

GOVERNANCE**Initiatives for Transgender Persons**

Recently, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched the National Portal for Transgender Persons and has inaugurated Garima Greh, a shelter home for transgender persons.

Key Points**National Portal for Transgender Persons:**

- It has been launched in consonance with the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020.
- It would help transgenders in digitally applying for a certificate and identity card from anywhere in the country, thus preventing any physical interaction with officials.
- It will help them track the status of application, rejection, grievance redressal, etc. which will ensure transparency in the process.
- The issuing authorities are also under strict timelines to process the applications and issue certificates and I-cards without any necessary delays.

Garima Greh:

- It has been opened in Vadodara, Gujarat and will be run in association with the Lakshya Trust, a community-based organisation entirely run by the transgenders.
- The Scheme of 'Shelter Home for Transgender Persons' includes shelter facility, food, clothing, recreational facilities, skill development opportunities, yoga, physical fitness, library facilities, legal support, technical advice for gender transition and surgeries, capacity building of transgender organizations, employment, etc.
- The scheme will rehabilitate a minimum of 25 transgender persons in each homes identified by the Ministry.
- 10 cities have been identified to set up the 13 Shelter Homes.
- Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020
- The Central Government made the rules under the powers conferred by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.
- The Act came into effect on 10th January 2020, which is the first concrete step towards ensuring welfare of transgender persons.
- The rules seek to recognise the identity of transgenders and prohibit discrimination in the fields of education, employment, healthcare, holding or disposing of property, holding public or private office and access to and use of public services and benefits.

Background:

- In 2014, the Supreme Court of India, in the case of the National Legal Services Authority versus Union of India, established the foundation for the rights of transgender persons in India by recognising 'transgender' as a 'third gender' and laying down several measures for prohibition of discrimination against transgender persons and protection of their rights.
- The judgment recommended reservations for transgenders in jobs and educational institutions and their right to declare the self-perceived gender identity without undergoing a sex reassignment surgery.

Key Features of the Law Relating to Transgender Persons:**Definitions:**

- Definitions of 'person with intersex variation' and 'transgender person' have been provided to include trans men and trans women (whether or not such person has undergone sex reassignment surgery, hormone or other therapy).

Non-discrimination:

- It prohibits the discrimination of transgender persons at educational establishments, in employment or occupational opportunities, healthcare services and access to public facilities and benefits.
- It further reinforces transgender persons' right to movement, right to reside, rent, or otherwise occupy property.

Certificate of Identity:

- It provides for a right to self-perceived gender identity and casts an obligation on the district magistrate to issue a 'certificate of identity' as a transgender person, without the requirement of any medical or physical examination.
- If the transgender person undergoes medical intervention to change sex either as a male or female and requires a revised identity certificate then they would need to apply to the district magistrate

along with a certificate issued by the medical superintendent or chief medical officer of the concerned hospital.

Equal Opportunity Policy:

- Every establishment has been mandated to formulate an equal opportunity policy for transgender persons with certain specific information as prescribed under the law.
- This will help create inclusive establishments like inclusive education, etc.
- The process of inclusion also requires creation of infrastructure facilities like separate wards in hospitals and washrooms (unisex toilets).

Complaint Officer:

- Every establishment has been mandated to designate a person as a complaint officer to handle complaints from transgender persons.

Transgender Protection Cell:

- Every state government will also have to set up a Transgender Protection Cell under District Magistrate and Director general of Police to monitor offence against transgender persons.

Welfare schemes:

- The government has been mandated to formulate welfare schemes and programs which are transgender sensitive, non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory.

Medical Care Facilities:

- The government has been mandated to set up separate Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) sero-surveillance centres to conduct sero-surveillance for transgender persons; provide for medical care facilities including sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy; and provide for a coverage of medical expenses by a comprehensive insurance scheme for surgeries and other therapies.

National Council for Transgender Persons:

- Constitution of the NCT to advise the government for the formulation and monitoring of policies and redress the grievances of transgender persons.

Offences and Penalties:

- Offences, like indulging transgender persons in forced or bonded labour or denial of access to public places or physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- Other offences committed under the provisions of the Transgender Persons Act, are punishable with imprisonment for a term of at least six months, extending up to two years along with fine.

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT**Awards for Tiger Conservation**

The Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR - Uttar Pradesh) has bagged international award TX2 for doubling the number of tigers in the past four years.

- Also, the Transboundary Manas Conservation Area or TraMCA (India-Bhutan border) has received the Conservation Excellence Award for 2020.
- Earlier, India's 2018 Tiger census (once in every four years) had set a Guinness record for being the largest camera-trap wildlife survey.

