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# 2-Minute Series

*A compilation of foundational topics prerequisite for Civil Services*

*For the 3rd Week*

*of*

# April 2021

*(12th April to 17th April)*

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# 1. Geography

## 1.1. Decarbonised Transportation Initiative

- NITI Aayog in collaboration with International Transport Forum (ITF) have jointly launched the Decarbonising Transport in India project.

### International Transport Forum (ITF)

- The ITF is an inter-governmental organisation within the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) system.
- It is the only global body with a mandate for all modes of transport.
- It acts as a think tank for transport policy issues and organises the annual global summit of transport ministers.
- India has been a member of ITF since 2008

### Decarbonising Transport Initiative

- The Decarbonising Transport initiative promotes carbon-neutral mobility to help stop climate change.
- It provides decision makers with tools to select CO<sub>2</sub> mitigation measures that deliver on their climate commitment.
- The DTI was launched in 2016 with funding from the International Transport Forums (ITF) and other funding partners including World Bank, European Commission etc.

### Decarbonising Transport In Emerging Economies

- The Decarbonising Transport in Emerging Economies (DTEE) project aims to help national governments and other stakeholders to identify transport measures and establish pathways to reduce transport CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and meet their climate goals and NDCs.

### Indian Context

- The India project is carried out in the wider context of the International Transport Forum's "Decarbonising Transport" initiative.
- It is part of the "Decarbonising Transport in Emerging Economies" (DTEE) family of projects, which supports transport decarbonisation across different world regions.
- It will provide the government with a detailed understanding of current and future transport activity and the related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as a basis for their decision-making.
- The "Decarbonising Transport in India" project will design a tailor-made transport emissions assessment framework for India. India, Argentina, Azerbaijan, and Morocco are current participants

### Note

- The Decarbonising Transport initiative does not advocate specific measures or policies.
- Building on an evidence-based assessment of mitigation impacts, it identifies options for decision-makers to achieve their targets - for instance the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by countries under the Paris Agreement, as well as targets set by sectors, companies or cities.

### **Note : (For Mains)**

- Builds a catalogue of effective CO2 mitigation measures: the Transport Climate Action Directory.
- Provides targeted analytical assistance for countries and partners to identify climate actions that work.
- Gathers and shares evidence for best practices that will accelerate the transition to carbon-neutral mobility.
- Shapes the climate change debate by building a global policy dialogue and by bringing the transport perspective to the broader climate change discussions.

### **Applications**

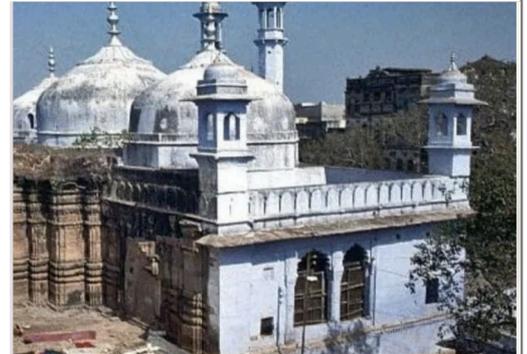
- GS 1
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- GS 3
- GS 4

## 2. History

### 2.1. Gyanvapi Mosque

#### About

- Located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India.
- It is said to be constructed on the site of Kashi Vishwanath temple, which had been demolished by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1696.
- It is administered by Anjuman Inthaazamiyya Masjid.



#### Historical Backgrounds

- Built during the reign of Aurangzeb in 1669 CE.
- According to scholar Madhuri Desai, the mosque was built on the plinth of the former temple.
- The remnants of the Hindu temple can be seen on the walls of the Gyanvapi mosque.
- The demolished temple is believed by the Hindus to be an earlier restoration of the original Kashi Vishwanath temple.
- The temple structure that existed prior to the construction of the mosque was most probably built by Raja Man Singh during Akbar's reign.
- The temple's demolition was intended as a warning to the anti-Mughal factions and Hindu religious leaders in the city.

