



PRECURE COMPILATION FOR 2020

1st Week of April
(6th April to 11th April)

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Table of Contents

GEOGRAPHY

1. *Grace of Mission*
2. *Operation Sanjeevani*
3. *Sunrise Mission*
4. *Stranded in India Portal*

POLITY

1. *National Security Act*
2. *MPLAD Scheme*

ECONOMY

1. *PMGKY*
2. *FPIs*

3. *CCCB*

4. *CSF*

5. *CRUDE*

ENVIRONMENT

1. *Pench Tiger Death Raises COVID-19 Fears*
2. *Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary*
3. *National Board for Wildlife*

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

1. *Bhilwara Model*
2. *Diamond Princes Model*
3. *Samadhan Challenge*
4. *Patents*

GEOGRAPHY

https://youtu.be/XX797_6A3Ec

1. Grace-Fo Mission

- The **Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE)** was a joint mission of **NASA** and the **German Aerospace Center (DLR)**.
- **Twin satellites** took detailed measurements of Earth's gravity field anomalies from its launch in **March 2002** to the end of its science mission in **October 2017**.
- The **Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-On (GRACE-FO)** is a continuation of the mission on near-identical hardware, launched in **May 2018**.
- By measuring gravity anomalies, GRACE showed how mass is distributed around the planet and how it varies over time.
- The GRACE missions measure variations in gravity over Earth's surface, producing a new map of the gravity field every **30 days**. Thus, GRACE shows how the planet's gravity differs not only from one location to another, but also from one period of time to another. Data from the GRACE satellites is an important tool for studying Earth's ocean, geology, and climate.
- GRACE-FO will continue the work of **tracking Earth's water movement** to monitor changes in **underground water storage**, the amount of water in large lakes and rivers, soil moisture, ice sheets and glaciers, and sea level caused by the addition of water to the ocean.
- The scientific community believes data available through this project would fill existing gaps in understanding the full picture of wet and dry conditions that can lead to drought.
- The data would also help in managing the selection of appropriate agricultural crops and predicting yields.

2. Operation Sanjeevani

- Recently, **India** supplied **6.2 tonnes** of essential medicines to **Maldives**, under **Operation Sanjeevani** as assistance in the fight against **COVID 19**.

Additional Info:

- The medicines include influenza vaccines, antiviral drugs such as lopinavir and ritonavir among others as well as consumables such as catheters, nebulisers, urine bags and infant feeding tubes.
- Lopinavir and ritonavir have been used to treat patients with **COVID-19** in some countries.

3. Sunrise Mission

- **NASA** has selected a new mission to study how the Sun generates and releases giant space weather storms – known as solar particle storms – into planetary space.
- Not only will such information improve understanding of how our solar system works, but it ultimately can help protect astronauts traveling to the Moon and Mars by providing better information on how the Sun's radiation affects the space environment they must travel through.
- The new mission, called the **Sun Radio Interferometer Space Experiment (SunRISE)**, is an array of six CubeSats operating as one very large radio telescope.
- The mission design relies on six solar-powered CubeSats – each about the size of a toaster oven – to simultaneously observe radio images of low-frequency emission from solar activity and share them via **NASA's Deep Space Network**.
- The constellation of CubeSats would fly within 6 miles of each other, above Earth's atmosphere, which otherwise blocks the radio signals SunRISE will observe.
- Together, the six CubeSats will create 3D maps to pinpoint where giant particle bursts originate on the Sun and how they evolve as they expand outward into space. This, in turn, will help determine what initiates and accelerates these giant jets of radiation.
- The six individual spacecraft will also work together to map, for the first time, the pattern of magnetic field lines reaching from the Sun out into interplanetary space.

4. Stranded In India Portal

- The **Ministry of Tourism** launched a portal 'Stranded in India' to help foreign tourists who are stuck in various parts of the country.
- The **portal contains numbers for the COVID-19 helpline, the Bureau of Immigration, as well as information about the control centres set up by state and Union Territory administrations**, which tourists can contact for assistance.

