic co-dependency and co-prosperity with China's strategic global intentions

and efforts to seek military supremacy + its bearing on European security.

- European companies still regard China as the biggest potential market
- But Triggered calls for diversifying European businesses away from an overreliance on any single market.

What is China Saying?

- The United States, Europe and Japan have common interests in curbing China, but China, Europe and Japan also have much to gain in tapping the potential of their relations.”

A role for India-Europe

- The Europeans recognize – India - peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.
- Potential in working together –Technologies - 5G and artificial intelligence
- Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement
- Europe will also need to change its positions on trade in goods and be ready to accommodate India on services.

2. India's solar strategy should look at tapping the best globally, to make locally

What is the News?

- 750 MW photovoltaic projects at Rewa - Madhya Pradesh

Agenda

- Greater reliance on solar power for energy + path for self-reliant industrialisation,

Issue

- India's installed base - estimated by the industry to be of the order of 50 GW- 100 GW of solar power by 2022- sharp deficit. + Low domestic cell manufacturing capacity + heavy reliance on China

Chinese Example

- Domestic market was treated with great importance while promoting exports.
- Low cost financing + invest in intellectual property. – Domestic Front
- 1990s - Active government support in identifying and acquiring top technologies globally + importing critical raw materials such as poly silicon, acquiring solar manufacturers abroad + investing in third countries – Co-operation Front

What Should India do

- Solar energy a strategic sector- defence + International Solar Alliance - manufacture solar photovoltaic infrastructure + low- and middle-income countries.
- Emerging trends in deploying solar innovatively. - Aesthetic photovoltaic window and roof tiles for buildings + multi-role urban structures + residential and commercial buildings to deploy more panels.

3. Hardly smart about urban health care

What is the News?

- Coronavirus - urban crisis + Indian cities - public health crisis + economic issues

Are cities equipped?

- Cities - policy attention from the government + urban development.
- E.g. : 'Smart Cities Mission', + completed five years, in June 2020 - Sought to make 100 selected cities "smart", primarily through an "Area-Based Development" model.

Why cities are still not equipped?

- 'Smart Cities Mission' - behind schedule.
- Only 69 of over 5,000 projects undertaken under the Mission - health Infra .Hence, public health seems to be a major blind spot in India's smart city dreams.
- India's urban local bodies - financially and administratively weak and heavily understaffed - (ASHA) workers, the frontline public health workers carrying out contact tracing

Constitution

- 12th Schedule of the Constitution- 74th Amendment, "public health" is one of the 18 functions that are to be devolved to the municipalities.

Case of Kerala

- Kerala - pandemic - decentralized political and administrative system + strong local governments + high investment in local public health care - authorities in some cities have roped in resident welfare associations

Way Forward

- Local government capacities + invest heavily in urban public health systems + promote programmes that improve the livelihoods of urban vulnerable communities.
- E.g.: National Urban Livelihoods Mission + National Urban Health Mission- lately received limited focus and resources, - need to be strengthened.
- Introduction of a National Urban Employment Guarantee Programme
- Example: Kerala has been running such a scheme since 2010 and States such as Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand have also recently launched similar initiatives in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

4. Why Russian Covid-19 vaccine still has miles to go

What is the News?

- Numerous reports - clinical trials for a Russian vaccine - "successfully" completed.

Point to Know

- Only phase-I of the clinical trials had been completed + Phase-II trials were supposed to start Monday+ no clarity over phase-III trials.

What is phase-I in vaccine trials?

- 'Safety and tolerability' of a vaccine is tested - small group of volunteers.

Result

- None of the volunteers had reported any complaints, experienced no side-effects

Phase - 2

- Tested for the efficiency and immunogenicity of the vaccine + suitable doses to generate this response.

Phase 3

- In real life situations

Conclusion

- Success can only be ascertained after the completion of the trials.

5. Govt's proposal for a unified gas price system

Objective

- Boost the share of natural gas in India's energy basket from around 6 per cent currently to 25 per cent by 2030

How are tariffs decided currently?

