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Daily News Discussion (DND)

18th - 19th March 2021

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1. Polity

1.1.As States Enter Election Season, Important CAG Reports Remain Unavailable to the Public

- Over the next month, millions of voters will exercise their democratic rights in four states and one union territory in what are widely being seen as key legislative assembly elections.
- When an elected government fails to present CAG of India's audit reports in state assembly during its last year in the office, it short circuits the legislative accountability enshrined in India's constitution.

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)

- The Constitution of India provides for an independent office of the CAG.
- He is the guardian of the public purse and controls the entire financial system of the country at both the levels- the centre and state
- He is the head of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department.
- CAG helps the parliament/state legislatures hold their respective governments accountable
- Dr. B R Ambedkar said that the CAG shall be the most important Officer under the Constitution of India and his duties are far more important than the duties of even the judiciary.

Historical background

- Before Mutiny of 1857
 - ✓ Lord Canning initiating a major administrative drive
- May 1858
 - ✓ A separate department was set up for the first time with an Accountant General, who was responsible for accounting and auditing the financial transactions under the East India Company.
- Government of India Act 1858
 - ✓ Laid the foundation stone of Imperial Audit
- 1860
 - ✓ Sir Edward Drummond took charge as the first Auditor General
- 1884
 - ✓ First time used term 'Comptroller and Auditor General of India

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)

- CAG derives its audit mandate from different sources like
 - ✓ Constitution (Articles 148 to 151)
 - ✓ The Comptroller and Auditor Generals (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971

- ✓ Regulations on Audit & Accounts-2007
- ✓ Instructions of Government of India
- ✓ Important Judgments

India	Britain
CAG is not a member of the parliament	CAG is a member of house of the Commons
Performed the role of an Auditor General and not of a Comptroller	power of both Comptroller as well as Auditor General.
audits the accounts after the expenditure is committed i.e. ex post facto	Name Comptroller is justified as no money can be drawn from the public exchequer without the approval of the CAG

● CAG (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Services) Act, 1971

- ✓ The State Government shall cause every report received by it under sub-section (1) to be laid, as soon as may be after it is received, before the Legislature of the State.

Issue

- while DPC Act does not prescribe a rigid timeline for the tabling of the report, it does say the reports should be laid before the state legislature as soon as may be after it is received.

Way forward

- Amend the CAG (DPC) Act and prescribe a strict timeline for tabling the audit reports
- former CAG Vinod Rajs draft amendments included prescribing a time period of seven days for laying the report in the legislature after it is received

1.2.Many teaching institutes substandard

- Recently first volume on teachers & teacher education released by Azim Premji University
- With as many as nine million teachers in around 1.5 million schools in India, the quality of education imparted to aspiring teachers is equally important. For education in our schools to improve, teaching has to improve.
- The first paper Mapping the Landscape of Teacher Education Institutions in India’ – found that
- Out of the 17,503 TEIs in India, more than 90% are privately owned, stand-alone institutions, offering single programmes localised in certain geographies.
- Four States, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, account for 54% of all TEIs in the country, said the researchers.

- Only 12 States/UTs have at least one TEI in each district.
- Equally worrying is the level of corruption, which is the focus of the second paper, Corruption in Private Teacher Education Institutions. There are many substandard, dysfunctional TEIs functioning as commercial shops
- TEIs deliberately neglected basic curricular requirements.
- Classes are neither conducted seriously nor taken seriously by students.
- Almost all private TEIs allowed students with shortage of attendance to appear for examinations.
- More than 60% allowed students who had not completed their school internship to appear for examinations.
- At least 70% TEIs had an average student attendance below 80%.
- The fourth paper in the series tackles the increasing prevalence of contract teachers, who are recruited for short periods on inadequate salaries with little or no benefits. This, the authors stated, had caused long-term damage to not just the teaching profession, but has also affected student learning.

