

**GOVERNANCE****Labour Reforms**

Recently, the recent versions of three labour codes namely Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2020, Code on Social Security Bill, 2020 and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020 have been introduced in Lok Sabha.

**Key Points****Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2020:**

- It has raised the threshold for the requirement of a standing order to over 300 workers which implies that industrial establishments with up to 300 workers will not be required to furnish a standing order.
- Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 makes it obligatory for employers of an industrial establishment where 100 or more workers are employed to clearly define the conditions of employment and rules of conduct for workmen, by way of standing orders/services rules and to make them known to the workmen employed.
- The new provision for standing order will be applicable for every industrial establishment wherein 300 or more than 300 workers are employed or were employed on any day of the preceding twelve months.
- It was earlier suggested by the Standing Committee on Labour which also suggested that the threshold be increased accordingly in the Code itself and the words 'as may be notified by the Appropriate Government' be removed because reform of labour laws through the executive route is undesirable and should be avoided to the extent possible.
- After becoming a law, orders will not be dependent on whims and fancies of executives of state governments.
- Without the need of a standing order in increased industrial establishments due to the raised threshold, the process of hiring and firing workers will be more flexible and faster for employers which would result in increased employment.
- It also introduces new conditions for carrying out a legal strike. The time period for arbitration proceedings has been included in the conditions for workers before going on a legal strike as against only the time for conciliation at present.
- No person employed in any industrial establishment shall go on strike without a 60-day notice and during the pendency of proceedings before a Tribunal or a National Industrial Tribunal and sixty days after the conclusion of such proceedings.
- At present, a person employed in a public utility service cannot go on strike unless they give notice for a strike within six weeks before going on strike or within fourteen days of giving such notice, which the IR Code now proposes to apply for all the industrial establishments.
- It has also proposed to set up a re-skilling fund for training of retrenched workers with contribution from the employer, of an amount equal to 15 days last drawn by the worker.

**Concerns:**

- It will water down the labour rights for workers in small establishments having less than 300 workers and would enable companies to introduce arbitrary service conditions for workers.
- It will give tremendous amounts of flexibility to the employers in terms of hiring and firing, dismissal for alleged misconduct and retrenchment for economic reasons will be completely possible for all the industrial establishments employing less than 300 workers which is complete demolition of employment security.
- The new conditions for carrying out a legal strike elongate the legally permissible time frame before the workers can go on a legal strike, making a legal strike near impossible.
- It has expanded to cover all industrial establishments for the required notice period and other conditions for a legal strike even though the Standing Committee on Labour had recommended against it beyond the public utility services like water, electricity, natural gas, telephone and other essential services, as is the case at present.
- The mention of 'other sources' for funding the re-skilling fund is vague. The reskilling fund is arbitrarily framed as the Code has no idea from where the funds for the same will come apart from employers' contributions.
- These ambiguities are left to the rule-making processes and the bureaucrats and, further, there are unclarity over who will reskill the workers and how adequate the funding will be.

**Social Security Code Bill, 2020:**

- It proposes a National Social Security Board which shall recommend to the central government for formulating suitable schemes for different sections of unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers.
- Also, aggregators employing gig workers will have to contribute 1-2% of their annual turnover for social security, with the total contribution not exceeding 5% of the amount payable by the aggregator to gig and platform workers.
- Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020:
- It has defined inter-state migrant workers as the worker who has come on their own from one state and obtained employment in another state, earning up to Rs. 18,000 a month.
- The proposed definition makes a distinction from the present definition of only contractual employment.
- It has dropped the earlier provision for temporary accommodation for workers near the worksites and has proposed a journey allowance, a lump sum amount of fare to be paid by the employer for to and fro journey of the worker to their native place from the place of their employment.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATION**
**International Day of Peace**

Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on **21st September**.

- **Theme for 2020 : *Shaping Peace Together.***

**Key Points**

- The United Nations (UN) General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.

**Background:**

- The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- In 2001, the General Assembly unanimously voted to designate the Day as a period of non-violence and cease-fire.

