

GOVERNANCE**Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index 2020: Oxfam**

Recently, the Labour and Employment Minister has informed the Lok Sabha that Oxfam Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index 2020 lacked clarity and did not take into account provisions of the four new labour codes.

Key Points

The Index ranked countries measuring their policies and actions in three areas that it said are proven to be directly related to reducing inequality:

- Public services (health, education and social protection)
- Taxation
- Workers' rights

Nigeria, Bahrain and India, which experienced the world's fastest-growing outbreak of Covid-19, were among the world's worst-performing countries in tackling inequality going into the pandemic.

India's Position on the Index:

- Overall, India ranked 129 in the CRI index out of 158 countries on government policies, and actions in areas of public services of education, health, social protection, taxation, and workers' rights.
- India slipped from rank 141 in the year 2018 to 151 in the year 2020 with weak labour rights and high incidence of vulnerable employment.
- Highest presence of the informal sector for men was in Uttar Pradesh at 86.9% and for women was in Andhra Pradesh at 73.6%.
- In terms of its public services, it ranked 141.
- India has been ranked 19 on the taxation pillar.

Reasons for India's Poor Performance:**Exploiting Labours in Covid:**

- Several state governments in India have used Covid-19 as a pretext to increase daily working hours from 8 to 12 hours a day and suspend minimum pay legislation, devastating the livelihoods of millions of poor workers now battling hunger.

Low Health Budget:

- India's health budget was the fourth lowest with half of its population having access to most essential health services, and more than 70% of health spending being met by people themselves.

Informal Jobs:

- Most workers earn less than half of the minimum wage, 71% don't have any written job contract while 54% do not get paid leave.
- Only around 10% of the workforce in India is formal.

Recommendation:

- In response to the coronavirus pandemic, governments must dramatically improve their efforts on progressive spending, taxation and workers' pay and protection as part of National Inequality Reduction Plans under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10.

Some Recent Indian Initiatives to Reduce Inequality:

- Increased allocation for health in Budget 2021-22 by 137%.
- Direct Tax Vivad se Vishwas Act, 2020 to provide for resolution of pending tax disputes.
- Transparent Taxation - Honoring The Honest' platform to honour the honest taxpayers of the country.
- Introduced Industrial Relations Code, 2020, Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.
- E-PG Pathshala: An initiative of the Ministry of Education to provide e-content for studies.
- SWAYAM: it provides for an integrated platform for online courses.
- National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.

ECONOMY**Skill Certification**

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has asked all government departments to ensure that workers executing government contracts must have official certification for their skills.

Initially, up to 10% of the strength of workers utilized in 2021-22 can be certified. This can be progressively increased to 100% by 2026-27.

Key Points**Need of the Move:**

Low Level of Trained Workforce: Only 2.4% of India's workforce is formally trained as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey of 2018-19.

India's skill regulator, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training, has standardised skill certification systems for 4,000-odd job roles, as part of an effort to change the labour market structure from a largely unskilled one to a predominantly formally skilled workforce.

Informal and Low Wage: Government contractors prefer to rely on informal workers with low salaries for meeting their labour needs.

Paradoxical Situation: This is a paradoxical situation wherein the government is trying to promote skilling in the workforce without insisting on the use of skilled manpower for its own project.

Advantage:

Increase Demand For Skill: Demand for skilling would start coming from the industry and labour force itself, which will prefer to pay for skilling itself, doing away with the present system of the Government trying to drive skilling through funding.

Improvement in Wages : Improvement in wages for the skilled manpower hired.

Culture of Certified Skilling: Given the quantum of manpower engaged in government and government contract works, this would help in making skilling aspirational for our youth and spread the culture of certified skilling.

Enhance Productivity and Quality: This will lead to higher productivity and output quality in government contract works.

Challenges:

Insufficient Training Capacity: Insufficient job-linked training is leading to low employability rate in India.

Low Industry Interface: Low industry interface in training institutes is leading to poor placements and lower salaries.

Low Student Mobilization: The enrolment in skill institutes like ITIs, and polytechnics, remains low as compared to their enrolment capacity. This is due to low awareness levels among youths about the skill development programmes.

Employers' Unwillingness: India's joblessness issue is not only a skills problem, it is representative of the lack of appetite of industrialists and SMEs for recruiting.

Due to limited access to credit because of Banks' Non-Performing Assets (NPAs), investment rate has declined and thus a negative impact on job creation.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**Permanent Indus Commission**

The 116th Meeting of Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) between India and Pakistan is underway in New Delhi.

The first day of the Meeting coincided with the National Day of Pakistan (marks Lahore Resolution of 23rd March, 1940).