ASER(Annual Status of Education Report)	NAS (<u>National Achievement Survey</u>)
It is designed as a household-based survey so as to include all children: those enrolled in government schools, private schools, other types of schools, and those not enrolled in school.	It is a school-based survey intended to assess grade level competencies of children enrolled in government and government-aided schools
Assesses early reading and basic arithmetic ability, which are foundational skills fundamental to literacy and numeracy acquisition.	NAS-Class assessed grade level competencies of students like language (including reading comprehension), mathematics and environmental science
ASER reading and arithmetic assessments are administered one on one in an oral format. Children are tested at home. All children are given the same test, regardless of age or grade	Pen and paper test administered to a group of students in school. ³ In most schools, children were tested in two out of the three subjects
By NGO Pratham	By NCERT

ASER Survey 2020

- It is a nationwide survey of rural education and learning outcomes in terms of reading and arithmetic skills that has been conducted by the NGO Pratham .

ASER 2018

- Surveyed children in the age group of 3 to 16 years and included almost all rural districts in India and generated estimates of foundational reading and arithmetic abilities of children in the age group 5 to 16 years.

ASER 2019

- Reported on the pre-schooling or schooling status of children in the age group 4 to 8 years in 26 rural districts, focused on the “early years” and laid emphasis on “developing problem-solving faculties and building a memory of children, and not content knowledge”.

ASER 2020

- First ever phone-based ASER survey and it was conducted in September 2020, the sixth month of national school closures
- 5.5% of rural children are not currently enrolled for the 2020 school year, up from 4% in 2018
- The proportion of boys enrolled in government schools has risen from 62.8% in 2018 to 66.4% in 2020, while for girls, that number has gone up from 70% to 73% in the corresponding period.
- Patterns show a slight shift toward government schools, with private schools seeing a drop in enrolment in all age groups.
- Due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, families are waiting for the physical opening of schools to enrol their youngest children, with about 10% of six-year-olds not in school.
- Among enrolled children, 61.8% live in families that own at least one smartphone which was merely 36.5% in 2018.

What is NAS?

- National Achievement Survey is a representative sample of schools from all districts in India aimed at understanding the health of the education system in government and government aided schools

Background

- In order to increase focus on quality of elementary education, the Central rules to The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) Act, 2009 have been amended in February 2017 to include references on class-wise, subject-wise Learning Outcomes.
- The Learning Outcomes for each class in Languages (Hindi, English and Urdu), Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Science and Social Science up to the elementary stage (classes 1 to 8) have, accordingly, been finalized and shared with all States and UTs. Learning outcomes have been translated in different languages and serve as a benchmark for student’s capabilities to be achieved in each subject & class

Key features of the NAS-2017

- The present (2017) survey is linked to the learning outcomes.
- NAS at the elementary level was based on the Learning Outcomes developed by the NCERT.
- Under the NAS the learning gaps will be identified in all the districts of the country.
- Findings from the NAS will be used for formulating policies, planning and pedagogical interventions to improve student learning.
- It is not designed to assess the individual student performance.
- This NAS was conducted for the Classes 3, 5 and 8 in government and government aided schools.

- The design and implementation of the survey included in its ambit the school leaders, teachers and the whole network of officials at the Cluster, Block, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and the Directorates of Education in the different States/ UTs.
- The survey tools used multiple test booklets with 45 questions in Classes III and V related to language, mathematics and 60 questions in Class VIII in Mathematics, Language, Sciences and Social Sciences.
- The competency based test questions developed, reflected the Learning Outcomes developed by the NCERT which were recently incorporated in the RTE Act by the Government of India.
- There is no much variation in the scores of children belonging to social categories such as SC, ST, OBC and General.
- There is no much variation in the scores of children from schools having government and private management

Significance

- NAS 2017 has informed us about the learning levels of children at different stages and also about the learning outcomes on which score is very low
- The National Achievement Survey (NAS) is the largest ever national assessment survey in the country and is amongst the largest in the world, was conducted throughout the country.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

- An autonomous organisation set up in 1961 by the Government of India to assist and advise the Central and State Governments on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education.
- Registered as society under Societies' Registration Act 1860