- tariffs for transportation - PNGRB + separately for each pipeline+ Tariffs for pipeline usage are divided into zones of 300km- from the point where gas is injected

Issue

- Imported natural gas arrives at terminals on the west coast - Distance + Cost

Point to Note

- Transport cost accounts 10% of the final cost of gas to an industry + low international prices

What is the proposed?

- Fixed tariff for longer distances to boost consumption + unified price system (300 km and one price for those transporting gas beyond 300km)

Way Forward

- India boosts gas imports, it will be able to negotiate better prices on gas imports + India - sub-scale importers, as we have a lot of latent demand which is not getting unlocked +India may better rates on imported gas if we become larger importers"

6. What China security law means for Hong Kong and the global internet

Context

- Much of Hong Kong's future identity + global Internet hinges on what the technology companies decide to do next in the region

What is the new national security law?

- Prepared in secret and promulgated without consulting Hong Kong's legislature+
- The law criminalises four activities: "secession, subversion, organization and perpetration of terrorist activities, and collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security.
- Some specific offences include damaging government buildings and lobbying against the Chinese government. The law also allows for a National Security Committee to investigate and prosecute violators.

What about the Companies?

- The Hong Kong Police are given extensive new controls to censor Internet content, track people online, and seize electronic records. + order its deletion, and penalties for the companies include fines up to nearly \$13,000 and six months jail time.



How have technology companies reacted?

- The shift puts tech companies in a bind as to whether to accept the new data-sharing and censorship requirements of the Communist Party or leave the territory altogether.
- Facebook, Twitter, Google, Telegram, Zoom, and Microsoft have suspended all requests for data from Hong Kong, pending their own review of the new legislation. Apple is still "assessing" the law.

Issue

- Their decisions will have significant weight on Hong Kong's future as an international business hub + and on digital free speech as a whole.

Way Forward

- Experts say tech companies could move operations to Taiwan to stay close to mainland China, or consider other Asian locations, or decide to forgo their espoused values and stay in the territory.

What is the key takeaway?

- This marks yet another step of national border disputes erecting new virtual walls between territories.

7. From citizenship to economic sanctions, how countries are reacting to Hong Kong security law

What is the News?

- The enforcement of a sweeping national security law in Hong Kong by China has drawn sharp reactions from several countries, and led to the announcement of a range of countermeasures.

United States

- This year in May, after China first revealed its designs for imposing a security law, the Trump administration notified the US Congress that it no longer considered Hong Kong as autonomous from mainland China. On June 29, a day before the law was passed, it began eliminating the city's special status, suspending the availability of export license exceptions.

- After the law was passed, US lawmakers approved imposing economic sanctions, penalising banks that do business with Chinese officials. According to Bloomberg Intelligence, the move potentially threatens up to \$1.1 trillion in Chinese funding, while also inviting steep fines.
- Visa restrictions have been announced against Chinese Communist Party officials “believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy”. Washington is also ending defence equipment sales to Hong Kong (used by its police), and selling sensitive American technology to the city has also been made more difficult.

The United Kingdom

- Prime Minister Boris Boris Johnson called the imposition of the security law “a serious and clear breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration”, and foreign secretary Dominic Raab said his country would not duck its “historic responsibilities” to the people of Hong Kong.

Australia

- While the country is yet to make an announcement on providing asylum, Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said Australia is “actively considering” offering a safe passage to Hong Kong residents.
- So far, it has offered a 5-year visa extension for Hong Kongers, providing the chance of acquiring permanent residency for around 10,000 people. Morrison said the offer also extended to Hong Kong businesses if they wanted to relocate to Australia.
- The country has suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong.

Canada

- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said that Canada is also exploring measures around immigration. Like Australia, Canada also suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong.
- Additionally, Ottawa has banned the export of sensitive military technology to Hong Kong, home to 3 lakh Canadian nationals.

8. Encounters: What rules the law lays down, and why they are flouted

Context

- SC + NHRC have framed guidelines that are to be followed in cases of custodial deaths.

