A total of 4,280 new cases of COVID-19 were reported across 37 districts of Tamil Nadu on Saturday, taking its tally to 1,07,001. Chennai, after recording 2,000-plus cases daily for five days, saw a marginal dip, with 1,842 new cases.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said in a statement on Saturday that a letter sent earlier this week by its Director General Balram Bhargava on a vaccine for COVID-19, was meant to “cut unnecessary red tape” and “speed up recruitment of participants”.

60% patients had at least one co-morbidity, survey finds

In India, 60% of COVID-19 patients had at least one co-morbidity such as hypertension and diabetes, and nearly 78% of them were under 50, says data from the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), a Health Ministry body. Fever was the dominant symptom reported by hospitals. ➢ PAGE 10

VIJAYTA SINGH
NEW DELHI
A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s surprise visit to the Union Territory of Ladakh, the government is preparing for the next round of the meeting of the ‘Special Representatives of India and China on the Boundary Question,’ as it looks for military and diplomatic measures to ease the tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, according to a senior Home Minis-

Aerial guard: An IAF fighter aircraft flying over a forward airbase near the India-China border on Saturday. ➢ ANN

China, Pakistan discuss Kashmir

The “deteriorating” situation on the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir was among the issues discussed by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Pakistan counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi during their phone call on Friday. ➢ PAGE 9
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* C – Chennai; B – Bengaluru; D – Delhi; H – Hyderabad; T – Thiruvananthapuram

@ end of the video
Why has Indian Railways opened doors for private players?

Will the move help to expand and modernise the sector, ensuring better services to passengers?

The story so far: Indian Railways has launched the process of opening up train operations to private entities on 90 origin-destination (O-D) pairs of routes using 108 modern trains. It has invited Request for Qualifications proposals, for scarcity of worker capabilities, from those who can bring modern trains for operations on existing rail infrastructure. At present, scheduled passenger train services remain paralysed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and various railways have been running only special trains to transport medical personnel and essential workers. These were the first trains allowed to be run by a non-Railway operator. The present move takes a step towards competing passenger train operations, bringing new-generation trains and attracting investments of an estimated 50,000 crores.

What is the background to the decision? Several committees have given into the expansion and the modernisation of Indian Railways. In 2015, the expert panel headed by Bibek Debroy constituted by the Ministry of Railways recommended that the ownership of the railways be “liberalization and not privatization” in order to allow entry of new operators to encourage growth and improve services. It also made it clear that a regulatory mechanism was a prerequisite to promote healthy competition and protect the interests of all stakeholders.

The present invitation for private operators to submit qualification bids for 13 trains would be in the assessment of the Railway Board, only for a fraction of the total train operations – 90 of the 2,600 Mail and Express services operated by Indian Railways. The overall objective, however, is to introduce a new model of train services, with the aim of improving passenger experience for those who are used to travelling by train. From a passenger perspective, there is a need for more train services, particularly between big cities. The Railway Board says low-speed intercity trains could not be accommodated during 2009-10 for want of capacity, and there was 13.7% travel demand in excess of supply during summer and festival seasons. Without an expansion, and with growth of road travel, the share of the Railways would steadily decline in coming years.

Why is the move significant for Indian Railways? For the Railways, one of the largest organisations in the country operating not just trains for passengers and freight, but also social institutions such as hospitals and schools, it represents a radical change. According to data maintained by the World Bank, in 2015 India had 68,243 route kilometers of railways, which is among the four largest rail networks in the world, along with the United States, China, and Russia, although every kilometer of track in India covers geographical area much less than Germany, Russia, China or Canada, indicating scope for expansion.

An analysis of passenger and freight operations in the Railways, taken note of by the Economic Survey and the Economic Planning Commission, showed that the already substantial difference in the cost of travel for both categories was effectively reducing to the point of making rail travel more attractive. It was estimated that if a rupee paid in the railway sector would have a forward linkage effect of increasing output in other sectors by 6.5%. The debate continues on how to take the “make in India” objective forward. The panel also noted that passengers were willing to pay more, if they had guaranteed and better quality of trains and ease of access. The move to augment capacity virtually overnight is a step in the right direction, and will not only affect the capital in train operations but also revenue generation.

Private operators will have to raise the level of their offering to justify higher fares and attract a segment of the population that is ready to pay for this difference.