#### Present Situation

- Maulana Abdus Salam Nomani (d. 1987), an Imam of the Gyanvapi mosque, contests the fact that a temple was destroyed to build the mosque.
- According to him, the foundation of the mosque was laid by the third Mughal emperor Akbar, and Akbar's grandson and Aurangzeb's father Shah Jahan started a madrasah called Imam-e-Sharifat at the site of the mosque in 1048 hijri (1638-39 CE).

#### Additional Information

- Around 1750, The Maharaja of Jaipur commissioned survey of the land around the site, with the objective of purchasing land to rebuild the Kashi Vishwanath temple.
- This survey showed that the edges of the rectangular Gyanvapi mosque precinct were lined up with the residences of Brahmin priests.
- Describing the site in 1824, British traveler Reginald Heber wrote that "Aulam Gheer" had defiled a sacred Hindu spot and built a mosque on it. He stated that Hindus considered this spot more sacred than the adjoining new Kashi Vishwanath temple.

#### Temple Ruins

- A Temple Structure can be seen at the mosque's real wall, long believed to be a remnant of the original Kashi Vishwanath temple.

## Gyan Vapi Well

- The mosque is named after a well, the Gyan Vapi ("the well of knowledge"), which is located within the mosque precincts.
- The legends mentioned by the Hindu priests state that the lingam of the original temple was hidden in this well, when the temple was destroyed.

## 2021 Legal Case

- On 8th April 2021, a court in Varanasi city ordered the Archaeological Survey of India to conduct a survey of the Gyanvapi Mosque.
- The court's ruling runs up against the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which states that any place of worship shall be maintained as it existed on 15 August 1947.
- This is an unconscionable intervention that will open the floodgates for another protracted religious dispute.

## Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991

- It prohibits the conversion of religious places of worship as it existed at the time of Independence.
- The Act was passed in September 1991, over a year before the demolition of the Babri Masjid (1992).
- Section 3 of the Act bans the conversion of a place of worship or even a section of it into a place of worship of a different religious denomination or of a different segment of the same religious denomination.
- The Act also imposes a positive obligation on the State to maintain the religious character of every place of worship as it existed at the time of Independence.

## Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, Exemption

- The disputed site at Ayodhya is exempted from the Act. Due to this exemption, the trial in the Ayodhya case proceeded even after the enforcement of this law.
- The Act also does not apply to any place of worship which is
- an ancient and historical monument or an archaeological site covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- Penalty: Section 6 of the Act prescribes a punishment of maximum three-years imprisonment along with a fine for contravening the provisions of the Act.

## 3. Polity & Governance

### 3.1. The Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021

- The Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021 was promulgated on April 4, 2021 with a view to streamline tribunals, as well as to abolish certain tribunals and authorities and to provide a mechanism for filing appeal directly to the commercial court or the High Court.
- It dissolves certain existing appellate bodies and transfers their functions (such as adjudication of appeals) to other existing judicial bodies.
- The Finance Act, 2017 had empowered the central government to notify rules on:
  - ✓ qualifications of members of tribunals,
  - ✓ terms and conditions of their service, and
  - ✓ composition of search-cum-selection committees for 19 tribunals (such as the Customs, Excise, and Service Tax Appellate Tribunals).

#### Transfer of functions of key appellate bodies as proposed under the Ordinance

The Cinematograph Act, 1952	FCAT	High Court
The Trade Marks Act, 1999	Appellate Board	High Court
The Copyright Act, 1957	Appellate Board	Commercial Court or the Commercial Division of a High Court
The Customs Act, 1962	Authority for Advance Rulings	High Court
The Patents Act, 1970	Appellate Board	High Court
The Airports Authority of India Act, 1994	Airport Appellate Tribunal	Central government, for disputes arising from the disposal of properties left on airport premises by unauthorised occupants. High Court, for appeals against orders of an eviction officer.
The Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002	Airport Appellate Tribunal	Civil Court
The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999	Appellate Board	High Court