NHRC guidelines

- The procedure of the Commission was established after a complaint from the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Union alleging a series of fake encounters in the state to eliminate individuals identified as Maoists or members of the People’s War Group.
- In 1993, the Commission had issued general guidelines that every case of custodial death must be intimated to it within 24 hours.
- Further, the post mortem reports, inquest requests, and other related documentation was to be sent to the human rights watchdog to ascertain its reliability within two months of the incident.
- If a death is prime facie found to be a case of death that took place unlawfully, the Commission would grant compensation to the victim’s kin and penalise the errant state and its officials

- A policeman, if found responsible for a custodial death, would have the same defenses available in law that are available to the common man, and would have no special protection.
- Essentially, this meant that for every case of custodial death, the concerned officers would be on trial, and their actions would not constitute an offence in only two circumstances: a) if they have killed the individual in order to protect themselves and, b) if use of force extending to death is necessary for making an arrest.

Intervention by Courts

- In 2009, a five-judge Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court recognised in the case of 'Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee v. Government of Andhra Pradesh' that illegal killings by policemen have been taking place with impunity. - Discussed in Detail.

Lacunae in implementation

- The significant issue is that the process – from initiating the case to investigating it – is done by the police, who are the accused to begin with.

9. Why is Yes Bank launching an FPO today?

What is the News?

- Yes Bank is launching its Follow-on Public Offer (FPO) to raise Rs 15,000 crore from the market. The price band for the issue has been fixed at Rs 12 to Rs 13 per share – which is substantially lower than market price of Rs 25.60

Point to Know

- The discount is likely to make the offer attractive for new investors + burden on the consortium of banks to infuse further capital (SBI).

What is FPO?

- FPO (Follow on Public Offer) is a process by which a company, which is already listed on an exchange, issues new shares to the investors or the existing shareholders, usually the promoters.

Key difference between IPO and FPO?

- IPO is the first public issue of the shares of a private company that is going public whereas FPO is the second or subsequent public issue of the shares of an already listed public company.

10. The Kuaizhou—11 rocket, and China's commercial space industry

What is the News?

- China's 19th launch of 2020, the Kuaizhou-11 rocket, failed in its mission + state-owned Xinhua news agency reported + failed due to malfunction during the flight.

The Kuaizhou-11

- It was carrying two satellites – the first being a remote sensing satellite that would provide data to clients on a commercial basis for forecasting and managing geological disasters. It would also provide information required for natural resource exploration.

- The second was part of a series of satellites for low-Earth orbit navigation.

The commercial space industry in China

- Commercial launches are an emerging industry in China. Companies such as Expace, iSpace, and Land space, Created after the Chinese government opened its space sector to private investment in 2014, have cut down traditional launch operations and are developing rapid response capabilities.

11. How does the Rewa Solar Power plants match up to similar plants In India and abroad?

- Explanation is available in Big News's. <https://youtu.be/5obj35qWp9Y>



12. What is non-personal data?

What is the News?

- A government committee - suggested that non-personal - allowed to be harnessed by various domestic companies and entities + public to send suggestions + setting up of a new authority - empowered to monitor the use and mining of such non-personal data.

What is non-personal data?

- No individual or living person can be identified by looking at such data. E.g. Zomato

What is Govt Saying?

- Classified non-personal data - categories - (public + community+ private) non-personal data.

What are public, community, and private non-personal data sets?

- All the data collected by government and its agencies such as census, data collected by municipal corporations on the total tax receipts in a particular period or any information collected during execution of all publicly funded works has been kept under the umbrella of public non-personal data.
- Any data identifiers about a set of people who have either the same geographic location, religion, job, or other common social interests will form the community non-personal data.
- Private non-personal data can be defined as those which are produced by individuals which can be derived from application of proprietary software or knowledge.

What are the global standards on non-personal data? (Example)

- In May 2019, the European Union came out with a regulation framework for the free flow of non-personal data in the European Union, in which it suggested that member states of the union would

cooperate with each other when it came to data sharing. + NO DEFINITION

What areas does India's non-personal data draft miss?