Civilspedia-Powered by Shankar IAS Academy
Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks)
- Current events of national and international importance.
- Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.
- Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-III
General Studies- II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.
- Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.
- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

PAPER-IV
General Studies-III: Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management
- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.
- Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.
- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.
News

- Indian Railways invited proposals for private participation for the operation of passenger train services.
  
  ✓ Operation - over 109 pairs of routes through introduction of 151 modern Trains.
  
  ✓ Estimated private sector investment - Rs. 30,000 crore.

- Aims to expand railway sector as suggested by the Bibek Debroy committee in 2015 - ‘Committee for mobilization of resources for major railway projects and restructuring of Railway Ministry and Railway Board’.
  
  ✓ Recommended expansion of railways by allowing private players - Liberalisation not Privatization.
Need

- Indian Railways (IR) - one of the biggest organizations having monopoly in Railway sector.
- Monopoly not advantageous.
  - Less revenue to IR
    - provides subsidised fare for Sleeper and Second Class.
    - fare concessions offered to Senior citizens, freedom fighters, Students etc.
  - Other activities - un-remunerative
    - Security – to customers and railway property
    - Social services such as medical and educational facilities to its employees etc.
  - Additional financial burden
    - Catering
    - Manufacturing of locomotives, coaches, wagons and their parts, etc.
- financial constraints affects IR’s efficiency.

✓ IRCTC started running two Tejas Class trains in 2019 - for the New Delhi-Lucknow and Ahmedabad-Mumbai route.

- IRCTC - Mini Ratna (Category-I) Central Public Sector Enterprise under Ministry of Railways.
• Passenger’s perspective – need more train services.
  ✓ Railway Board – during 2019-20, 5 crore passengers could not be accommodated due to lack of capacity.
  ✓ Increased travel demand than supply, during summer and festival seasons.
• World Bank and International Union of Railways
  ✓ 2018 – India had 68,443 kms of railway route – among four largest rail networks in the world (others are USA, China, and Russia).
  ✓ But every kilometre of track in India covers geographical area much less than Germany, Russia, China etc. – need to cover more geographical area.

• Above reasons + Growth of road transport – share of Railways in transport service is declining in passenger and freight operations.
  ✓ Steady shift to other modes of travel for both categories is affecting economic growth – 4.5% of GDP-equivalent.
Objective of inviting private players

✓ to introduce modern technology rolling stock with reduced maintenance,
✓ to reduced transit time,
✓ to boost job creation,
✓ to provide enhanced safety.
✓ to provide world class travel experience to passengers.
✓ to reduce demand supply deficit in the passenger transportation sector.

• Private operators will focus on revenue – to justify higher fares, have to raise their level and number of services offered to outstanding.
✓ 2015 expert panel – passengers are willing to pay more, if they had guaranteed and better quality of travel.

• It will increase share of railway transport in passenger services and contribute more to economy.

Conclusion

• Private rail operations can be seen as a government-led pilot plan to enhance the railway sector.
The impact of the Chinese apps ban

How popular are these apps in India? Can the government move more be challenged legally?

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is in a tight corner in India as it has to decide whether to ban 59 Chinese apps, which are suspected of sending sensitive data to China and violating privacy norms.

Why were the Chinese apps banned?

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has placed on the ban list 59 Chinese apps that it has suspected of sending sensitive data to China and violating privacy norms. The move comes after months of deliberations and consultations with various stakeholders, including the government, the tech industry, and civil society groups. The ban is expected to have a significant impact on the Indian market, where these apps have been popular among users.

What are the implications of the ban?

The ban could have far-reaching implications for the Indian tech industry, as well as for the users of these apps. It is expected to hurt the businesses of Chinese app developers, who have a significant presence in India. At the same time, it could benefit Indian app developers, who may gain market share as users switch to domestic apps.

How will the order be implemented?

The Ministry has said that it will work with the Indian Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRAI) to implement the ban. The TRAI will be responsible for blocking access to the banned apps.

What is the role of the government in the ban?

The government has said that it will not interfere with the implementation of the ban, and that it will rely on the TRAI to enforce it. The TRAI has said that it will take steps to block access to the banned apps, and that it will ensure that the ban is enforced effectively.

What is the impact of the ban on users?

The ban could have a negative impact on users, who may lose access to popular apps that they use regularly. At the same time, it could lead to a surge in the use of domestic apps, as users switch to alternatives.

What is the future of Chinese apps in India?