2. Economy

2.1.'Voluntary Vehicle-Fleet Modernisation Programme

- Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari informed the Parliament that the Ministry is introducing a voluntary vehicle fleet modernisation programme, which seeks to create an ecosystem to phase out unfit and polluting vehicles.
- Proposed Vehicle scrapping policy
- Private vehicles be de-registered after 20 years if found unfit or in case of failure to renew registration certificate.
- As a disincentive measure, increased re-registration fees will be applicable for private vehicles 15 years onward from the date of initial registration.
- It is being proposed that all government vehicles may be de-registered and scrapped after 15 years from date of registration.
- The criteria will take into account emission tests, braking and safety equipment, among other tests. A vehicle failing the fitness test may be declared as end-of-life vehicle.
- Policy will offer a rebate of about 5 per cent to buyers on new car purchases in lieu of scrapping of the old.
- The scrap value for the old vehicle will be approximately 4-6 per cent of the ex-showroom price of a new vehicle.
- State governments may be advised to offer a road tax rebate and waive registration fees for the purchase of a new vehicle against the scrapping certificate.
- With a simplified registration process through a single window, the scrapping facility shall have to comply with environmental and pollution norms and with all applicable Acts

What are the vehicles that would be deregistered?

- Older vehicles pollute 10-12 times more than fit vehicles and pose a risk to road safety. Commercial vehicles can be deregistered after 15 years, if they fail to get a fitness certificate.

Significance of policy

- Firstly, the policy could provide a major boost to the Indian automobile sector, which is reeling under the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Secondly, the policy can reduce population caused by older and defective vehicles. it will help in achieving better fuel efficiency, formalising the informal vehicle scrapping industry, and boost the availability of low-cost raw materials for the automotive, steel and electronics industry.
- Finally, it can also improve road and vehicular safety.

2.2.UDAN -Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik

- In the hope of providing air connectivity to parts of India where it does not exist, the government had launched the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS), more popularly known as UDAN - Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik in April 2017.

- But, nearly four years on, just 41 per cent or 325 routes of the 778 routes awarded until now have been operationalized

About UDAN (Ministry of Civil Aviation)

- Aims to make air travel affordable and widespread.
- The scheme will be jointly funded by the central government and state governments.
- The scheme will run for 10 years and can be extended thereafter.
- Airport authority of India, AAI has an ambitious plan to develop at least 100 airports/water dromes/ heliports by 2024 under the Scheme
- The first flight under the UDAN scheme was flagged in 2017 from Bhubaneswar to Varanasi route

UDAN 1.0

- 5 airlines companies were awarded 128 flight routes to 70 airports (including 36 newly made operational airports).

UDAN 2.0

- In 2018, the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced 73 underserved and unserved airports.
- For the first time, helipads were also connected under phase 2 of the UDAN scheme.

UDAN 3.0

- Inclusion of Tourism Routes under UDAN 3 in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism.
- Inclusion of Seaplanes for connecting Water Aerodromes.
- Bringing in a number of routes in the North-East Region under the ambit of UDAN.

UDAN 4.0

- In 2020, 78 new routes were approved under the 4th round of Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UdeDeshKaAamNagrik (UDAN) to further enhance the connectivity to remote & regional areas of the country.
- Kavaratti, Agatti, and Minicoy islands of Lakshadweep will be connected by the new routes of UDAN 4.0.

UDAN 4.1

- Focusing on development of required infrastructure at airports, heliports and water aerodromes, allowing operational flexibility
- Special round of UDAN 4.1 in respect of cancelled and non-operationalised routes by the second half of 2021
- Will cover cancelled and terminated routes
- Few new routes have been proposed under the Sagarmala Seaplane services

Sagarmala Seaplane Services

- under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

- One such seaplane service is already in operation between Kevadia and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad, which was started in October 2020.