1. National Security Act

- The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan recently said the National Security Act (NSA) would be invoked against persons involved in the alleged late night attack on two policemen who were trying to enforce the lockdown in Itwara locality in old Bhopal.
- The **NSA Act 1980** has its roots in the colonial era. In **1818, Bengal Regulation III** was enacted to empower the British government to arrest anyone for maintenance of public order without giving the person recourse to judicial proceedings. In 1919, the **Rowlatt Act** allowed confinement without a trial. The Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy was a direct result of the protest against these Rowlatt Act.
- Post-independence, Indira Gandhi introduced the controversial **Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA)** in 1971, which was similar to the Rowlatt Act. It was repealed in 1977, and eventually the **National Security Act (NSA) 1980** was promulgated. As per the Act, a person can be detained for up to 12 months without a charge. A person can be **held for 10 days** without being told the charges against them. The person can appeal before a high court advisory board but will not be allowed a lawyer during the trial.
- The National Security Act is an act that empowers the government to detain a person if the authorities are satisfied that he/she is a threat to national security or to prevent him/her from disrupting public order. Key points under National Security Act are:
 1. The act allows preventive detention for months
 2. States or Centre can detain a people from **acting in manner prejudicial to India's security**
 3. A person can be detained if he/she is a threat to India's relations with foreign countries
 4. The Act is invoked to **maintain public law and order**
 5. It empowers the government to **detain foreigners** and regulate his/her presence or expel him/her from India
 6. The provisions in the Act are is **re-notified every quarter**

Article 22 (1) of the Indian Constitution says an arrested person cannot be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by, a legal practitioner of his choice. According to Section 50 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CRPC), any person arrested has to be informed of the grounds of arrest and has the right to bail. However, under National Security Act, **none of these rights are available to the person detained**. The government holds the **right to conceal information** which it considers to be against public interest to disclose. The detained person is not **entitled to any legal aid**. Moreover, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which collects crime data in India, does not include cases under the NSA as no FIRs are registered.

2. MPLAD Scheme

- The Modi cabinet on April 6 2020 gave its nod to the **temporary suspension** of MPLAD Funds during 2020-21 and 2021-22 in view of the adverse impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 in India. The consolidated amount of MPLAD Funds for 2 years – Rs 7,900 crores – will go to **Consolidated Fund of India**.
- The Cabinet has approved an ordinance to reduce the salaries, allowances and pensions of Members of Parliament (MPs), including the Prime Minister, **by 30 per cent for one year** and the amount would be utilised in the fight against coronavirus.
- The **Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)** is a programme first launched during the Narasimha Rao Government in 1993, aimed towards providing funds for developmental works recommended by individual MPs. The MPs were entitled to recommend works to the tune of **Rs 1 crore annually between 1994-95 and 1997-98**, after which the annual entitlement was enhanced to Rs 2 crore. The UPA government in 2011-12 raised the annual entitlement to Rs 5 crore per MP.
- According to the document 'Guidelines on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)' published by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** in June 2016, "The objective of the scheme is to enable MPs to recommend works of **developmental nature** with emphasis on the creation of **durable community assets** based on the **locally felt needs** be taken up in their Constituencies. Right from

inception of the Scheme, durable assets of national priorities viz. drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation and roads, etc. are being created.”

- The guidelines recommend MPs to suggest **works costing at least 15 per cent of their MPLADS entitlement** for the year for areas inhabited by **Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by ST population**. To implement their plans in an area, MPs have to recommend them to the District Authority of the respective Nodal District. The **District Authorities then identify Implementing Agencies which execute the projects**.
- The respective District Authority is supposed to oversee implementation, and has to submit monthly reports, audit reports, and work completion reports to the Nodal District Authority.
- The guidelines lay down a number of development works, including construction of railway halt stations, providing financial assistance to recognised educational bodies, cooperative societies, bar associations, installing CCTV cameras, and rainwater harvesting systems. The MPLADS funds can be merged with other schemes such as **MGNREGA and Khelo India**.
- MPLADS was held constitutionally valid by the Supreme Court in its May 6, 2010 judgment. In July 2019, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh wrote to members, seeking their suggestions on how to **address various problems plaguing the MPLADS, as pointed out by numerous reports both by Parliamentary Committees and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)**.