**Other:** The United Nations (UN) will celebrate its 75th anniversary on 24th October 2020.

**Challenges to Global Peace:**

- **Global Unrests:** Over 25 countries are facing deadly wars today. According to the World Population Review, 8 countries including Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Turkey, Somalia, Iraq, Mexico and Libya suffered at least 1,000 deaths each (mainly civilians) through militarised attacks and battles in 2019.
- **Refugee Crisis:** According to the UN Refugee Agency, 79.5 million were displaced at the end of 2019, due to armed conflicts, persecution and other reasons.
- **Role of Global Powers:** The USA, Russia and China are required to uphold peace and international harmony being the permanent members of the UN Security Council. However, on the contrary, they have been found to fuel instability in order to achieve geopolitical hegemony.

**Examples:**

- The tragedy in Yemen, which the UN has declared as the world's worst humanitarian disaster, is the outcome of indiscriminate attacks by the U.S.-backed coalition of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, whose geopolitical goal is to counterbalance Iran.
- Libya's descent into chaos is the product of the active involvement of mercenaries and weapons pumped in by Russia and the USA-allied Gulf Arab monarchies to push back Turkey's influence.
- China's hegemonic expansionism against its neighbours and its 'new Cold War' with the U.S. have significantly raised risks of military clashes in Asia.
- **Domestic Suppressions:** Domestic surveillance and repression with the use of technology is being used by countries to suppress dissenting voices.
- **New Power Tussle:** The conflict and competition between the powerful countries, like the USA-China New Cold War is also going on, risking global peace.
- **Pandemic Challenge:** Covid-19 has posed a new concern that may directly and indirectly affect the global peace through lack of access to resources, health and education, displacement etc.

**Way Forward**

On the International Day of Peace, the unjust structure which privileges great powers and permits their ghastly machinations should be diagnosed and challenged. Intellectuals, social movements and responsible states should prioritise struggling for an equitable world order.

**ENVIRONMENT AND DIVERSITY****Killing of more than 300 African elephants**

Neuro-toxins in water produced by **cyanobacteria** killed more than 300 African elephants in the **Okavango delta region**, Botswana (country in Southern Africa).

- Neuro-toxins are substances that damage, destroy, or impair the functioning of neural tissue.

**Key Points****Cyanobacteria:**

- Cyanobacteria, also called blue-green algae, are microscopic organisms found naturally in soils and all types of water.
- These single-celled organisms (bacteria) live in fresh, brackish (combined salt and freshwater), and marine water.
- These organisms use sunlight to make their own food.
- In warm, nutrient-rich (high in phosphorus and nitrogen) environments, cyanobacteria can multiply quickly.
- Not all produce toxins but scientists say toxic ones are occurring more frequently as climate change drives up global temperatures.
- **Climate Change and Algal Bloom:** An algal bloom is a rapid increase in the population of algae or cyanobacteria in an aquatic system.
- **Warming water temperature:**
- Toxic blue-green algae thrive in warm, slow-moving water.
- Warmer water due to climate change might favor harmful algae.
- Warmer temperatures prevent water from mixing, allowing algae to grow thicker and faster.
- **Changes in salinity:**
- Climate change might lead to more droughts, which make freshwater saltier. This can cause marine algae to invade freshwater ecosystems.

**Higher carbon dioxide levels:**

Algae need carbon dioxide to survive. Higher levels of carbon dioxide in the air and water can lead to rapid growth of algae, especially toxic blue-green algae that can float to the surface of the water.

**Changes in rainfall:**

Climate change might affect rainfall patterns, leading to alternating periods of drought and intense storms. This can cause more nutrient runoff into water bodies, feeding more algal blooms.

**The African elephant:**

- It is the largest animal walking the Earth.
- Their herds wander through 37 countries in Africa.
- They are vulnerable as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.
- African elephants in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe are included in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix II.
- Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.

**Two Subspecies: The Savanna (or bush) elephant and the Forest elephant.**

Savanna elephants are larger than forest elephants, and their tusks curve outwards.

Forest elephants, a distinct subspecies of African elephants, are uniquely adapted to the forest habitat of the Congo Basin, but are in sharp decline due to poaching for the international ivory trade.

The World Elephant Day is celebrated on 12th August every year to spread awareness for the conservation and protection of the largest mammal on land.

The day was launched in 2012 to bring attention to the urgent plight of Asian and African elephants.

**Botswana**

- It is a landlocked country of southern Africa.
- Botswana is mostly flat with a few hills, most of its highest points located along the south-east section of the country (the eastern edge of the Kalahari Basin).
- The semi-arid Kalahari Desert covers about 70% of Botswana's surface.