Key Points**About the Awards:**

- Launched recently, these awards were open to submissions from any site in a tiger range country that has achieved remarkable measurable progress since 2010.
- Site: An area having a functional tiger population, legally designated as a "site" under national legislation.
- Award winners were announced on 23rd November 2020 - the 10 year anniversary for the global TX2 goal.
- Sites will receive a small financial grant to be used to further tiger conservation.
- TX2 Award: It goes to one site that has achieved remarkable and measurable increase in its tiger population since 2010.

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.

TX2 Goal

- The TX2 goal is a global commitment to double the world's wild tigers by 2022.
- The goal has been set by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) through the Global Tiger Initiative, Global Tiger Forum and other critical platforms.
- All 13 tiger range governments came together for the first time at the St Petersburg Summit (Russia -2010) where they committed to double the number of wild tigers by 2022.
- Tiger Range Countries include India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.
- Tiger (*Panthera Tigris*) is categorised as 'Endangered' under the IUCN Red List and is listed under Appendix I of CITES.
- Global Tiger Day is observed on 29th July across the world.
- India's Project Tiger was launched in 1973 with 9 tiger reserves. Tiger has been listed under 'Schedule I' of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve:

- Location: Pilibhit district, Lakhimpur Kheri District and Bahraich District of Uttar Pradesh
- The northern edge of the reserve lies along the Indo-Nepal border while the southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.
- Declaration: PTR was declared in 2014-15 on the basis of its special type of ecosystem with vast open spaces and sufficient feed for the elegant predators.
- PTR is one of the finest examples of the exceedingly diverse and productive Terai ecosystems (low-lying land at the foot of the Himalayas).

Features:

- The study done by 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 behavioral adaptations of the tiger unique to the Terai region.
- It is home to a habitat for over 127 animals, 326 bird species and 2,100 flowering plants.
- Wild animals include tiger, swamp deer, Bengal florican, hog deer, leopard, etc.
- It has high sal forests, plantation and grasslands with several water bodies.
- Bagged TX2 Award: The number of tigers in the reserve area has gone up to 65 from 25 in the period of just four years (2014-18).

Other Protected Areas in Uttar Pradesh:

- Dudhwa National Park
- Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary
- Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary
- Sur Sarovar (Keethan) Bird Sanctuary

Transboundary Manas Conservation Area:

Formation: It was conceptualized in 2011 with the vision to jointly develop and manage a transboundary conservation area between Bhutan and India, for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Features:

- The TramCA landscape with an area of over 6500 sq. km forms a vital mosaic of conservation spaces across the Eastern Himalayas, and covers the entire Manas Tiger Reserve in India, four protected areas in Bhutan and also two biological corridors.
- The Manas Tiger Reserve in India and Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan form the core of this biologically outstanding trans-boundary region that is home to tigers, elephants, rhinos and more than 1,500 species of mammals, birds and vascular plants.
- The Manas River flowing through Royal Manas National Park and Manas National Park also makes both parks an important watershed area in the region.
- The landscape and its surroundings support over 10 million people in India and Bhutan with its services.
- Bagged Conservation Excellence Award: For efforts to increase the tiger population. The recognition was for the TramCA comprising the 500 sq. km. Manas National Park in Assam and the 1,057-sq. km. Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan.
- The number of Tigers in the Indian Manas increased from 9 in 2010 to 25 in 2018 while that in the Bhutan Manas more than doubled from 12 in 2008 to 26 in 2018.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Cabinet Approves Capital Infusion into NIIF**

Recently, the Union Cabinet has given its approval to the proposal for equity infusion by the Government of Rs. 6000 crores in NIIF Debt Platform - sponsored by the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF).

- This was one of the twelve key measures made by the Union Minister for Finance as part of Government of India's stimulus to the economy, under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Key Points**Background:**

- As per the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), investment in infrastructure sector is targeted at Rs. 111 lakh crore over the next 5 years across various sub-sectors, creating substantial need for debt financing.
- It would require at least Rs. 60 to 70 lakh crores in debt financing.
- Current environment requires well-capitalized specialized infrastructure focused financial institutions, such as NIIF Debt Platform being developed by NIIF which can focus on lending across the project life cycle with a strong capital base and expertise driven approach.
- The current approval of equity infusion is subject to two conditions:
- Out of the proposed amount, only Rs. 2,000 crore would be allocated during the current year 2020-21.
- However, in view of the unprecedented financial situation and availability of limited fiscal space due to the prevailing Covid-19, the proposed amount may be disbursed only if there is readiness and demand for debt raising.
- NIIF will take all necessary steps to use the equity investments from Domestic and Global pension funds and sovereign wealth funds expeditiously.