- The Ordinance amends the 2017 Act to include provisions related to the composition of search-cum-selection committees and term of office of tribunal members in the Act itself.
- The 2017 Act specifies that the Chairperson and Members of the Tribunals will be appointed by the central government on the recommendation of a Search-cum- Selection Committee.
- The 2021 Ordinance specifies that these Committees will consist of:
  - ✓ the Chief Justice of India, or a Supreme Court Judge nominated by him, as the Chairperson (with casting vote),
  - ✓ two Secretaries nominated by the central government,

- ✓ the sitting or outgoing Chairperson, or a retired Supreme Court Judge, or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court, and
- ✓ the Secretary of the Ministry under which the Tribunal is constituted (with no voting right).
- The Ordinance specifies that the term of office for the Chairperson of the tribunals will be of four years or till the attainment of the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier.
- For other members of the tribunals, the term will be of four years or till the age of sixty-seven years, whichever is earlier.
- Further, the Ordinance includes the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission established under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 within the purview of the Finance Act, 2017.
- The Ordinance removes the following bodies from the purview of the Finance Act, 2017:
  - ✓ the Airport Appellate Tribunal established under the Airports Authority of India Act, 1994,
  - ✓ the Appellate Board established under the Trade Marks Act, 1999,
  - ✓ the Authority of Advanced Ruling established under the Income Tax Act, 1961, and
  - ✓ the Film Certification Appellate Authority established under the Cinematograph Act, 1952.