- While Kalahari does receive about 500 millimetres in the wettest parts per annum, the Kalahari is considered a desert because it has a vast surface area covered with sand.

**Biodiversity:** It is home to plants and animals, mostly different types of acacia trees, animals like lion, cheetah, leopard, hyena, antelopes, meerkats, as well as many birds species and reptiles.

**Indigenous People:** It is also home to the tribes like- San people (Bushmen), Tswana, Kgalakgadi, and Herero people.

**Okavango Delta:** It is one of the world's largest inland deltas.

- It spans about 15,000 square kilometres and is relatively flat topography.

### INDIAN POLITY

#### No-confidence resolution against Rajyasabha deputy Chairman

- Rajya Sabha members of 12 opposition parties moved a no-confidence resolution against Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman over the passage of two controversial farm Bills by the voice vote.

#### **Key Points**

##### **Resolution:**

- The Deputy Chairman has violated all the canons of law, procedure, parliamentary procedures, practices and fair play. The Deputy Chairman did not allow points of order to be raised and did not allow large numbers of members of Rajya Sabha, from diverse political parties, to even speak against farm bills.
- This no confidence resolution is for the removal of the Deputy Chairman. It is not the same as the No Confidence Motion specified in Rule 198 of the Rules of Procedure and conduct of Lok Sabha, which can lead to the resignation of the Council of Ministers. Article 75 of the Constitution specifies that the Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of People.
- Some Precedents: Earlier resolutions moved against the first Lok Sabha Speaker G V Mavalankar in 1951, Speaker Sardar Hukam Singh in 1966, and Speaker Balram Jakhar in 1987.
- All of these resolutions were negated by the House.

#### **Options with the Government:**

- **Suspension of Opposition MPs :** In a counter move, the government is likely to seek the suspension of Opposition MPs who were involved in the unruly scenes witnessed in the House.
- The government can invoke Rule 256, which deals with the suspension of a member.
- The final decision of suspension rests with the Chairman.
- **Privilege Motion:** The ruling party can also move a privilege motion against some of the Opposition MPs.
- A privilege motion is invoked when there is a breach of parliamentary privileges by a member.

#### **Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha**

- The Deputy Chairman is elected by the Rajya Sabha itself from amongst its members. The post of the Deputy Chairman is not subordinate to the Chairman.

#### **In the Role of the Chairman:**

- The Deputy Chairman performs the duties of the Chairman's office when it is vacant or when the Vice-President acts as President or discharges the functions of the President.
- He also acts as the Chairman when the Chairman is absent from the sitting of the House.
- In both cases, he has all the powers of the Chairman.
- Like the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, while presiding over the House, cannot vote in the first instance; he can only exercise a casting vote in the case of a tie.

**Removal:** According to the Article 90 of the Constitution, the Deputy Chairman vacates his office in any of the following three cases:

- If he ceases to be a member of the Rajya Sabha;
- If he resigns by writing to the Chairman; and
- If he is removed by a resolution passed by a majority of all the then members of the Rajya Sabha. Such a resolution can be moved only after giving 14 days' advance notice.

#### **Relevant Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business**

- Rule 256, Suspension of member: This is decided by the presiding officer of the house on the grounds like a member disregarding the authority of the Chair or abusing the rules of the Council.
- Rule 258 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Rajya Sabha makes a provision to enable a member to raise a point of order. It provides as follows:
- Any member may at any time submit a point of order for the decision of the Chairman.

- The Chairman’s decision shall be final in this regard.

**Point of order:**

- A point of order is an objection to the pending matter or proceeding is in violation of a written and unwritten rule of the House.

**GEOGRAPHY**

**Increase in frequency of Mediterranean Hurricanes**

- Scientists have warned that extra-tropical storms in the Mediterranean Sea, known as ‘Medicanes’ or ‘Mediterranean Hurricanes’, could become more frequent due to human-induced climate change.



**Key Points**

**Medicanes:**

- Medicanes are tropical-like cyclones formed over the Mediterranean Sea.
- With the surrounding dry climate and the relatively shallow waters of the sea, the occurrence of tropical-like cyclones is infrequent.
- They typically form in the fall or winter months and occur once or twice a year.
- On September 18, 2020, a medicane named Lanos made landfall along the coast of Greece and caused heavy rainfall and flooding in Greece and surrounding islands.