NIIF Debt Platform:**It comprises of:**

- Aseem Infrastructure Finance Limited (AIFL): It is an IFC (Infrastructure Finance Company), established with the aim of playing a transformative role in growth of Indian infrastructure debt financing.
- NIIF Infrastructure Finance Limited (NIIF-IFL): It was incorporated as an Infrastructure Debt Fund (IDF) in 2014 for financing operating infrastructure projects.
- Contribution: It is expected to contribute nearly Rs. 1 lakh crores in debt to the infrastructure sector over the next 5 years.

Impact :

- It will act as a catalyst in attracting more investments into the infrastructure sector as envisaged in NIP.
- The process will also help relieve exposure of banks to infrastructure projects and free up space for new green-field projects.
- It will enhance liquidity of infrastructure assets and lower the risks.
- It is expected that a well-capitalized, well-funded and well-governed NIIF debt Platform can play a major role in infrastructure financing and development of the bond market in India by acting as an intermediary between the bond markets and infrastructure projects and companies.

National Investment and Infrastructure Fund

- NIIF is a government-backed entity established to provide long-term capital to the country's infrastructure sector.
- The Indian government has a 49% stake in NIIF with the rest held by foreign and domestic investors.
- With the Centre's significant stake, NIIF is considered India's quasi-sovereign wealth fund.
- It was set up in December 2015 as a Category-II Alternate Investment Fund.
- Across its three funds viz. Master Fund, Fund of Funds, and Strategic Opportunities Fund, it manages over USD 4.3 billion of capital.
- Its registered office is in New Delhi.

Terms**Debt financing:**

- When a company borrows money to be paid back at a future date with interest, it is known as debt financing.

Equity:

- Equity represents the shareholders' stake in the company, identified on a company's balance sheet.

Sovereign wealth fund:

- A sovereign wealth fund is a state-owned investment fund composed of money generated by the government, often derived from a country's surplus reserves.

Pension fund:

- A pension fund is any plan, fund, or scheme which provides retirement income.

Bond:

- It is a fixed income instrument that represents a loan made by an investor to a borrower. In simpler words, a bond acts as a contract between the investor and the borrower. Mostly Companies and Government issue bonds and investors buy those bonds as a savings and security option.

INDIAN POLITY**PM on One Nation, One Election**

Recently, the Prime Minister of India has addressed the concluding session of the 80th All India Presiding Officers Conference via videoconference, at Kevadiya (Gujarat) on the occasion of Constitution Day (26th November).

- He raised the pitch for 'One Nation, One Election', a single voter list for all polls and also asked the presiding officers to simplify the language of statute books and allow for an easier process to weed out redundant laws.
- He also paid tributes to the security forces and appreciated India's efforts to fight terrorism. The day marked 12 years of the Mumbai terror attacks.

Key Points**One Nation, One Election:**

- The idea is about structuring the Indian election cycle in a manner so that elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies are synchronised together so that the election to both can be held within a given span of time.

Advantages:

- Help keep a check on the poll expenses, party expenses, etc. and also save public money.
- Reduce the burden on administrative setup and security forces.
- Ensure timely implementation of the government policies and also ensure that the administrative machinery is engaged in developmental activities rather than electioneering.
- Solve the problem of governance on the part of the politicians who are ruling. It is generally seen that for short term political gains from a particular assembly election, ruling politicians avoid taking a harsh long term decision which can ultimately help the country in the long run.
- Provide more time to all the stakeholders i.e. political parties, Election Commission of India (ECI), paramilitary forces, civilians for the preparation of elections once in five years.

Challenges:

- The synchronisation is a major problem considering the traditions and conventions that India's Parliamentary system follows. The government is accountable to the Lower House and it is possible that the government can fall before completing its term and the moment the government falls, there has to be an election.
- It is difficult to convince and bring together all the political parties on the idea.
- For holding simultaneous elections, the requirements for Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) will double as the ECI has to provide two sets (one for election to the Legislative Assembly and second for that to the Lok Sabha).
- There will also be an additional requirement of the polling staff and for better security arrangements.