ECONOMY

<https://youtu.be/7pJ5mENt934>

1. PMGKY (Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana)

Why in News

Rs 1.70 lakh crore package for the front-line COVID-19 warriors and welfare of the people during this pandemic situation.

Primary Objectives

1. Medical Insurance Coverage to around 20 lakh front-line COVID-19 warriors.
2. Food Security
3. Direct Benefit Transfer

Quick Overview

1. Food-Related:

- Per Person: Additional 5 kg rice or wheat
- Each household: 1 kg of preferred pulse for the next three months.

To people under the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana (around 80 crore people).

2. Farmers

- Rs 2,000 - In excess of Rs.6000
- Under the Kisan Samman Nidhi programme

3. **MNREGA:** Wage increase of Rs 20 per day.

4. **Poor Senior Citizen/Poor Widows/Poor Divyang:** An ex-gratia of Rs 1,000.

5. Women:

- **Under PMJDY:** Rs 500 per month for the next three months
- **Under Ujjwala Scheme:** Free LPG cylinders to BPL families for the next three months.
- **Self-Help Groups (NRLM):** Collateral-free loans of Rs 20 lakh instead of Rs 10 lakh.

6. Organised Sector Workers:

- **EPFO:** Government of India will pay the EPF contribution for both employer and employee (12% each totalling to 24%) for the next three months.(available for all those establishments with up to 100 employees and where 90% of those employees draw a salary of less than Rs 15,000 per month)
- **Construction Workers:** Welfare fund of Rs 31,000 crore for 3.5 crore registered building and construction workers.

7. **District Mineral Fund:** For medical testing, screening and other requirements to combat COVID-19.

2. Liberalised Investment Limits, FPI & Indian Debt

Why in News

A major concern:

- March 2020 saw the largest ever sell-off by FPIs with pull-outs totalling to ₹60,000 crore.
- FPIs are using just 37-40 per cent of their quotas in Indian bonds.
- Long-term FPIs using up less than a fourth of their limits.

What is the impact

Because they sold collectively:

- There is considerable turmoil in Indian debt markets.
- It has spiked up yields for even high-quality issuers.

- Liquidity has and dried up.

Are India's Fundamentals an issue?

- India's trade balance, forex reserves and foreign debt, are on a particularly strong footing.
- The Oil price has collapsed which will help bring the current account deficit at a near-zero level.
- India's external debt is at less than 20 per cent of GDP
- Forex reserves are at a record level, providing a comfortable 12-month import cover.

It shows that the bulk of these investors are of the speculative and not fundamental variety.

Way Ahead

- There is a lack of depth and breadth in the domestic bond market.
 - Instead of higher quantitative limits, policymakers need to focus more on the quality of foreign investors.
- Seeking more quality investors like sovereign wealth funds, pension funds and venture capital funds instead of opportunistic investors like hedge funds.
- Indian government to showcase India's good external debt credentials to overseas investors and global rating agencies.
- A stronger legal framework for debt recovery.
- A vibrant onshore currency market.
- Better sovereign rating for India from global agencies.

3. Counter-Cyclical Capital Buffer

What is it

According to Basel-III norms:

- CCCB is a part of norms where central banks specify certain capital adequacy norms for banks in a country.
- It is calculated as a fixed percentage of a bank's risk-weighted loan book.

Why do we need it

- When economy booms, there are a variety of lenders like NBFCs, banks, others.
- The speed of credit approval is very high.
- But when the economy is facing a distress, most sources dry up.
- This can be disastrous, considering that businesses and households need more financial support during such times.
- Hence comes the need for banks to increase their credit during times of distress.
- The CCCB helps here.