**Comparison with Tropical Cyclones:**

- These occur more in relatively colder waters than tropical cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons. Hence, the cores of these storms are also cold, as compared to the warm cores of tropical cyclones (but warmer as compared to extra-tropical cyclones).
- These are typically smaller in diameter and have lower wind speeds than true tropical cyclones.
- Sometimes, warm-cored tropical cyclones transform into cold-cored extratropical cyclones and in rare cases, the opposite can also happen.
- Such an event of extra tropical cyclone becoming a tropical cyclone occurred in November 2011 and caused severe flooding in parts of Spain, Italy and France, killing 11 people.

**Increase in Occurrence**

- Medicanes have increased in number in the past half-century.
- Two of these storms, one in 2005 and another in 2012, even formed over the Black Sea, which is a much smaller water body than the Mediterranean Sea.
- Due to global warming, warmer sea surface temperatures in the Mediterranean can allow the storms to take on more tropical appearances and characteristics, increasing the wind speeds and making the storms more intense and cause heavier rainfall.

- This year is a mild La Niña, according to the World Meteorological Organization. La Niña tends to reduce the land falling hurricanes but even if the La Niña this year is mild, the hurricane season is very active. This implies that the impacts of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) are being modulated by global warming in all oceans, including the Mediterranean.
- **La Niña** is the cooling phase of the ENSO cycle in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, as opposed to the warming El Niño phase. It is characterised by the unusual cooling of the central and east-central equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- The Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate released Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2019 warns of increased temperatures and more frequent extreme El Niño and La Niña events.

**Threats:**

- Increase in frequency of medicanes will be a threat for already vulnerable populations living in North Africa, possibly triggering human migration.
- They could also be a menace for European countries like Italy and Greece.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**

**Komodo Dgragan**

- A recent study conducted by Australian universities has found out that the Komodo dragon could become extinct in the next few decades due to climate change.
- In February 2019, the government of Australia officially declared the first known extinction of a mammal (Bramble Cay melomys) as a result of human-induced climate change.



**Key Points**

- **Scientific Name: Varanus komodoensis.**
- Komodo dragons are the largest and heaviest lizards on Earth. They have long, flat heads with rounded snouts, scaly skin, bowed legs, and huge, muscular tails.
- Komodo dragons can eat almost anything, including invertebrates, birds, and mammals like deer, pigs, and even large water buffalo.
- They have venom glands loaded with toxins which have been shown to secrete anticoagulants.
- An anticoagulant is a compound which prevents the victim's blood from clotting, causing it to bleed to death.
- The venom lowers blood pressure, causes massive bleeding, and induces shock.

**Habitat:**

- Komodo dragons have thrived in the harsh climate of Indonesia's Lesser Sunda Islands for millions of years. They prefer the islands' tropical forests but can be found across the islands.
- Komodo National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is situated in the Island of Komodo (eastern Indonesia) and is the only habitat for this lizard species. Later, it became the capital of the Qutb Shahi kings, who ruled from CE 1518-1687.

**Threats:**

- Anthropogenic factors.
- Small size of population, less prey and higher inbreeding factors.
- Climate change is likely to cause a sharp decline in the availability of habitat, reducing their populations even further.

**Conservation:**

IUCN Status: **Vulnerable.**

CITES: **Appendix I.** (The commercial trading of live specimens or any parts, dead or alive of Komodo is prohibited.)

In August 2019, the Indonesian government ordered the relocation of the residents of the Island of Komodo in a bid to conserve Komodo dragons and the Komodo National Park.

### **DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. “Financial inclusion is an essential tool in pursuit of social justice”. In light of the given statement , examine the role of digital technology in furthering the cause of financial inclusion.(250 words)**

**Ans.**

- Financial inclusion may be defined as the process of ensuring access to financial services and timely and adequate credit where needed by vulnerable groups such as weaker sections and low income groups at an affordable cost.
- Social justice is a political philosophical concept centered around equality among people along various social dimensions.
- In economic terms, social justice efforts usually seek to elevate the economic status of poor and marginal groups.
- In India, financial inclusion is a critical part of the development process to achieve social justice. The state of financial inclusion has improved considerably over time. However, the financial inclusion hasn't reached the poorest of the poor.