It is too early to predict the future of Chinese apps in India, as the ban is a recent development. It is likely that the government will continue to monitor the situation closely, and that it may take further action if necessary.

Civilspedia-Powered by Shankar IAS Academy
Part A—Preliminary Examination
Paper I - (200 marks)
- Current events of national and international importance.

Part B—Main Examination
PAPER-III
General Studies–II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.
- India and its neighborhood- relations.
- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.
- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests. Indian diaspora.

PAPER-IV
General Studies-III: Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management
- Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.
- Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.
- Security challenges and their management in border areas - linkages of organized crime with terrorism.
Why the apps were banned?

- Apps posed a threat to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order - to safeguard the interests of crores of Indian mobile and internet users and to ensure the safety and sovereignty of Indian cyberspace.

- Intelligence received by Govt. of India
  
  ✓ Apps were involved in stealing user data and secretly sending such data to servers located outside India.
  
  ✓ Any server located in a foreign country will be normally bound by the laws and rules of that foreign country.

- Representations on such apps received from other Government agencies, cyberspace experts, users, also from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre of Ministry of Home Affairs.

- a clear case of emergency for India in international relations to take such action.
Effects on India

- Indian cyberspace and its citizens are relatively safer now.
- Reduction of investment commitments from Chinese firms.
- Actions that could be taken by China in bilateral trade in sectors where India is dependent on China.

Chinese response to the ban:

- India’s measure selectively and discriminatorily aims at certain Chinese apps on ambiguous and far-fetched grounds.
- The action by Indian Govt. runs against fair and transparent procedure requirements, and violates the WTO rules.
  - The Government order on the matter is not published in public domain.
  - WTO agreement - The General Agreement on trade in services - ‘Article 14 bis’ - Security exceptions - the agreement does not prevent any Member from taking any action necessary for the protection of essential security interests.
Legal basis for the Govt. to issue such ban.


Under normal circumstances

Request from a Govt. agency received by Designated Officer under the 2009 rules

Examination of request by a committee comprising designated officer as chairperson and representatives of Ministry of Law and Justice, MHA, I and B, and I-CERT.

Intermediary - given opportunity of hearing.

Recommendations of the committee - forwarded to Secretary of Department of IT in MEITY

After the approval of Secretary of Dept. of IT, Designated Officer passes directions to block public access.
Legal basis for the Govt. to issue such ban.


Under emergency circumstances

Request from a Govt. agency received by Designated Officer under the 2009 rules

Designated Officer examines and places recommendations to Secretary, DoIT

If satisfied, Secretary, IT, may issue directions as an interim measure, without giving an opportunity of hearing for the alleged intermediary.

The recommendations will be placed before the IT Secretary who will pass the final order, blocking or unblocking the access.

Interim measure – Order – placed before the committee for recommendations.
Can the order to block public access be challenged in Indian courts?

• Can be challenged by the app hosting company or an affected individual in India

• Court will pass appropriate order after examining whether there is sufficient cause or need to issue such order.
State to absorb burden if Centre cuts share in crop cover premium

Tamil Nadu government will bear additional cost of about ₹150 crore

T. RamaRakhiani

The State government will absorb the anticipated additional burden in the payment of premium for the Prime Minister’s crop insurance scheme (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana – PMFBY) in the light of the Centre’s move to reduce its share of premium payment, according to senior officials of the Agriculture department.

This year, the State government may have to shell out up to ₹150 crore so that farmers are not taxed in any way. Till now, after giving allowance for farmers’ share of 2% generally, the Union and the State governments shared the premium amount equally.

Effective this year, the Centre introduced the element of the status of irrigation in a given district for determining the premium amount and sought to restrict its assistance. Consequently, it divided each State into two broad categories – irrigated and non-irrigated districts. In respect of the irrigated districts, the Centre has decided to limit subsidy in premium to 25% of the sum insured and in non-irrigated districts to 30%.

The hitch will arise if insurance companies charge higher premium rates than the Centre’s stipulation.

For example, if an insurance company fixes the premium rate of 33% for a crop in a non-irrigated district, the Centre and the State government would bear only 14% each, with farmers taking the load of 2%. In such a case, the State government has to take care of the balance 3%, the officials said.

Irrigated districts are those having 50% or more irrigated areas and non-irrigated ones are those having less than 50%.