- Non-personal data often constitutes protected trade secrets and often raises significant privacy concerns.

Way Forward

- Clearly define the roles for all participants, such as the data principal, the data custodian, and data trustees.

13. India's loss is falling to develop the chabahar port project in Iran might be china's gain

Background

- The project, signed in 2003, has been a symbol of traditionally important India-Iran ties.

Significance

- Connected by sea lanes to ports on India's west coast + India's outreach to Russia and Central Asia + enhancing connectivity energy supplies and trade.

Pakistan Angle

- Given that Pakistan had blocked Indian aid to Afghanistan and all trade over land, Chabahar provided India an alternative to permanently bypass its troublesome neighbour.
- As a result, the government fast-tracked plans for the project, and in 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Tehran to sign a trilateral trade and transit agreement with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani.



What did the MOU Say?

- India would be granted a 10-year lease to develop and operate two terminals and five berths, access to the Chabahar free trade zone, and the opportunity to build the 628 km rail line from Chabahar to Zahedan, just across the border from Afghanistan.

Problems

- However, the rail line has never taken off for a number of reasons
- Contract changes by the Iranian side + delayed responses from the Indian side
- Main hurdle has been the fear of American penalties (Iran Nuclear Deal + CAATSA)

What did Iran do?

- Iran decided to go on its own, by beginning to lay tracks for the line connecting Chabahar to Afghanistan and Turkmenistan

Take Away

- India : India wavered due to U.S. pressure + especially after India cancelled oil imports from Iran
- Iran – China Angle: While Iran claims it will fund the railway using its own resources, it seems to have embarked on the Chabahar-Zahedan project with a confidence borne from an imminent deal with China for a 25-year, \$400 billion strategic partnership on infrastructure, connectivity and energy projects.

Conclusion

- In a world where connectivity is seen as the new currency, India's loss could well become China's gain.

14. What the \$10 billion investment means for Google, and India?

Context

- Plans to invest \$10 billion in India - equity investments, partnerships and other arrangements - to “accelerate digitisation” in the country.

How will Google invest from the \$10-billion fund?

- Focus on areas such as enabling affordable access to the Internet
- Information for every Indian in their own language
- building new products and services in segments like consumer tech, education, health and agriculture; empowering businesses leveraging technology and artificial intelligence for digital literacy
- Outbreak predictions + for rural economies.

Example

- Internet Saathi - spreading awareness of the Internet in rural villages + artificial intelligence-based flood forecasting system.

Is this a reaction to the curbs on Chinese companies

- While the fund may have been in the works since before the clampdown
- + Potential hurdles for Chinese companies investing in India could provide better prospects for American giants to strengthen their position in a market

How does this announcement figure in big-tech's outlook on India?

- Google's investment plan is in line with big-tech's bullish outlook on India.
- Earlier this year, Amazon said it would invest an additional \$1 billion in India.
- This was followed by a marquee investment announcement of \$5.7 billion by Facebook in the country's largest telecom company Reliance Jio.

Conclusion

- Rise of India.

15. The stand-off and China's India policy dilemma

Background

- China+ has long been preoccupied with its relentless pursuit to approach the centre of the world + USA+ LAC Issue + idea back to not-so-popular topic of China-India relations.

Two Schools of Thought

- Believe that the present conflict is not an “accident” but an “inevitable result” of what they perceive as “India’s long-standing speculative strategy on the China-India border” - Doklam to Kashmir + had to teach India a lesson”. China-India relations hold no great prospect in the current international situation. There is no possibility of a negotiated settlement of the border dispute - India is already a “quasi-ally” of the U.S. ----- Periodic violent conflicts + Trade issues + “new normal” in China-India ties. China - should reconsider its prevalent strategic thinking that India is not its main strategic challenge- USA
- China should take all opportunities to crack down on India. This, it is argued, will not damage China-India relations; on the contrary, it will make it more stable. Didn't the 1962 China-India war help China to maintain peace and stability on the western front for a long time?