Issues

- Land issues
 - ✓ At some of the RCS airports, additional land is required for development or upgradation and is to be provided by the state government or Union Territories free of
 - ✓ In the scenario where the state doesn't have land, it has to acquire it, which is a time-consuming process.
- Difficult terrain
 - ✓ Also many of the far-flung regions, which did not have air service until now and are to be covered under the UDAN scheme, have difficult terrain
 - ✓ SpiceJet the largest player in the scheme, operating 63 daily flights that connect 15 domestic destinations with key metros was unable to start certain routes for these reasons
 - ✓ Adverse and unpredictable weather conditions at remote areas don't allow consistent operations.
- Lack of funds
 - ✓ Some of the small airlines that have won bids under RCS-UDAN could not mobilise sufficient funds and human crew resources and as a result they could not commence the RCS operations on awarded routes
- Covid-19 impact
 - ✓ The coronavirus induced lockdown halted the development of RCS airports and delayed acquisition of aircrafts by the selected airline operators.
 - ✓ The suspension of domestic operations for two months, followed by a very low scale of operations post restart impacted the collection of the levy

Way forward

- Developing a competitive and viable regional aviation ecosystem is critical to support the orderly growth of Indian aviation
- Strategic review of regional aviation in India and a re-targeting of planned investment" is required.
- Taxes on fuel need to be reduced, which has been a demand in the industry for a long time.

3. Environment

3.1. Oceans may emit more ozone-depleting gases

- Oceans may start releasing chlorofluorocarbons (CFC), a class of ozone-depleting chemicals, at a faster rate due to rising global temperatures, according to a recent study
- The research, carried out by scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences and published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 15 March, 2021 centered on CFC-11 (trichlorofluoromethane)

Findings

- Oceans, which are a vast repository for gases, would emit more CFC-11 by 2075 than they absorb.
- They would emit detectable amounts of the chemical by 2130. The shift will occur 10 years earlier due to climate change.
- If the planet warms by five degrees Celsius by 2100, the ocean will become a net emitter of CFC-11 by 2065 and release detectable levels by 2140.
- Climate change stands poised to change average temperatures and circulation patterns in the ocean, thus facilitating this outgassing process. Climate change is however expected to start impacting ocean circulation patterns in the Northern Hemisphere first, meaning outgassing will likely start here.
- CFCs are more soluble when sea surface temperatures are low, according to the researchers.

About CFC

- Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) are gases used for various purposes including solvents, refrigerants and aerosol sprays.
- Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are a group of odourless manufactured chemicals. Because they damage the earth's ozone layer, CFCs have been banned since 1996

Ozone Layer Depletion

- This refers to the thinning of the protective ozone layer in the atmosphere.
- This happens when certain chemicals come into contact with ozone and destroy it.
- Chemical compounds that cause ozone layer depletion are called Ozone Depleting Substances (ODSs).

Montreal Protocol

- The Protocol was signed in 1987 and entered into force in January 1989. The protocol gives provisions to reduce the production and consumption of ODSs to protect the ozone layer.

3.2. Delhi- World's most polluted capital

- Delhi has been ranked as the world's most polluted capital in a new report that placed India as having the third worst air quality out of 106 countries in 2020
- The World Air Quality report by Swiss technology company IQAir, mentions that 22 of the top 30 most polluted cities globally are in India

- The Report aggregated PM2.5 data from 106 countries
- Most polluted Country
 - ✓ Bangladesh followed by Pakistan and India
- Least polluted country
 - ✓ Puerto Rico
- Most polluted Capital
 - ✓ Delhi followed by Dhaka (Bangladesh), Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia), Kabul (Afghanistan), Doha (Qatar).
- Most polluted city
 - ✓ Hotan in China followed by Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh

Indian Scenario

- Ghaziabad is the second most polluted city in the world followed by Bulandshahar
- Delhi listed as the 10th most polluted city
- Compared to north Indian cities, the cities in the Deccan recorded relatively better air quality
- However, every city in India observed air quality improvements compared to 2018 and earlier
- Major sources of India's air pollution include transportation, biomass burning for cooking, electricity generation, industry, construction, waste burning, and episodic agricultural burning,
- It is estimated that as much as 20% to 40% of Delhi's air pollution originates from Punjab farm fires
- Delhi experienced average PM 2.5 levels of 144 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in November and 157 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in December, exceeding the WHO's annual exposure guideline by more than 14 times.
- The annual exposure limit of PM2.5 set by WHO is 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, lower than 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ set under the Indian National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

3.3.UP: Tigress carcass found

- A day after the carcass of a five-year-old tigress was found in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, a search was launched on Tuesday to trace four of its cubs that "were possibly spotted by a forest official".