What are its benefits

- Acting as a buffer that can be drawn upon during distress
- Helps head off systemic risks by curbing unruly bank credit growth

One very unique point

- CCCB differs from other forms of capital adequacy.
- It helps a bank counteract the effect of a downturn or distressed economic conditions.
- Because of CCCB, banks set aside a higher portion of their capital during good times when loans are growing rapidly, so that the capital can be released and used during bad times, when there's distress in the economy.

How is CCCB supposed to be kept

- CCCB is supposed to be in the form of equity capital.
- Capital distribution constraints such as limits on dividends and share buybacks can be imposed on the bank if the minimum buffer requirements are breached.

CCCB & India

- RBI hasn't required the CCCB to be maintained.
- It had proposed keeping it in 2015 but based on various assessments, the RBI has been keeping the ratio at zero per cent.

CCCB & Other Countries

- The Bank of England announced a cut in the counter-cyclical capital buffer (CCCB) to 0 per cent, from 1 per cent currently.

4. Consolidated Sinking Fund

Why in News

- Because of lack of funds with the States, they want the Centre to relax spending norms related with Consolidated Sinking Fund (CSF).
- (They are also demanding with the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Fund (BoCWWCF))

All about CSF

- Set up in 1999-2000 by the RBI.
- Aim: To meet redemption of market loans of the States.
- Initially, 11 States set up the sinking funds.
- 12th Finance Commission (2005-10) recommended that all States should have sinking funds for amortisation of all loans, including loans from banks, liabilities on account of NSSF (National Small Saving Fund), etc.
- The fund to be maintained outside the consolidated fund and the public account of the States.
- It should not be used for any other purpose, except for redemption of loans.
- State governments could contribute 1-3 per cent of the outstanding market loans each year to the Fund.
- The Fund is administered by the Central Accounts Section of RBI Nagpur.

Do all states have it

- Except UP, MP, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, HP and Jammu & Kashmir (now a UT), all States have CSF.

The case of Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Fund (BoCWWCF)

- The BoCWWCF is a cess collected only for the welfare of building and other construction workers.
- But it can only be used for registered workers, whose number is much less as compared to the actually employed.
- Some states want that the law could be amended to allow use of fund not just for building and construction workers but other workers, including daily wage workers across all the activities.

5. Impact of Low Oil Prices

Some Possible Fall-Outs

- Reduced Inflation
- Reduced CAD
- Recession in a lot of countries that depend primarily on oil exports
- Reduced incentive to pursue Shale production in USA
- Decreased incentive to pursue research on Renewables