What India must note

- China- India- without a military conflict.
- China simultaneously - CPEC + Gwadar Port + Tibet Bhutan Issues + Indian Ocean (String of Pearls)

Conclusion

- If the conflict ends in a short period of time, it will benefit China. But if it is prolonged, China will be disadvantaged.
- If a war starts, they argue, India will make all efforts to prolong it as long as possible, and the U.S. is likely to help India to attain this objective.
- Even if the two sides ended in a tie, in India it will be counted a victory and the national morale will rise sharply; on the contrary, in China, the morale will decline if it cannot beat India decisively. Therefore, in its effort to “teach India a lesson”, they fear, China might lose more than it would gain.

16. Nepal considers bilateral relationship with India to be important; aggression shouldn't have any place in ties

What was the haste about in revising Nepal's map?

- Nepal has consistently raised this issue since 1997 in all appropriate bilateral fora + India has always assured us that this will be resolved through diplomatic means.
- Nepal have for a long time waited very patiently for that process to start.

What is Nepal saying for their claims?

- Treaty of Sugauli + language of treaty should be taken seriously + Origin of Kali River + Periodic Maps + Nepal's voter list used during the general election of 1959 + census record of 1961 + land tax collection records.

Why Nepal took such a stand?

- The message we received in early March was that once both countries and societies are done fighting against the Covid-19 pandemic, both sides can hold consultative meetings at the secretary level and start a process of resolving this outstanding issue. But just a few days after - to hear the news about the virtual inauguration by defence minister Rajnath Singh of the road passing through Lipulekh.

Presence of China

- (Nepal's Stand) Special characteristic bilateral relationship with India+ India understands and honours the nature and importance of a very friendly bilateral relationship with our other neighbour, China.

17.The Padmanabhaswamy temple case, and what verdict means for Travancore royal family

- Explanation is available in Big News' video. https://youtu.be/nCYsZ44Ej_c



18.Explained: what is hope, UAE's first mission to Mars?

What is the mission?

- Creating mankind's first integrated model of the Red planet's atmosphere (2015)

Basic Objective

- The spacecraft will orbit Mars to study the Martian atmosphere.
- Its interaction with outer space and solar winds.
- Hope will collect data on Martian climate dynamics, which should help scientists, understand why Mars' atmosphere is decaying into space.

Significance of US

- In 2017, NASA's MAVEN spacecraft revealed that solar wind and radiation had stripped the Martian atmosphere from the planet, which could have supported life billions of years ago.
- In 2015, MAVEN team members showed how the planet's atmospheric gas is being lost to space.
- This meant that Mars' atmosphere is too cold and thin to provide stability to liquid water, which is essential for life. But evidence, in the form of features resembling dry river beds and minerals that can only be formed in the presence of liquid water, indicates that the ancient Martian atmosphere was much warmer, allowing water to flow on its surface.

- Therefore, scientists want to study the past environments that would have existed on Mars to understand how a planet's habitability can change over time.

Point to Know

- Atmosphere of Mars was once warm enough to allow water to flow through its surface, which could mean life existed there too -- there is the idea that humans themselves might be able to inhabit the planet one day.

Future Planned Expeditions

- NASA is set to launch its Perseverance rover -- The rover will explore ancient habitability, seek signs of ancient life, gather rock and soil samples that could be returned to Earth and demonstrate technology for future robotic and human exploration.

19. Azad Pattan: What is the PoK hydel project deal signed by Pakistan, China?

Background

- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a collection of infrastructure projects that are under construction throughout Pakistan since 2013.
- CPEC is intended to rapidly upgrade Pakistan's required infrastructure and strengthen its economy by the construction of modern transportation networks, numerous energy projects, and special economic zones

What is the News?

- Pakistan and China signed an agreement for the 700 MW Azad Pattan hydel power project on the Jhelum river in Sudhoti district of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) - (CPEC) + Kohala project.