Key Points**About the Latest Meeting:**

- The meeting is being held after a gap of more than two-and-a-half years, a period that witnessed:
- Pulwama attack (14th February, 2019), Balakot air strike (26th february, 2019), and
- Abrogation of special provisions under Article 370 that gave special status to J&K.
- A discussion on Pakistan's objections about two India Projects - Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai - is expected to be held.
- India is building Pakal Dul Hydro Electric Project (1,000 MW) on river Marusudar, a tributary of the Chenab. The project is located in Kishtwar district of J&K.
- The second project – Lower Kalnai – is being developed on the Chenab.
- Routine issues such as flood data exchange mechanisms are also expected to be discussed.
- The meeting is being seen as a positive step after both countries agreed to “strict observance of all agreements, understanding and ceasefire along the Line of Control and all other sectors” last month.
- About the Permanent Indus Commission:
- It is a bilateral commission of officials from India and Pakistan, created to implement and manage goals of the Indus Waters Treaty, 1960.
- The Commission, according to the treaty, shall meet regularly at least once a year, alternately in India and Pakistan.

The functions of the Commission include:

- To study and report to the two Governments on any problem relating to the development on the waters of the rivers.
- To solve disputes arising over water sharing.
- To arrange technical visits to projects' sites and critical river head works.
- To undertake, once in every five years, a general tour of inspection of the Rivers for ascertaining the facts.
- To take necessary steps for the implementation of the provisions of the treaty.
- The 115th meeting of the PIC was held in Lahore in August, 2018.

Indus Water Treaty, 1960:

- It is a treaty brokered by the World Bank and signed by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's President Ayub Khan which administers how the waters of the Indus and its tributaries that flow in both the countries will be utilised.
- According to the treaty, waters of the eastern rivers — Sutlej, Beas and Ravi had been allocated to India, while the western rivers — the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab to Pakistan.
- Under the treaty, India has been given the right to generate hydroelectricity through a run of the river projects on the western rivers subject to specific criteria for design and operation.
- India has cleared several hydropower projects in Ladakh: Darbuk Shyok (19 MW), Shankoo (18.5 MW), Nimu Chilling (24 MW), Rongdo (12 MW), Ratan Nag (10.5 MW) for Leh; and Mangdum Sangra (19 MW), Kargil Hunderman (25 MW) and Tamasha (12 MW) for Kargil.
- It also gives Pakistan the right to raise concerns on the design of Indian hydroelectric projects on western rivers.
- The Treaty also provides an arbitration mechanism to solve disputes amicably.
- There have been disagreements and differences between India and Pakistan over dams. For eg. In 2010, Pakistan instituted international arbitration proceedings over India's 330-megawatt hydropower project on a small Indus tributary, the Kishenganga (known as Neelum in Pakistan).
- Though Indus originates from Tibet, China has been kept out of the Treaty. If China decides to stop or change the flow of the river, it will affect both India and Pakistan.
- Climate change is causing melting of ice in Tibetan plateau, which scientists believe will affect the river in future.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**Market Infrastructure Institutions**

The Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has asked Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) to begin operations from disaster recovery sites within 45 minutes of a disruption to critical systems, including trading.

The directive comes against the backdrop of a technical glitch at the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on 24th February that halted trading for nearly four hours.

Key Points**SEBI's Latest Directive:****New Framework for MIIs:**

- SEBI has come out with a new framework for Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and Disaster Recovery (DR) of Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) - stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories.
- Business Continuity (BC) and Disaster Recovery (DR) are closely related practices that support an organization's ability to remain operational after an adverse event.

Guidelines:

- In the event of disruption of any one or more of the 'critical systems', the MII would, within 30 minutes of the incident, declare that incident as 'disaster'.
- Critical systems for an exchange or clearing corporation would include trading, risk management, collateral management, clearing and settlement and index computation.
- Critical systems' for a depository shall include systems supporting settlement process and inter-depository transfer systems.
- MIIs have been directed to move to disaster recovery sites within 45 minutes of declaring an incident a 'disaster'.

- A disaster recovery site is a place that a company can temporarily relocate to following a security breach or natural disaster.
- It ensures that a company can continue operations until it becomes safe to resume work at its usual location or a new permanent location.
- Mobile- and cloud-based disaster recovery sites are becoming increasingly popular.
- The new guidelines should be implemented within 90 days.

Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs):

- Stock exchanges, depositories and clearing corporations are collectively referred to as securities Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs).
- According to the Bimal Jalan Committee (2010), these institutions are systemically important for the country's financial development and serve as the infrastructure necessary for the securities market.
- The stock exchange in India serves as a market where financial instruments like stocks, bonds and commodities are traded.
- Depositories may be organizations, banks, or institutions that hold securities and assist in the trading of securities.
- A clearing corporation is an organisation/entity affiliated with a stock exchange whose primary objective is to oversee the handling of confirmation, settlement, and delivery of transactions.

INDIAN HISTORY**Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia**

The Prime Minister of India paid tribute to Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia on his birth anniversary (23rd March).

Key Points

- **Birth:** 23rd March, 1910 in Akbarpur, Uttar Pradesh.
- Indian politician and activist who was a prominent figure in socialist politics and in the movement towards Indian independence.
- Much of his career was devoted to combating injustice through the development of a distinctly Indian version of socialism.
- Socialism refers to a set of political ideas that emerged as a response to the inequalities present in, and reproduced by, the industrial capitalist economy.

Lohia's Idea of Socialism:

Lohia identified five kinds of inequalities that need to be fought against simultaneously:

- Inequality between man and woman,
- Inequality based on skin colour,
- Caste-based inequality,
- Colonial rule of some countries over others, and
- Economic inequality.

For him struggle against these five inequalities constituted five revolutions. He added two more revolutions to this list:

- Revolution for civil liberties against unjust encroachments on private life and
- Revolution for non-violence, for renunciation of weapons in favour of Satyagraha.

These were the seven revolutions or Sapta Kranti which for Lohia was the ideal of socialism.

Education:

- Bachelor's degree (1929) from the University of Calcutta and a doctorate (1932) from the University of Berlin, where he studied economics and politics.

Pre-Independence Role:

- In 1934, he became actively involved in the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), founded that year as a left-wing group within the Indian National Congress.
- A vehement opponent of Indian participation on the side of Great Britain in World War II (1939-45), he was arrested for anti-British remarks in 1939 and again in 1940.
- With the emergence in 1942 of the Quit India movement—a campaign initiated by Mahatma Gandhi to urge the withdrawal of British authorities from India—Lohia and other CSP leaders (such as Jaya Prakash Narayan) mobilized support from the underground. For such resistance activities, he was jailed again in 1944–46.

Post-Independence Role:

- Lohia and other CSP members left the Congress in 1948.

- He became a member of the Praja Socialist Party upon its formation in 1952 and served as general secretary for a brief period, but internal conflicts led to his resignation in 1955.
- He established a new Socialist Party (1955), for which he became chairman as well as the editor of its journal, Mankind.
- He advocated for various socio-political reforms in his capacity as party leader, including the abolition of the caste system, stronger protection of civil liberties, etc.
- In 1963, Lohia was elected to the Lok Sabha, where he was noted for his sharp criticism of government policies.
- Some of his works include: 'Wheel of History', 'Marx, Gandhi and Socialism', 'Guilty Men of India's Partition', etc.

ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

Greater One-Horned Rhino

The claims by different political parties over significant reduction in poaching of Greater One-Horned Rhino has become an issue in Assam Assembly Elections.

According to the Assam Forest Department, poaching has reduced by 86% in the last three years.

Key Points

- The Greater One-Horned Rhino is one among the five different species of Rhino. The other four are:
 - Black Rhino: Smaller of the two African species.
 - White Rhino: Recently, researchers have created an embryo of the northern white rhino by using In vitro Fertilization (IVF) process.
 - Javan Rhino: Critically endangered in IUCN Red List.
 - Sumatran Rhino: Recently gone extinct in Malaysia.
- There are three species of rhino in Asia—Greater one-horned (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), Javan and Sumatran.
- Only the Great One-Horned Rhino is found in India.
- Also known as Indian rhino, it is the largest of the rhino species.
- It is identified by a single black horn and a grey-brown hide with skin folds.
- They primarily graze, with a diet consisting almost entirely of grasses as well as leaves, branches of shrubs and trees, fruit, and aquatic plants.

Habitat:

- The species is restricted to small habitats in Indo-Nepal terai and northern West Bengal and Assam.
- In India, rhinos are mainly found in Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.
- Assam has an estimated 2,640 rhinos in four protected areas, i.e. Pabitora Wildlife Reserve, Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park, Kaziranga National Park, and Manas National Park.
- About 2,400 of them are in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR)

Protection Status:

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix I (Threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research).

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I.

Threats :

- Poaching for the horns
- Habitat loss
- Population density
- Decreasing Genetic diversity

Conservation Efforts by India:

- The five rhino range nations (India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia) have signed a declaration 'The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019' for the conservation and protection of the species.
- Recently, the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has begun a project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos in the country.
- National Rhino Conservation Strategy: It was launched in 2019 to conserve the greater one-horned rhinoceros.