Suggestions:

- India held the elections for the assembly as well as the Lok Sabha from 1951-52 to till 1967. As such, therefore, there are no disagreements on adequacy and efficacy of the idea. India can even think of holding elections at the same time even for the local bodies.
- To sync the term of the State Legislative Assemblies with that of the Lok Sabha, the term of the state legislative assemblies can be reduced and increased accordingly. However, to do so, constitutional amendments may be needed in Articles 83, 85, 172, 174 and 356.

- In India, fixing the dates is not feasible because of the Parliamentary form of government so one radical solution is to switch to the Presidential form of Government where the President is not accountable to the House.
- Synchronising only the elections to the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

One Voter List:

- Only one voter list should be used for Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and other elections.

Advantages:

- A common electoral roll will save an enormous amount of effort and expenditure as the preparation of a separate voters list causes duplication of the effort and the expenditure.

Challenges:

- Persuading the state governments to tweak their respective laws and adopt the ECI voters list for municipal and panchayat polls.
- Requires a massive consensus-building exercise.

Suggestions:

- The mature approach calls for the option of states adopting EC's voter list.
- The EC's voters list has to be made in a way to fit the State Election Commissions' wards which is a tedious task but can be done by the use of technology.

All India Presiding Officers Conference

- It began in 1921, and the Gujarat event marks its centenary year.
- Theme for 2020: 'Harmonious Coordination between Legislature, Executive and Judiciary: Key to a Vibrant Democracy'.
- It emphasises on the need for coordination between all three wings of the state, viz. Legislature, Executive and Judiciary and suggests them to be guided by the Constitution which mentions their role to their decorum.

Way Forward

- Elections are held at different places every few months and it hampers the developmental work. Therefore, it's a must to have a deep study and deliberation on the idea in order to prevent the impact of the model code of conduct on development works every few months.
- There needs to be a consensus on whether the country needs one nation, one poll or not. All political parties should at least cooperate in debating this issue, once the debate starts, the public opinion can be taken into consideration. India being a mature democracy, can then follow the outcome of the debate

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**Trends in Air Pollution: CPCB**

According to a recent study commissioned by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the rate of increase in pollution levels in southern and eastern India is far greater than the Indo-Gangetic plain (IGP). It has also found that air pollution in rural areas has increased at par with urban India.

Key Points**About the Study:**

- It was jointly carried out by IIT-Delhi and CPCB and analysed data from 2000 to 2019.
- Currently, the process of collating and analysing the 2020 data is going on as well and a decrease in pollution levels is expected in the coming years.
- The study, conducted on the basis of satellite data, is the first of its kind to look at air pollution spatially.
- Spatial mapping of pollution will be vital for the government to form its future policies under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

Findings:

- The rate of increase of PM_{2.5} over eastern and southern India is more than 1.6% per year during this period, and less than 1.2% annually in the IGP.
- PM_{2.5} are fine inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller.
- It is a major pollutant affecting the environment, human health and the climate.
- 436 cities/towns with a population of more than 1 lakh in 2019 exceeded the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) of 40 micrograms per metric cube ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$).
- Population-weighted 20-year averaged PM_{2.5} over India is 57.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, with a larger increase observed between 2010 and 2019 than in the 2000-09 period.

- As of 2019, 99.5% of districts in India did not meet the World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guideline of 10 µg/m³.

Statewise Data:

- Ambient PM_{2.5} exceeds the annual NAAQS of 40 µg/m³ in every state except for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.
- The PM_{2.5} level in the IGP, which has a population of more than 70 crore, and the western arid region is more than double the annual NAAQS.
- In Odisha and Chhattisgarh, which have reported among the highest increase in air pollution in eastern India, this is due to mining activities and thermal coal power plants.
- In southern India, high urbanisation in and around cities such as Bengaluru or Hyderabad has led to increased emissions.
- Unfavourable meteorological conditions in eastern and peninsular India, along with increase in emissions, has led to an overall increase in PM 2.5.

Analysis:

- While in absolute terms the level of air pollution continues to be the highest in the IGP, the rate of increase in air pollution is much higher in southern India and certain areas of eastern India.
- If the focus continues to be on IGP and the increasing pollution (levels) in southern and eastern India is not addressed now, in another 10 years these regions will also have the same problem as northern India does.