Going by this definition, Tamil Nadu has nine non-irrigated districts of Salem, Virudhunagar, Dharapuram, Namakkal, Ariyalur, Krishnagiri, Perambalur, Thoothukudi and the Nilgiris.

The other change in the guidelines is that enrolment has been made voluntary. Earlier, all those who wanted to take loans had to have insurance cover. But this will have no impact on Tamil Nadu as farmers who did not take crop loans constituted 70% to 80% of those covered by insurance.

In another development, farmers, who insured their crops during samba season last year, may start receiving the claim amount later this month. The compensation for 2019-20 is expected to be less than that of the previous year in view of a bumper harvest during the samba season.

With kuruvai cultivation under way, the authorities are taking steps to intensify enrolment of farmers. The cut-off dates for coverage of paddy in the delta are July 31, and in Madurai and Krishnagiri August 15.
Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks)

- Current events of national and international importance.
- Indian Polity and Governance- Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.
- Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-III

General Studies- II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
- Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

PAPER-IV

General Studies-III: Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management

- Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
- Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System-objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.
News:
- Concerns of states regarding the changes approved by the central government to Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).
- Inclusion of status of irrigation will put more burden on the States if the insurance companies increase the premium to more than 30 percent of insured amount.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY):
- It is a crop insurance scheme, launched in 2016.
- Implemented under the overall guidance & control of the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW).
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme.
- Objectives:
  ✓ Providing insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers.
  ✓ To stabilize their income.
  ✓ To encourage them to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
Eligibility:

- All farmers growing notified crops in a notified area who have interest to get insured in the crop.
- All farmers who have taken Seasonal Agricultural Operations (SAO) loans from Financial Institutions (FIs) for the notified crop season are compulsorily covered.
- Farmers who have taken non-standard Kisan Credit Card/crop loans can voluntarily opt for this scheme. They will be considered as non-loanee farmers.
- And all non-loanee farmers including sharecroppers/tenant farmers can voluntarily opt for this scheme.

Crops covered under this scheme:

- Food crops (Cereals, Millets and Pulses).
- Oilseeds.
- Annual Commercial/Horticultural crops are covered.
- Perennial horticultural crops for which standard methodology for yield estimation is available.
Types of risks covered under the Scheme

• Failure of standing crops due to non-preventable risks like Natural disasters like Fire, adverse weather, Flood, Drought and also Pests/ Diseases etc.

• Losses arising out of ‘prevented sowing’ due to adverse weather conditions.

• Post-harvest losses due to specific perils like cyclone and unseasonal rains.

• States may consider providing add-on coverage for crop loss due to attack by wild animals wherever the risk is perceived to be substantial and is identifiable.

Risks not covered:

• Losses due to war, nuclear risks, malicious damage, and preventable risks etc.

Premium rates of the scheme:

• Premium paid by farmers:
  ✓ 2% for all Kharif crops
  ✓ 1.5% for all Rabi crops.
  ✓ 5% for annual commercial and horticultural crops.
  ✓ 5% for perennial horticultural crops (pilot basis by states).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Maximum Premium payable by farmer (% of Sum Insured)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kharif</td>
<td>All food grain and Oilseeds crops (all Cereals, Millets, Pulses and Oilseeds crops)</td>
<td>2.0% of SI or Actuarial rate, whichever is less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabi</td>
<td>All food grain and Oilseeds crops (all Cereals, Millets, Pulses and oilseeds)</td>
<td>1.5% of SI or Actuarial rate, whichever is less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharif and Rabi</td>
<td>Annual Commercial/ Annual Horticultural crops</td>
<td>5% of SI or Actuarial rate, whichever is less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perennial horticultural crops (pilot basis)</td>
<td>5% of SI or Actuarial rate, whichever is less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Premium paid by non loanee farmers should be rounded off in Rupee terms
• balance premium will be paid by the Centre and State as subsidy on a 50:50 basis.
• Element called Status of Irrigation introduced by centre.
• determining the premium amount.

• States divided into irrigated and non-irrigated districts.
  ✓ Irrigated districts
    ➢ Central Subsidy for the scheme is limited for premium rates up to 25% for unirrigated areas/crops
  ✓ Un-irrigated Districts
    ➢ Central Subsidy for the scheme is limited for premium rates up to 30% for unirrigated areas/crops
  ✓ It will be 90% for North East States.
  ✓ Districts having 50% or more irrigated area will be considered as irrigated area/district.
Infant mortality rate surged in M.P. in 2018

26 infants among 1,000 live births in State died within first 7 days, says official

SESHARATH YADAV
BHOPAL

The infant mortality rate (IMR) in Madhya Pradesh, recording the country’s worst rate for years now, surged by a single point over the previous year to 48 in 2018, defying an improving annual trend for at least six years, according to the Office of the Registrar General India.