India

- The Azad Pattan project is one of five hydropower schemes on the Jhelum. India has protested the construction of dams and other infrastructure in PoK and Gilgit Baltistan, which are territories claimed by it as part of Jammu & Kashmir

20. What forecast of shrinking population means for India and world?

What is the News?

- A new analysis published in The Lancet - has projected that the world population will peak much earlier than previously estimated.
- It projects the peak at 9.73 billion in 2064, which is 36 years earlier than the 11 billion peak projected for 2100 by last year's UN report World Population Prospects.

India

- For India, the report projects a peak population of 1.6 billion in 2048, up from 1.38 billion in 2017.
- By 2100, the population is projected to decline by 32% to 1.09 billion.

Data?

- Analysed population trends in 195 countries + data from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 to model future population in various scenarios as a function of fertility, migration, and mortality rates.

The broad takeaways

- huge challenges to the economic growth of a shrinking workforce
- The high burden on health and social support systems of an ageing population.
- Continued trends in female educational attainment and access to contraception will hasten declines in fertility and slow population growth.

Way Forward

- Incentives to increase TFR
- Artificial intelligence as a path towards self-sufficiency.
- Wealthy countries such as the UK and the USA could counteract the impact of these changes through net migration of working-age adults from the countries with growing populations. Unfortunately, the election of nationalist rulers, associated decline in multilateralism, and increasing hostility to migration makes this option unlikely in the short term

21. Carbon 'subsidy': How policy favours polluters?

Background

- Last year, the International Monetary Fund recommended a carbon tax of \$75 per ton of emissions to fight the climate crisis.

Issue

- But far from taxing emissions, the trade policies of most countries in effect end up subsidizing industries that emit more carbon, a new study finds. -- industries such as iron and steel, which do not directly sell to the final consumer, emit more carbon, yet face fewer trade restrictions, unlike the automobile industry, which is consumer-facing

Study

- The study, a working paper published by the US National Bureau of Economic Research, looks at data from 48 countries and 163 industries to estimate carbon subsidies.

Point to Remembers

- Labour and capital share + worker wages + firm size and location + trade exposure + lobbying power.

22. China's post-covid aggression is reshaping Asia

Background

- India's deadly encounter with China in the Galwan Valley is not an outlier in Beijing's recent behaviour in Asia.
- China's coronavirus "mask diplomacy" has given way to tense geopolitical confrontations with a growing array of its neighbours

Catalyst for change

- The Indian, Japanese, Malaysian, and Australian governments have all taken concrete steps to reduce their economic exposure to Beijing, spanning investment, manufacturing, and technology.
- India and Australia recently inked a new military logistics agreement + similar agreement between Delhi and Tokyo may follow.
- The Quadrilateral Dialogue between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States is growing stronger and even expanding.
- And recently as well, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) - insisting that maritime disputes must be resolved in accordance with the UN Law of the Sea treaty.

History

- Asian multilateralism has often been born out of crises.
- The Chiang Mai Initiative – a financial swap mechanism between China, Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia – emerged in the aftermath of the late 1990s financial crisis.
- The grandfather of all Asian regional organisations, ASEAN, was created in 1967 but did not convene its first heads of state meeting until Southeast Asian leaders were shocked into action by the fall of Saigon in 1976.

America and geopolitics : UNDERSTAND : WUHAN ACCUSATIONS WHO + + VISA ISSUE

What the U.S. needs to do

- First, U.S. policy needs to start supporting, rather than attempting to commandeer, regional efforts to build a less China-centric future for the Indo-Pacific -- U.S. partners are seeking an agenda that is framed in broader terms than simply rallying to counter Beijing. American leaders should recall the long-standing resonance of the Non-Aligned Movement in a region that resists a “new Cold War” framing.
- Second, while China certainly has the power to coerce, it also has a tremendous ability to be its own worst enemy by pushing too hard on its neighbours. Moves such as demanding that a G-7 communiqué refer to COVID-19 as the “Wuhan virus” and blocking mask shipments to close allies are the kind of counterproductive bullying that the U.S. should leave to China.