Urban-rural Divide:

- On PM_{2.5} levels cutting across the urban-rural divide, the study cites the example of Delhi, where it increased by 10.9% between 2001 to 2015.
- During the same period, PM_{2.5} exposure in rural India rose by 11.9%.
- A steady air pollution rise in rural India is due to high reliance on solid fuel for domestic use, which is the largest contributor to ambient PM_{2.5} in India.
- This implies that poor air quality in India is not an urban-centric problem.
- Air pollution in rural areas is rarely discussed with air pollution policies which continue to focus on urban centres.
- Schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) are expected to decrease the pollution levels but it lacks a mechanism to track its progress.
- Since the household sources contribute more than 50% to ambient PM_{2.5} in rural areas, successful implementation of PMUY with sustained usage should arrest or even reverse the increasing trend in rural PM_{2.5}.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns Discuss India's position in getting closer to permanent membership of UNSC.(250 words)

Ans:

United Nation Security Council (UNSC) has primary responsibility, under the United Nations Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the UNSC has been criticised due to its undemocratic nature, misuse of veto powers, etc.

Thus, there is global consensus for UNSC reforms. In light of this, India too advocates for UNSC reforms and a place as a permanent member of UNSC.

Reasons for India to be granted permanent membership in UNSC:

- India is the largest democracy, second-most populous country and 5th largest economy in the world.
- India acquired the status of a Nuclear Weapons State in May 1998, which brought it to the equal footing of the existing permanent members of UNSC.
- India is the undisputed leader of the third world countries, as reflected by its leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement and G-77 grouping.
- Historically, India has been the founding member of the UN and has been elected for seven terms for a two-year non-permanent member seat.
- India contributes one of the largest military personnels in UN peace-keeping forces.
- India's candidature is supported by 4 out of 5 permanent members, G4 grouping, and the majority of UNGA countries.
- Recently, India has taken a proactive role in regional and global politics. For example, Quad initiative, SAGAR vision, International Solar Alliance etc.

RoadBlocks in India's Path

- India being the non-signatory to NPT and CTBT, is cited as the reason by the countries opposing India's candidature.
- China is the only permanent member of UNSC, opposing India's inclusion into UNSC. Thus, uses veto power against India's efforts to become a permanent member.
- India is yet to prove its military prowess beyond the Indian Ocean region.
- India heavily relies on weaponry imports from the US and Russia for its military requirements.
- Poor performance in many socio-economic indicators like the Human Development Index diminishes India's claim to leadership.

Conclusion

- India's international profile and capabilities make it a natural claimant to become a permanent member in UNSC. However, in order to have a more legitimate claim, India must address its socio-economic indicators and dependency on military imports.

DAILY QUIZ

1. Consider the following statements regarding Jason Continuity of Service (Jason-CS) mission:
1. The mission is dedicated to measuring the height of the ocean.
 2. It is a joint effort of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only**
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. With reference to the UMANG app, consider the following statements:

1. It was developed by the National e-Governance Division (NeGD), Ministry of Electronics & IT.
2. It provides access to high impact services of various organizations of central government only.

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 Negative Yield Bonds, consider the following statements:

1. These are debt instruments that offer to pay the investor a maturity amount lower than the purchase price of the bond.
2. These are generally issued by central banks or governments.

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

4. With reference to Masala Bond, consider the following statements:

1. Masala Bonds are rupee-denominated bonds to raise funds from the overseas market in Indian rupees.
2. Any corporate body except Indian banks is eligible to issue these bonds overseas.

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

5. The Arria Formula, an informal arrangement of discussion is related to?

- a) North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- b) World Trade Organization (WTO)
- c) International Labour Organization (ILO)
- d) United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**



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Scholarship will vary from 10% to 100% in tuition fee, based on merit list.

VST : TEST CENTRES

BHUBANESWAR, CUTTACK, BERHAMPUR, SAMBALPUR, KOLKATA

Syllabus	No. of Questions
History of Modern India	5
Geography of India	5
General Science	8
Environment & Ecology	7
Indian Constitution	8
Indian Economy	7
Current Affairs	10

TEST PATTERN: OBJECTIVE TYPE OFFLINE TEST

Total Marks	: 100
Total Questions	: 50Q
Time Duration	: 1 Hour
Per Question	: 2 Marks
Negative Marking	: 0.66 Marks

- Ex. Vanik Students refers to those students who were previously enrolled in classroom courses like Banking, SSC, Banking + SSC + Railway, OSSC, ASO, CT/B.Ed batches.
- Scholarship is applicable for IAS, OAS, WBCS long term classroom courses.
- Both Ex. VANIK & Non-VANIK students can appear for VST.

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Berhampur
OSRTC Depo, Infront of SBR Women's
College, Near Khalikot College
7992556677, 8018036677

Sambalpur
Plot No-266, Unit-7
Modipada, Sambalpur
7377556677

Kolkata
Seedah Big Bazar Complex, 4th Floor,
Belaghata Main Road, Kolkata
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