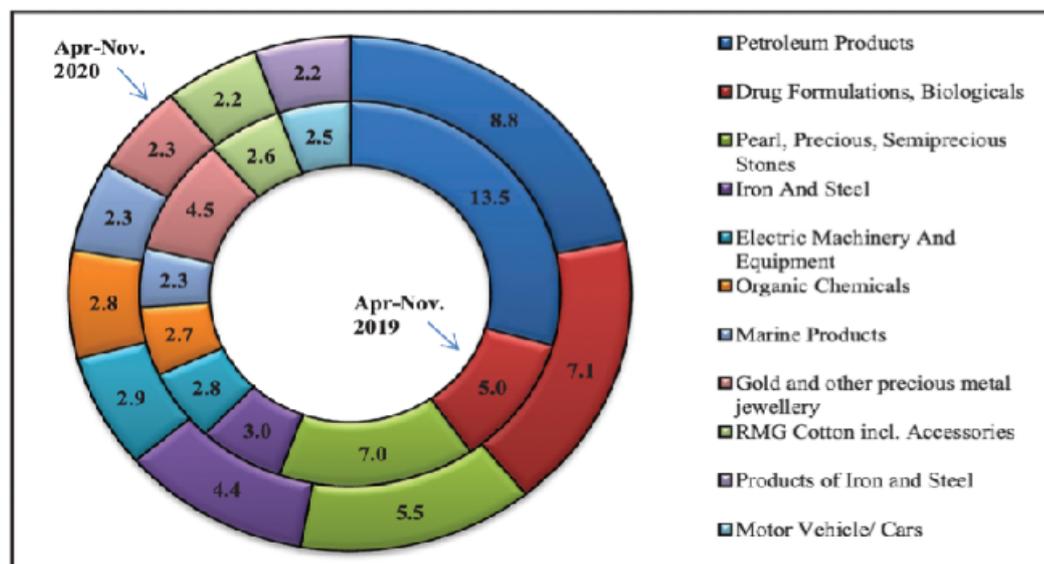
# 4. Economy

## 4.1. India's Top Exports & imports

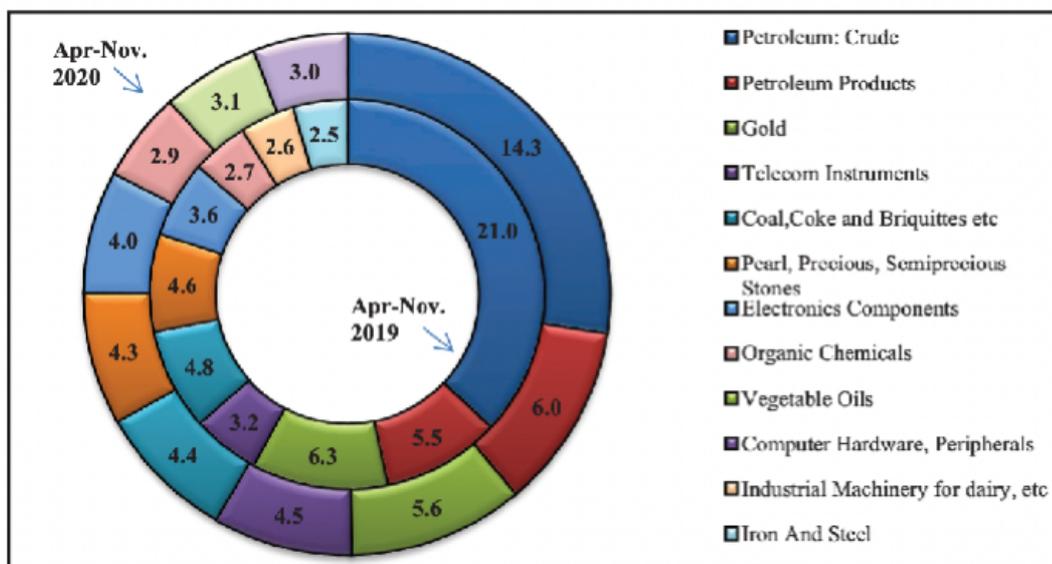
### Source of Data

- Economic Survey 2020-21
- Volume-2
- Chapter-3
- External Sector

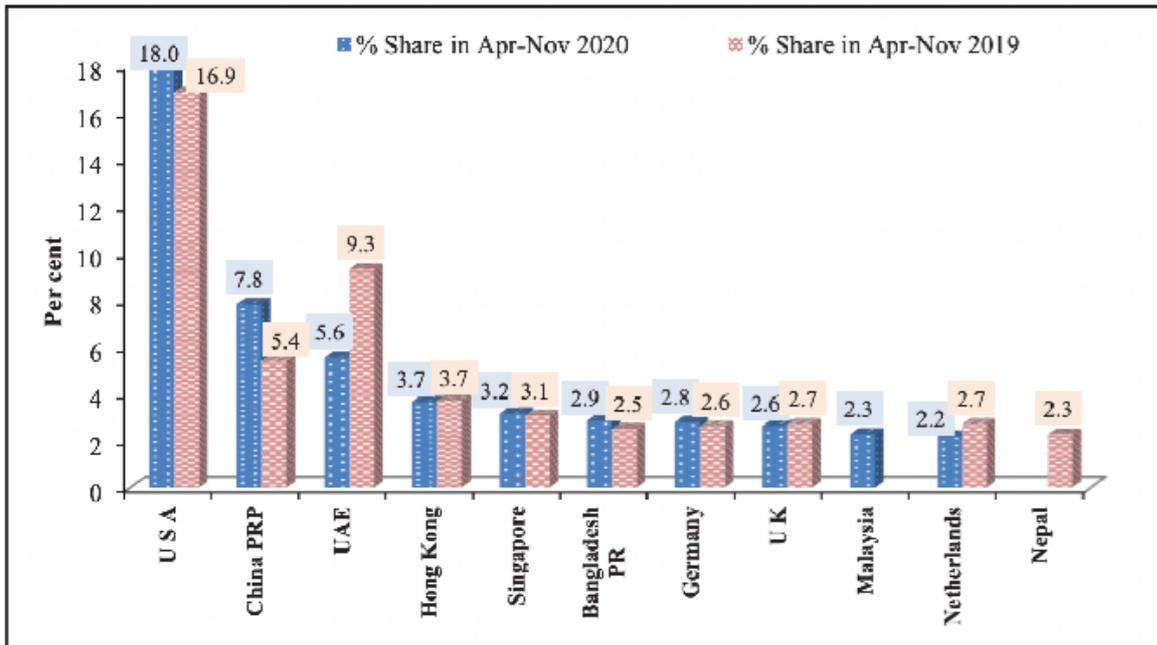
### Top 10 Export Commodities



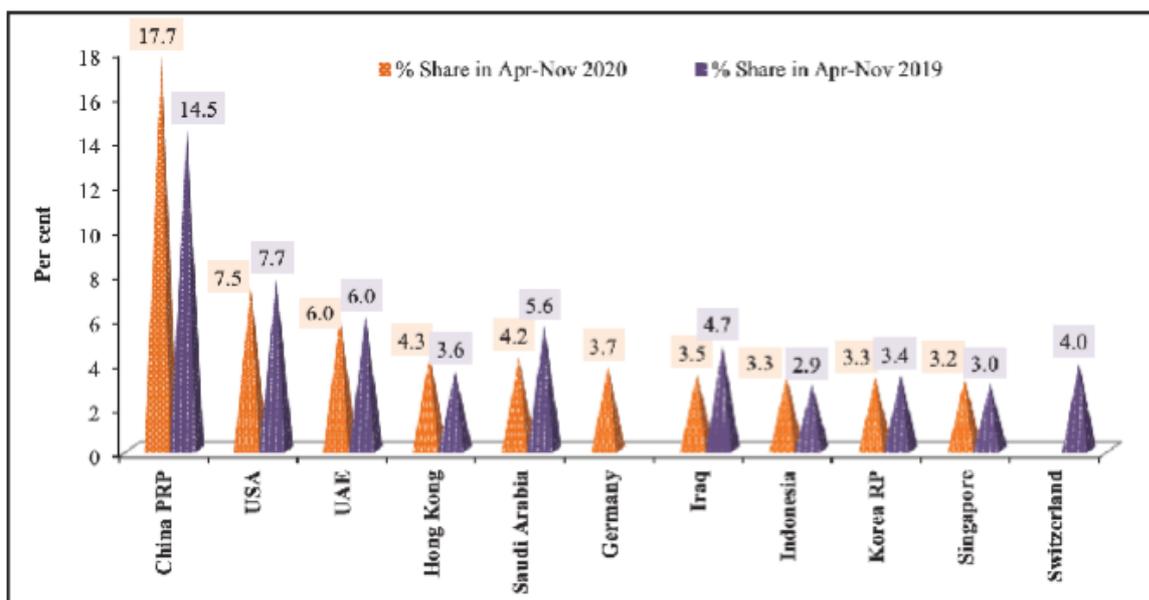
Source: DoC



Source: DoC



Source: DoC



Source: DoC

## 5. Environment & Ecology

### 5.1. Whale Sharks

#### Introduction

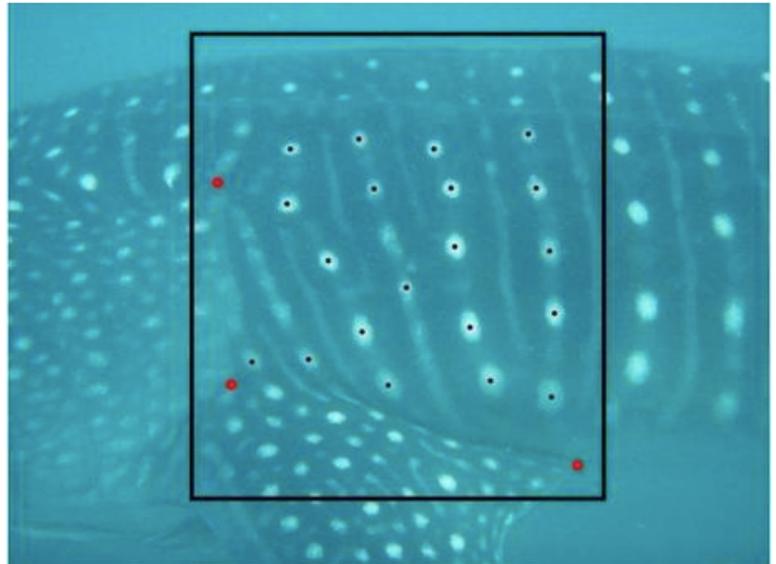
- Whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) are the largest shark, and indeed largest of any fishes alive today.
- Whale sharks hold many records, most notably for being the largest living nonmammalian vertebrate.
- They feed on plankton and travel large distances to find enough food to sustain their huge size, and to reproduce.
- Whale sharks are found in all the tropical oceans of the world.
- Their white spotted colouration makes these gentle giants easy to distinguish, and popular with snorkelers and divers at sites where they aggregate off the coast.
- Also known as Gentle Giants.

#### Habitat

- Tropical oceans and warm temperate oceans. Pelagic.
- The whale shark is the biggest fish and shark in the world.
- These gentle marine giants roam the oceans around the globe, generally alone.
- However, large numbers of whale sharks often gather in areas with abundant plankton food—making them prime tourist attractions.