**Digital technology is playing a big role in bringing financial inclusion in India:**

- **Ease of operation:** Digital technology has made financial inclusion easier for the poor daily wage labourers. They need not stand in long queues and miss their daily wage. Along with that transactions can now be made with a click of a button making it easier to operate for everyone.
- **Better governance and policy implementation:** Digitalisation and financial inclusion has led to the beneficiaries getting allowances directly in their accounts and hence elimination the middle men, who were highly corrupt in their practices.
- **Increased tax base:** While Banking has now taken to digital platforms and more and more people using the cashless transactions, escaping taxes had become nearly impossible.

**Integration of Financial Services**

- The convergence of JAM trinity with the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme has largely been successful.
- Due to this, there has been a significant improvement in terms of targeted and accurate payments.
- It has also helped in weeding out duplication of entries, and bringing down the reliance on cash mode of payments.

**Challenges**

- **Non-Universal Access to Bank Accounts**
  - Bank accounts are a gateway to all financial services. But, according to a report by the World Bank, about 190 million adults in India do not have a bank account, making India the world's second largest nation in terms of unbanked population after China.
- **Digital Divide**
  - The most common barriers to the adoption of digital technology which may promote financial inclusion are non-availability of suitable financial products and lack of skills among the stakeholders to use digital services.
- **Infrastructural issues**
  - Low-income consumers who are not able to afford the technology required to access digital services
- **Informal and Cash-Dominated Economy**
  - India is the heavily dominated cash economy, this poses a challenge for digital payment adoption.
  - The combination of a huge informal sector along with a high dependence on cash mode of transaction poses an impediment to digital financial inclusion

**Way forward**

- **Leveraging JAM Trinity:**
  - Technology should be used to improve the assessment of credit-worthiness for households and informal businesses.
  - With the adoption of appropriate technology a new data-sharing framework (using Jan Dhan and Aadhaar platforms), to enable easier access to credit, with adequate safeguards for maintaining data privacy.

- **Need For Data Protection Regime:**
- In addition to greater digitization, there is also a need to strengthen cyber security and data protection regime in the country.
- **Leveraging Differentiated Banks:**
- Differentiated Banks like Payment banks and small finance banks can be leveraged to scale up payments systems in underserved areas.
- **Promoting USSD for Rural Areas:**
- Payments through the USSD channel should be promoted, as they have an advantage over the internet in that it can also cover a large proportion of non-smartphone users.
- In India, USSD can be particularly useful in rural areas where some segments still do not have reliable access to the internet.

### Conclusion

- For the success of financial inclusion in India, there has to be a multidimensional approach through which existing digital platforms, infrastructure, human resources, and policy frameworks are strengthened and new technological innovations should be promoted.
- With the help of Digital technology, financial inclusion has the potential to amplify the benefits of economic growth to the poor. balance. Therefore, Parliaments should not dispense with these even at the time of war.

## DAILY QUIZ

1. Consider the following statements about Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India:
  1. The highest number of PVTGs are found in Madhya Pradesh.
  2. Absence of written language is one of the criteria for determining PVTG status.
  3. There are 75 PVTGs officially notified by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
  4. Bondas and Didiayis Tribes are included in the list of PVTGs.
 Which of the statements given above are correct?  
 a) 1 and 3 only      **b) 2 and 4 only**      c) 2, 3 and 4      d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
2. Consider the following statements regarding Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT):
  1. InvITs are mutual funds like instruments that are designed to pool small sums of money from a number of investors.
  2. InvITs are regulated by the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA).
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 a) **1 only**      b) 2 only      c) Both 1 and 2      d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. With reference to Komodo Dragon, consider the following statements:
  1. They are the largest and heaviest lizards on Earth.
  2. The only island inhabiting this species is in Indonesia.
  3. Its IUCN status is critically endangered.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 a) 1 only      b) 2 and 3 only      **c) 1 and 2 only**      d) 1, 2 and 3
4. Which of the following statements is/are correct?
  1. Neutrinos are subatomic fundamental particles with no charge.
  2. Neutrinos are created from radioactive decay.
  3. A Neutrino Observatory is being set up in the Himalayan region.
 Choose the correct option using code given below:  
 a) 1 only      b) 2 only      **c) 1 and 2 only**      d) 1, 2 and 3
5. Which of the following are Rabi crops?
  1. Wheat
  2. Barley
  3. Gram
  4. Mustard
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:  
 a) 1 and 4 only      b) 2 and 3 only      c) 2, 3 and 4      **d) 1, 2, 3 and 4**