US versus China

- U.S. still viewed more favourably than China, according to Pew. Facing the unprecedented health and economic crises spawned by COVID-19, the U.S. and Asian partners will need to coordinate more closely than ever. They have a unique chance to build more equal and capable regional partnerships and institutions in the long recovery ahead.

23.India, EU seek to boost trade ties

What is the News?

- India and the European Union (EU) - announced the launch of a high-level economic and investment dialogue to work out a bilateral trade and investment pact as countries and firms look to decouple and diversify supply chains from China.

Points to Know

- Invited European firms to invest in India “taking into account its efforts to improve ease of doing business and regulatory environment and an aim to integrate India into global value supply chains.”
- India has been seeking to woo firms looking at relocating from China
- Addressing trade irritants and improving conditions for traders and investors on both sides.
- Maritime dialogue, agreed to boost cooperation between their navies and conclude an agreement between Europol and the Central Bureau of Investigation.
- Data protection, artificial intelligence and clean energy

24.Jio 5G explained: What does the solution mean to reliance and its users?

What is 5G?

- first generation of networks allowed only mobile voice calls to be made
- Second generation allowed mobile voice calls as well as sending of short text messages.
- third generation or 3G network which allowed web browsing on mobile devices
- The speed and latency of which improved with fourth generation or 4G networks.
- The 5G networks will have even faster speeds with latency down to between 1-10 milliseconds.

What is the News?

- Jio is said to have a complete end-to-end 5G solution prepared by the company itself that is ready for deployment once the networks are in place.

Where does India stand on the deployment of 5G?

- Telecom service providers + equipment vendors - completed lab trials of 5G network components +yet to commence field trials + awaiting allocation of test spectrum - Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

What does Jio's 5G solution comprise?

- 5G infrastructure and services for Indian customers + Jio plans to develop affordable smart phones.

25.Why India has little option but to open up the economy?

What is the News?

- Dharmakirti Joshi, chief economist CRISIL Ltd - maps the risks to the Indian economy due to the Covid disruption. Foresees a 25 per cent contraction in India's GDP in the first quarter of the current financial year, and 5 per cent contraction for the entire fiscal year.

What seems to be the issue?

- “The monetary measures announced after the pandemic do not have the heft to trigger a recovery because of rising financial sector stress and lack of fiscal space”.

So, how does the economic recovery look from here?

- Given India's high population density and weak health infrastructure, the reliance so far has been on lockdown and social distancing.
- That, in turn, necessitates income support for vulnerable households and financial support for susceptible businesses.

India has had little option but to open up the economy. This is because of several reasons.

- First, some regions, where the spread has been faster, have reintroduced containment measures, which will adversely impact economic activity.
- Second, the partial unlocking of the economy and the back and forth on containment measures will continue to pose a hindrance to supply chains, transportation and logistics.
- Third, it will take time to restore normalcy in the services sector, particularly in hospitality, travel, sports and entertainment.

26.China's unexpected GDP rebound and signals for India

What is the News?

- China's GDP growth has swung back sharply into the black in the April-June quarter, driven by a bounce back in manufacturing output and a public spending boost. This signals a major turnaround in the world's second largest economy, even as much of the economies globally are reeling under the impact of the Covid-19 spread.

Point to Ponder

- the recovery in economic activity, if China is an indication, is directly linked to a country's success in controlling the coronavirus spread,
- Quality of policy support, even if the scale of spending is modest.

Example

- China's COVID-19 related support policies, including spending, loans and guarantees, amounted to just 2.5% of GDP, as compared to 11% for the US, over 20% for Japan, and 34% for Germany.
- So, while the size of the package was relatively small, what mattered is that in China – where one-half of GDP is driven by consumption – Beijing seems to have rightly focused on maintaining consumption by attempting to put money in the hands of consumers. China did this through pre-paid vouchers for specific products and other related measures.

What are the signals for India?

- But unlike in China – where the efforts to put money directly into the hands of the people is clearly in sharp contrast to New Delhi's strategy – in India, much of the Rs 20 lakh crore Covid-19 economic package .
- It has been primarily focused on pushing banks to extend credit on the back of government guarantees to sectors that include small businesses, non-banking financial companies, microfinance institutions and housing finance companies.