- Indian Rhino Vision 2020: Launched in 2005, it is an ambitious effort to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in the Indian state of Assam by the year 2020.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**'Buldhana Pattern' for Water Conservation**

Minister for Jal Shakti informed Rajya Sabha about the 'Buldhana Pattern' for water conservation.

Key Points

- NITI Aayog has prepared draft guidelines for convergence of the activities of (i) sourcing earth for improvement/construction of national highways, state roads, and railways and (ii) water conservation works through desiltation/ deepening of water bodies.
- This two-fold activity has already been successfully implemented as a pilot project in the Buldhana district of Maharashtra state.

Launch of Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain

Indian Prime Minister launched the 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain' campaign on World Water Day i.e. on 22nd March 2021.

Key Points

- The Campaign will be undertaken across the country, in both rural and urban areas.
- Theme: "Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls".
- It will be implemented from 22nd March 2021 to 30th November 2021 – the pre-monsoon and monsoon periods in the country.
- It is launched as a Jan Andolan to take water conservation at the grass-roots level through people's participation.
- It is intended to encourage all stakeholders to create rainwater harvesting structures suitable to the climatic conditions and subsoil strata, to ensure proper storage of rainwater.
- After the event, Gram Sabhas will be held in all Gram Panchayats of each district (except in the poll-bound states) to discuss issues related to water and water conservation.
- Gram Sabhas will also take 'Jal Shapath' for water conservation.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns Mathura school was a great centre of art and sculptures during the early historic period. How did it differ from the Gandhara school? (150 words)

Ans:

The first century CE onwards, Gandhara (now in Pakistan) and Mathura in northern India emerged as important centres of art production.

Buddha in the symbolic form got a human form in Mathura and Gandhara. The sculptural tradition in Gandhara had the confluence of Bactria, Parthia and the local Gandhara tradition.

The local sculptural tradition at Mathura became so strong that the tradition spread to other parts of northern India.

The best example in this regard is the stupa sculptures found at Sanghol in the Punjab.

The Buddha image at Mathura is modelled on the lines of earlier Yaksha images whereas in Gandhara it has Hellenistic features.

Difference between Mathura and Gandhara school of art

- **Area:** The Gandhara school of art mostly flourished in areas of Afghanistan and present North-west India whereas Mathura school of art developed and flourished in Mathura and areas of Uttar Pradesh.
- **Time period:** The Gandhara school of art flourished from first century BC to fifth century AD whereas the Mathura school of art originated in the first century BC and flourished till twelfth century AD.
- **External influence:** Gandhara school of art was influenced by Greek and possibly Macedonians whereas Mathura school of art was purely indigenous with no external influence.
- **Religious influence:** Gandhara school of art was influenced by Buddhism while Mathura school of art was influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.
- **Material used:** Gandhara school of art used bluish Grey and grey sandstone whereas Mathura school of art used spotted red sandstone.
- **Expression:** The expression of calmness is the centre point of attraction of Gandhara Buddha whereas Mathura Buddha is delighted in mood, seated in Padmasana and right hand in Abhaya mudra and left hand on left thigh showing masculinity.

- **Halo:** The Halo around the head of Buddha was not decorated generally in Gandhara school of art while it was largely decorated in Mathura school of art.

Conclusion

The other two famous schools were Amaravati School and Sarnath School of art. All these art schools were mostly inspired by religion and have left behind a rich heritage.

The Art of India constitutes a unique chapter in the history of human endeavour. It unveils the deepest recesses of the human mind and offers a mirror to the Indian soul. The spiritual and religious dimensions of India's creative genius has found full and perfect expression in the myriad aesthetic creations.

DAILY QUIZ

1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Ken and Betwa rivers are the tributaries of river Yamuna.
2. The Ken Betwa Link Project aims to transfer surplus water from Betwa river in UP to Ken river in MP.

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. Consider the following statements about Sheikh Mujibur Rahman:

1. He served as the first Prime Minister as well as President of Bangladesh.
2. He played a crucial role in advocating political autonomy for East Pakistan.
3. He has been chosen for Gandhi Peace Prize 2020.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) **1, 2 and 3**

3. With reference to Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), consider the following statements:

1. The CDRI was launched at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019.
2. The secretariat of CDRI is based in Paris.

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 the Climate Financing in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Climate Change Finance Unit (CCFU) was established under the National Action Plan for Climate Change.
2. The CCFU is a nodal agency for all climate change financing matters under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

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. With reference to the Bhagat Singh, consider the following statements:

1. He was a member of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA).
2. He started a militant youth organisation named Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

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