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (UP)

- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve was declared in September 2008 based on its special type of ecosystem with vast open spaces and sufficient feed for the elegant predators.
- The Pilibhit Tiger Reserve is one of the finest examples of the exceedingly diverse and productive Terai ecosystems.
- The northern edge of the reserve lies along the Indo-Nepal border while the southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.
- The study done by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) shows that Dudhwa-Pilibhit population has high conservation value as it represents the only tiger population with the ecological and behavioural adaptations of the tiger unique to the Tarai region.

- The area of Pilibhit Tiger Reserve has a dry and hot climate which brings a combination of dry teak forest and Vindhya mountain soils
- One can also see largest Indian deers i.e sambar, nilgai, chital, chousingha and chinkara in the vicinity. As far as bird species is concerned, there are about 200 avifauna found in the area

Past News

- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve got international award TX2 for doubling the number of tigers in the past four years.

TX2 Award

- Global award which was set up in 2010 in St. Petersburg, Russia by international organizations working for tiger conservation like WWF, UNDP, IUCN, Global Tiger Fund (GTF)

TX2 goal

- The goal has been set by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) through the Global Tiger Initiative, Global Tiger Forum
- Global commitment to double the world's wild tigers by 2022.

Conservation Excellence Award for 2020

- Transboundary Manas Conservation Area straddling the India-Bhutan border has received the TX2 Conservation Excellence Award for 2020.
- Transboundary Manas Conservation Area or TraMCA comprising the 500 sq. km. Manas National Park in Assam and the 1,057-sq. km. Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan.
- Conservation Excellence Award: This award recognises one site that has achieved excellence in two or more of these five themes:
 - ✓ Tiger and prey population monitoring and research (tiger translocation/prey augmentation),
 - ✓ Effective site management,
 - ✓ Enhanced law enforcement & protection & ranger welfare improvement,
 - ✓ Community based conservation, benefits and human-wildlife conflict mitigation and
 - ✓ Habitat and prey management.

4. International relation

4.1. India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Women's Forum

- The Sixth India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Womens Forum meeting was held virtually on 16th March, 2021. Led by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, the event witnessed participation of Ministers and officials responsible for Women Affairs of IBSA Countries

Key points of meeting

- Recalled that the Year 2020 marked-
 - ✓ A Decade since UN WOMEN was established which was established in 2010
 - ✓ The 20th anniversary of UNSC RESOLUTION 1325 on women, peace and security.
 - ✓ Fifth anniversary of SDG (Goal 5-to eliminate violence against women)

About IBSA

- Formalized during meeting in Brasilia (Brazil) in 2003 and issued Brasilia Declaration.
- Does not have a headquarters or a permanent executive secretariat
- The IBSA Dialogue Forum is a tripartite grouping (India, Brazil, South Africa) for promoting cooperation among these countries.

Efforts of IBSA

- Fund for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger (2004) to execute development projects with IBSA funding in fellow developing countries.
- IBSAMAR (IBSA Maritime Exercise) is an important part of IBSA trilateral defence cooperation, the latest one being off the coast of South Africa in October, 2018.

Downfall of IBSA

- In 2011 onwards, BRICS, the larger group comprising IBSA countries, China and Russia, started to overshadow IBSA.

Significance of IBSA

- South - South Cooperation It is the champion of South-South Cooperation, and the advocate of a coordinated response by developing economies to secure the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Solidarity among developing countries IBSA is the true inheritor of solidarity among developing countries, which was nurtured from the Bandung Conference (1955) through UNCTAD and G-77 to the BAPA+40 Declaration (2018).
- Shared Values The glue that binds IBSA countries together is their faith in democracy, diversity, plurality, inclusivity, human rights and rule of law.

Current affairs Worksheet (18th -19th March 2021)

Factual sheet for Quick revision

Topic	Description	Update
Environment	ODS Distribution of ozone Montreal protocol World air quality report Pilibhit TR TX2 award	
Economy	Vehicle scrapping policy UDAN	
IR	IBSA Vs BRICS Vs SAARC	
Polity	CAG (Include other constitutional bodies also) ASER vs NAS	