27. Supreme did well to extend to the disabled the relaxations given to SC/ST

Background

- In holding that people suffering from disability are entitled to the same benefits and relaxations as candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes, the Supreme Court has recognized the travails of the disabled in accessing education or employment, regardless of their social status.

What is the News?

- Recently, the top court ruled that the Delhi High Court had correctly decided in 2012 that “people suffering from disabilities are also socially backward, and are therefore, at the very least, entitled to the same benefits as given to the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes candidates”.
- Therefore, it took the view that when SC/ST candidates get a relaxation of a certain percentage of marks to qualify for admission, the same relaxation shall apply to disabled candidates too.

What was the issue?

- In the 2012 case before the High Court, a university had allowed a 10% concession in the minimum eligibility requirement for SC/ST candidates, and 5% concession for disabled applicants.
- The High Court ruled against this differential treatment, terming it discriminatory.

Principle behind it

- The larger principle behind this was that without imparting proper education to those suffering from disabilities, “there cannot be any meaningful enforcement of their rights” both under the Constitution + the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, is in place.

Counter Point

- Questioning the attempt to equate physical or mental disability with the social disability and experience of untouchability suffered by marginalised sections for centuries.

Delhi High Court

- For instance, the social background of disabled persons from a traditionally privileged community may give them an advantage over those suffering from historical social disability. The Delhi High Court had cited the abysmally low literacy and employment rates among persons with disabilities.
- The 2001 Census put the illiteracy rate among the disabled at 51%.

28. The lost voice of the Indian university

Background

- In the 19th and 20th centuries, Indian universities emerged as institutions where a privileged generation of colonial subjects trained to serve the colonial regime and further Western political ideals.
- Some graduates went on to serve the colonial state, while others contributed to the nationalist movement.

Post Independence Reforms in higher learning

- In the initial decades after Independence, the government was conscious of various social, economic and financial challenges.
- These changes were marked by the growing importance of various large representative institutional bodies like faculty committees, committees of courses, board of studies, university senates, academic councils and executive councils ensured a collective decision-making based on serious academic deliberation.
- It inspired individuals who went on to contribute to the growth of the economy, politics and shaped various social movements that transformed the nation in the first 50 years of the republic.

A new intellectual regime

- From 2005 onwards, these changes that infused a new vigor in institutional academia were undermined by government policy that displayed an eagerness to impose a new intellectual regime.
- The constitution of the National Knowledge Commission and a very strong emphasis on privatisation of education undermined the deliberative and independent character of these institutions of higher education.
- Those in positions of authority within the universities were encouraged to undermine academic bodies and limit their role in revising and regulating matters pertaining to curricula, teaching and academic life in their institutions.

This trend intensified with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic

- The manner in which the Central government and the University Grants Commission have imposed themselves on the daily functioning of all higher educational institutions (Central, State and private) represents a new government-oriented bureaucratic centralisation.
- Decisions about the conclusion of academic term, the modalities for evaluation and the conduct of the teaching-learning process have become exclusive government prerogatives overnight.
- How and whether examinations are to be conducted has become an issue of contention between State and Central governments.

Conclusion

- The university administration has been replaced by the Education Minister and his bureaucratic apparatus.

29. India registers a steep decline in maternal mortality ratio

Define

- “As per the World Health Organization, maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management,”
- One of the key indicators of maternal mortality is the MMR, defined as the number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births.

Report

- The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India has declined to 113 in 2016-18 from 122 in 2015-17 and 130 in 2014-2016, according to the special bulletin on Maternal Mortality in India 2016-18, released by the Office of the Registrar General's Sample Registration System (SRS).

SDG's

- The target 3.1 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set by the United Nations aims to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 1,00,000 live births.

Healthy trend

The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) between 2016 and 2018 dropped to 113 in India, almost 100 deaths lesser than in the 2007-2009 period