- The whale shark is a filter-feeder shark, which means it does not eat meat like other sharks.
- They filter sea water and feed on tiny planktons.
- The distribution of whale sharks indicates the presence of plankton and the overall health of our oceans.

#### Threats

- They are usually hauled in as bycatch with fishermen targeting economically benefiting species.



© WWF-Philippines

Like human fingerprints, whale sharks have a unique pattern of spots which allow individual sharks to be identified. By taking photos and cataloguing them, WWF has identified 458 different whale sharks in the Philippines.



- The meat of whale sharks is not very edible, it is the liver that is the most important for commercial trade, while oil from the fish is used for water-proofing boats.
- Whale shark tourism presents a threat to the species as it can interrupt their feeding and sharks can be injured by boat propellers.
- Oil & gas drilling.



## IUCN Status

- IUCN Status - Endangered
- The Whale Shark also receives international protection due to its inclusion in Appendix II of the Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- Appendix I listing the UN Convention on Migratory Species in 2017.

## Conservation in India

- It was in 2001 that, in a conservation attempt, whale sharks were included in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972, rendering the capture and killing of the fish a cognisable offence.
- It was the first-ever species to be protected under this Act, after which the Ganges shark (*Glyphis gangeticus*) and spartooth shark (*Glyphis glyphis*) were added to it.
- WTI launched the widely-acclaimed Whale Shark Campaign in 2004 to spread awareness on the plight of the species and its protected status among coastal communities in Gujarat.
- On the East coast, the Forest Department of Andhra Pradesh along with The East Godavari River Estuarine Ecosystem (EGREE) has been conducting awareness programmes and workshops to educate fishing communities since 2013.

## 6. Science & Technology

### 6.1. Helium Crisis for India

- Helium is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, inert gas
- USA is the most important exporter of helium across the world and also the biggest store house
- India consumes about 70 million cubic metres of helium per year

#### News

- US is now planning to switch off export of helium from 2021
  - ✓ India consumes helium for its needs and our industry stands to lose out heavily

#### Applications

- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans
- Rockets
- Nuclear Reactors

#### Sources

- Present in natural gas
  - Despite its rarity, it is concentrated in large quantities under the American Great Plains
- In India
  - ✓ Heating up monazite sand – small quantity obtained by Englishman Moris Travers in 1906
  - ✓ Rajmahal volcanic basin around Bakreswar and nearby Tantloi