Assam pulled down the next highest rate of 44 a year before to 41, Odisha by one count to 40 and Kerala by three points to seven, the lowest among the bigger States. Even the country’s average rate has dropped single point to 32 but the rate climbed to 43 in Uttar Pradesh, making it the second highest.

Rural M.P.

In rural Madhya Pradesh, 52 children below one died per 1,000 live births (Infant mortality rate) and 36 in urban area. The country’s average stands at 36 deaths for rural and 23 for urban areas. The delay in getting treatment was among reasons cited for the rise in infant mortality.

IMR for boys in the State stood at 51, while for girls it was 46 in 2018, according to the Sample Registration System bulletin issued by the office.

As many as 26 infants of 1,000 live births in Madhya Pradesh died within the first seven days constituting more than half the infant deaths, explained Manish Singh, Deputy Director, State-unit of National Health Mission. “Early neonatal deaths form the largest chunk,” he said.

Increasing premature deliveries, infections, birth asphyxiation and delay in securing treatment leading to complicated deliveries were the major causes, he said.

Major concern

“A major concern is birth spacing as in most cases two children were born within one year and a half years against the advised gap of around three years. This may result in premature deliveries of low birth weight babies,” he said.

Sagar, Jabalpur and Rewa divisions witnessed higher infant mortality as did Jhansi, Gwalior and Barwani districts where high malnutrition levels was a major cause, said Dr. Singh.

Maternal health also had a bearing on the IMR, he said. In 2015-2017, Madhya Pradesh registered a maternal mortality ratio of 188 per 1 lakh live births, against the country’s average of 122.

“Antenatal and postnatal care were important aspects in bringing down Infant mortalities,” said Sachin Jain, who works for child rights.

“Further, the primary health system needs to be ramped up. The entire focus, despite paucity of specialists, is on big cities like Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and Jabalpur,” Mr. Jain said only 11.4% mothers received full antenatal care, according to the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16). “Antenatal check-ups for pregnant women are very minimal. So, despite a high claimed institutional deliveries, when pregnancy is not monitored properly that may lead to complicated deliveries,” he said.

To bring down the IMR, Mr. Singh said, “We are setting up paediatric intensive care units in 26 districts, available only in five districts until 2018. We are also enhancing our manpower.”

As for encouraging community referrals and ensuring timely treatment, the NHM was training workers at health and wellness centres, he said.
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with respect to IMR:

- SDG3 is about ‘Ensuring Healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages’.

- target number 3.2:
  - By 2030, the world needs to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age.
  - Aim to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1000 live births.
  - Aim to reduce the under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1000 live births.
  - Neonatal mortality rate: The number of death of children before 29 days after they are born per 1000 live birth
  - Under-5 mortality rate: The number of deaths of children who are ‘under 5 years of age’ per 1000 live births.

News:

- Recent findings of the Office of the Registrar General, India regarding Infant Mortality Rate in India.

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR):

- Number of infant deaths recorded under the age of 1 per 1000 live births.
Current trends of IMR in India

- Reports of Sample Registration System (SRS) published the Office of the Registrar General of Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Madhya Pradesh performed the worst in the country with respect to IMR in 2018 with 48.
  ✔ 52 in rural M. P. and 36 in urban area.
- Uttar Pradesh had the second highest rate of IMR with 43; Assam and Chhattisgarh had the third highest rate of 41 and Odisha had 4th highest rate of 40.
- Kerala had the lowest IMR among the bigger States and it was at 7.
- India’s average rate dropped by single-point to 32.
- India’s average stands at 36 deaths for rural and 23 for urban areas.
Major reasons for high IMR:

- Increasing premature deliveries.
- Low birth weight babies.
- Infections.
- Birth asphyxiation.
- Delay in securing treatment leading to complicated deliveries.
- Poor maternal health.
- Poor maternal and prenatal/neonatal care.
Chart 82: Infant mortality rates by sex, India and bigger States/UTs, 2018
Practice Question – Prelims

Q1. Logistics Performance Index is released by which of the following?