ENVIRONMENT

<https://youtu.be/mU3PkT3zEO8>

1. Pench Tiger Death Raises Covid-19 Fears

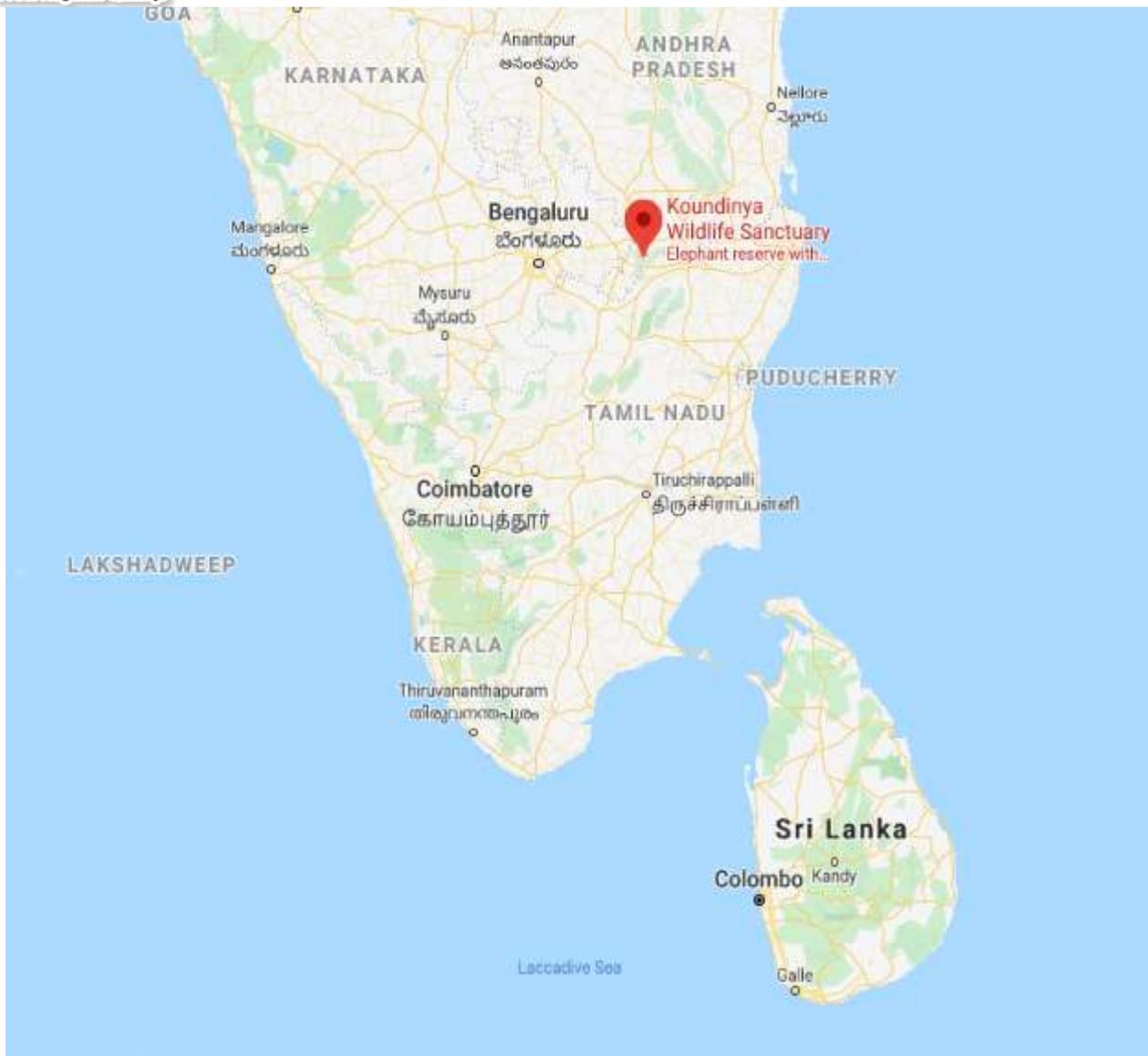
- A 10-year-old ailing male tiger, in the Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR), died due to respiratory illness.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is investigating whether the tiger should be tested for the novel coronavirus disease.
- However, swabs from the throat and nose to test for rhino tracheitis, a viral infection that afflicts cats and causes respiratory illness were collected.
- An advisory by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- It has asked all Chief Wildlife Wardens (CWLWs) of all States/UTs to take immediate preventive measures to stop the transmission and spread of the virus from humans to animals and vice versa, in National Parks/Sanctuaries and Tiger Reserves.
- Both the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) and the NTCA have issued guidelines that require zoos to be on the “highest alert” and monitor animals on closed-circuit cameras 24/7 for “abnormal behaviour and symptoms.”
- The CZA has also directed zookeepers to approach sick animals wearing personal protective equipment and isolate and quarantine them.
- Pench Tiger Reserve or Pench National Park is one of the premier tiger reserves of India and the first one to straddle across two states - Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- The Reserve lies in the southern lower reaches of the Satpura Range of hills on the southern border of Madhya Pradesh.
- It derives its name from its life line-the River Pench.
- The forests found in Pench Tiger Reserve are divided into three parts -
- Southern tropical wet dry forest, southern tropical dry deciduous teak forest and southern tropical dry deciduous mixed forest.



