The Hindu Editorial Analysis  12th November,2020
A time for cautious optimism:
Relation with syllabus: GS-3-13-Biotechnology

Context:
Ongoing analysis of phase-3 trials of Pfizer’s Covid-19 vaccine

Different phases of vaccine (Clinical trials):

Phase 1:
- clinical studies carry out initial testing of a vaccine in small numbers (e.g. 20) of healthy adults.
- Tolerability, side effects are checked.
- Concerned with safety.

Phase 2:
- larger number of healthy adults.
- To check whether vaccine is generating immunity or not.
- And also, general safety.

Phase 3:
- This is the main stage
- To fully assess the protective efficacy and safety of a vaccine.
- To decide whether to grant the license or not.

- An application for market authorization may be submitted to the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) on the basis of the data from phase III testing and if approved, the vaccine then becomes commercially available in that particular country.

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.
About Pfizer’s vaccine:

- m-RNA platform is being used.
- First interim analysis of phase-3 trials going on.
- 90% effectiveness is proclaimed.
- But, Food and Drug Admission (FDA) safety must give approval.
- Generally, the limit is at least 50% effectiveness according to FDA.

What is m-RNA technology?

- It avoids the use of an infectious particle (like a portion of a virus)
- Uses a piece of RNA which is made into an antigen (which induces immune responses)
- Faster and less expensive (no need of Chicken eggs or mammalian cells)
- It is a novel vaccine producing method
- Being used by Pfizer, Moderna, NIAID.
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Trumpism still remains unvanquished:
Relation with syllabus: GS-2-IR-19

Context:
The results of U.S. presidential election are out and Joe Biden has been elected as the President for next four years. But Trump also got 71 million votes. What can be the reason?

During the regime of Trump:

- Tax cuts or change to the tax code raised exemption limits on estate duty.
- It also favoured high income individual and corporations.
- For example, in August 2018, Apple hit a market of $1 trillion.
- In 2020, it became $2 trillion despite of Covid-19.
- But middle-class and low-income earners were deprived with lower allowances and deductions
- Both Inequality and Household debt continued growing
- Simmering discontent, anxieties among the middle class because of widening gap between their household assets and liabilities (Debts).
- Trump failed to address this issue and hence it resulted into cultural and identity wars.
- In the winning speech, Biden promised to build the middle class as the “backbone of the nation”.

Prelims perspective:

1. Can the SC of America alter the decision of national election?
   
   Ans: Yes, George W Bush won back the presidency for the Republicans by a majority of one in the SC, after losing in the national vote.

About Gini Coefficient:
The Gini Coefficient is derived from the Lorenz Curve.

It can be used as an indicator of economic development in a country.

The Gini Coefficient measures the degree of income equality in a population.

The Gini Coefficient can vary from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality).

A Gini Coefficient of zero means that everyone has the same income, while a Coefficient of 1 represents a single individual receiving all the income.

The distribution of income in an economy is represented by the Lorenz Curve.
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Myths and reality of election forecasts:

Relation with syllabus: GS-2-5-Polity

Context:
A litany of exit polls and their accuracy, credibility.

India’s context:
- In the very recent case of Bihar, the exit polls predicted victory of RJD+ but actual scene is different.
- In Delhi also, Arvind Kejriwal nullified predictions by many pollsters.

International context:
- In 2016, Mr. Trump supporters were under-counted.
- 1936, US Presidential elections, Roosevelt got 62% votes (predicted margin was 42%!!)

Missing points:
- **Selection bias**: Let us take the example of a Facebook poll and a twitter poll. How many Indians use twitter? Will twitter give the actual results? But Facebook poll might give an overview as it is reaching more audience and from different walks of life.
- **Random sampling**: Results of one region can not be projected as the final or it cannot be generalized. A contrast picture can also emerge.

Yardsticks for exit polls from the purview of statistics:
- Samples are random or not.
- Standard 3 % points margin of error.
- Inclusiveness of samples (across all gender, age,income,religion etc.)
- Methods of sampling
- Handling of non-responses.
Back to the House:
Relation with syllabus: GS-2-Polity

Context:
By elections in Madhya Pradesh, BJP won a majority

Why by election is held?
To replace the incumbent who

- Might have moved to other public roles
- Deceased or
- Incapacitated

Why this happened in Madhya Pradesh?
- Defection of some Congress MLAs to BJP (led by Jyotiraditya Scindia)

What is Defection?
- Changing Political party after winning.
- The “Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram” slogan was coined in the backdrop of this.
- Legislators used to change parties frequently, bringing about chaos in the legislatures as governments fell.
- They often brought about political instability.

What is Anti-Defection Law?
- Passed by an act of Parliament during Rajiv Gandhi reign.
- As the 52nd amendment Act and added as 10th schedule of the Constitution.
It states that members who do the following will lose their membership any House (which could be at the Centre or in a State) if they:

1. Voluntary resign from their political party from which they have been elected
2. Vote against the direction of their political party (in legislature)
3. Does not vote/abstain from voting (in legislature) despite having a direction to vote from their party.
4. Rule no 3 do not apply if the member has prior permission from his/her party or the party condones the member’s action within 15 days of the voting.
5. Members independent of any political party will lose their membership if they join one after their election to legislature.
6. Nominated members will lose their membership if they join a party within 6 months of their nomination to legislature.

Certain Exceptions to the Law:
The law provides exceptions from being disqualified as a member of legislature on the following grounds:

- When political parties merge with each other entirely.
- When two-thirds (or more) of members belonging to a party join another party without both their parties explicitly merging.
- If there occurs a split in the original political party and as a result of which one-third of the legislators of that party forms a separate group, they shall not be disqualified. (this provision was deleted by an amendment in 2003 as it was misused).

- The Speaker or the Chairman of the concerned Houses (as applicable) makes decisions on defection matters.
- If the Chairman or the Speaker defects, the decisions shall be made by a member elected by the House.
Challenges of Anti-Defection Law:

- Voting against the political party can lead to defection as per this act. It might restrict a legislator from voting in line with their conscience, judgement.

- Role of the Presiding officer:
  1. No specified time period within which the speaker is supposed to take decision on defection
  2. Vested political interest might also influence the decision.

- Vagueness of the term “Voluntarily Resigning from Political party”.

Way forward:

- Advice by Election commission: to entrust the President or the governor with responsibility to decide on defection rather than the speaker.

- Rational use of anti-defection law (like in passage of annual votes or no-confidence motion)

- Defections can’t be just done away with through legislative action unless they are seen as immoral by voters.