(a) World Bank
(b) International Monetary Fund
(c) World Economic Forum
(d) World Trade Organization
'Mulling national logistics law'

Ministry aims to replace current transportation of goods law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Commerce Ministry is considering replacing the Multi-Modal Transportation of Goods Act (MMTG) with a full-fledged national logistics law with a view to promote growth of the sector, a senior government official said on Saturday.

Special Secretary in the logistics division of the Ministry, Pawan Agarwal said a National Logistics Efficiency and Advancement Predictability and Safety Act (NLEAPS) is under consideration and this law tends to define various participants of the logistics space and create a light regulatory ecosystem.

“What the logistics sector is all about is not very clear to us as of now and in that direction, we need to clearly define what the logistics sector is and what the various elements in it are... We are considering replacing it with a full-fledged national logistics law.” NLEAPS is under consideration, he said at a webinar organised by industry chamber PHDCCI.

Multimodal transportation refers to a combination of more than one mode of movement, such as rail, road or sea, for end-to-end delivery of goods.

“We are working towards finalising a national logistics policy. We will be having consultations once the draft is finalised,” he added.

The move assumes significance as high logistics cost impacts the competitiveness of domestic goods in the international market. Effective implementation of the policy would help provide an impetus to trade, enhance export competitiveness, and improve India’s ranking in the Logistics Performance Index.

India’s logistics sector is highly fragmented and the government aims to reduce the logistics cost from the present 14% of the Gross Domestic Product to less than 10%.

According to an earlier statement from the Ministry, the sector is complex, with more than 20 government agencies, 40 partnering agencies, 37 export promotion councils, 500 certifications and 10,000 commodities.
Logistics Performance Index (LPI)

- An interactive benchmarking tool created to help countries to identify the challenges and opportunities that they face in their performance on trade logistics and what they can do to improve their performance.
- Report - “Connecting to Compete”.
- Provides information on logistics infrastructure, service provision, cross-border trade facilitation and other aspects.

- LPI 2018

- Comparisons across 160 countries.
- Both qualitative and quantitative measures and helps to build profiles of logistics friendliness for these countries.

- Two different perspectives

- International LPI – provides qualitative evaluations of a country in six areas by its trading partners—logistics professionals working outside the country.
- Six indicators

1. The efficiency of customs and border management clearance.
2. The quality of trade- and transport-related infrastructure.
3. The ease of arranging competitively priced international shipments.
4. The competence and quality of logistics services.
5. The ability to track and trace consignments.
6. The frequency with which shipments reach consignees within the scheduled or expected delivery time.

#CurrentAffairs #February2020 #Important_topics
Target - UPSC Prelims 2020 Series || Current Affairs || February 2020 || 55 Important Topics ||

35,272 views • May 4, 2020
Practice Question – Prelims

Q2. Consider the following statements under the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking of Access of Information by Public) Rules 2009.

1. In normal circumstances, the Central Government decides on the request to block public access of any information through computer resource, after giving opportunity of hearing to the alleged intermediary.

2. Under emergency circumstances, the Final order is made by the Central Government after receiving recommendations from the examining committee.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
Q3. Consider the following statements with reference to Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.

1. The objectives of this scheme include providing insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers.

2. It covers failure of standing crops due to non-preventable risks like Natural disasters but crop loss due to attack by wild animals are not covered.

3. Central Subsidy for the scheme is limited for premium rates up to 30% for unirrigated areas/crops and 25% for irrigated areas/crops.

4. Farmers who have taken non-standard Kisan Credit Card /crop loans should compulsorily enroll in this scheme.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 3 and 4 only
Q4. Consider the following statements with reference to Infant Mortality Rate.

1. Infant mortality rate is the number of infant deaths recorded under the age of 1 year per 1000 live births.

2. As per the reports of Sample Registration System (SRS) published by Office of Registrar General, in 2018, Haryana performed the worst and Kerala performed the best with respect to IMR.

3. India’s average rate of IMR has dropped in 2018 compared to previous years.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
Answers
1. Option ‘a’ – World Bank
2. Option ‘c’ – Both 1 and 2
3. Option ‘c’ – 1 and 3 only
4. Option ‘c’ – 1 and 3 only
Practice Question – Mains

GS – III

Q. Operation of passenger train services in Railways is now set to be liberalised. Discuss the need for it. What influence this is expected to have on Railway sector?

(250 words, 15 marks)