Map showing Pench Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh)

2. Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary

- Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary is a wildlife sanctuary and an elephant reserve situated in Andhra Pradesh, India.
- It is the only sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh with a population of Asian elephants, which migrated after 200 years from neighbouring regions. (from the forests of Anekal-Hosur in Tamil Nadu and Bannerghatta in Karnataka)



- The sanctuary has dry deciduous forests with thorny scrubs interspersed with trees.
- These forests have small ponds, tanks and the Kaindinya and Kaigal tributaries of Palar River.

3. National Board for Wildlife

- The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife had its first ever video-conferencing meet recently where infrastructure projects in 11 States were cleared.
 - Projects that encroach into forests or protected reserves require NBWL approval as part of the government's environmental clearance process.
 - Most of the projects were given in-principal approval.
 - National Board for Wild Life is a "Statutory Organization" constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
 - Theoretically, the board is "advisory" in nature and advises the Central Government on framing policies and measures for conservation of wildlife in the country.
 - However, it is a very important body because it serves as apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approve projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries.
- The NBWL is chaired by the Prime Minister.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

<https://youtu.be/SBoIC43fUcs>

1. Bhilwara Model

- It is a textile town in Rajasthan
- Its strict lockdown, strategic containment plan and dedicated healthcare work has resulted in no new coronavirus infection in the last six days
 - Before the clampdown it was worst-hit district of Rajasthan
- Actions taken
 - Sealing of borders of the city
 - Screening of out-patients and in-patients in hospitals, 10 lakh households
 - People identified and put under isolation
 - Dedicated beds for COVID-19 patients, isolation facilities at hotels and such establishments
 - Curfew imposed but supply of food and essentials sustained
 - Community leaders and religious gurus roped in to motivate people to stay indoors
 - Legal action against unwanted social elements

2. Diamond Princess Model

- Researchers drew this model to predict an outbreak in the cramped neighbourhoods
 - Diamond Princess was a cruise ship which was quarantined off the coast of Japan
- The study's Diamond Princess model portrayed a closed-setting scenario, forecasting 26 per cent of infections among populations in congested neighbourhoods
 - It warned that one in every 450 patients could succumb
 - It estimated that five per cent of affected patients in India would need intensive care. Of them, half require mechanical ventilator support
 - In severe cases, one among eight to ten patients might die
 - One casualty might also occur among 40-50 non-severe COVID-19 cases

Recommendations

- Early identification and training for frontline healthcare workers
 - Use of personal protective equipment, screening of symptomatic contacts, isolation measures and management of cases
 - Emergency crews should be given health and life insurance
- Building bio-security wards
- Public health measures should be initiated at multiple levels, including but not limited to, public messaging

3. Samadhan Challenge

- Innovation Cell of the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in collaboration with Forge and InnovatioCuris launched a mega online challenge - SAMADHAN - to test the ability of students to innovate
- Students participating the challenge will search and develop such measures that can be made available to the government agencies, health services, hospitals and other services for quick solutions to the Coronavirus epidemic and other such calamities
- It will also work to make citizens aware, to motivate them, to face any challenge, to prevent any crisis and to help people get livelihood
- Under the "Samadhan" challenge, the students and faculty will be motivated for doing new experiments and new discoveries and provide them with a strong base leading to spirit of experimentation and discovery

4. Patents

- China was the biggest source of applications for international patents in the world in 2019
 - United States was at the top spot since the global system was set up more than 40 years ago
- World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) oversees the system (Patent Cooperation Treaty System) for

countries to share recognition of patents

- China filed 58990 applications which is a 200-fold increase in just 20 years
- United States had filed the most applications in the world every year since the Patent Cooperation Treaty system was set up in 1978
 - More than half of patent applications - 52.4 % - now come from Asia, with Japan ranking third, followed by Germany and South Korea
- Ownership of patents is seen as a sign of economic strength and industrial know-how of a country
- India is among the top 15 countries and three middle income countries
 - China, Turkey (2058) and India (2053)

WIPO

- It is a global forum for for intellectual property policy, services, information and cooperation
- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations