

9pm
Compilation

March, 2021 (Fourth Week)

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General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies 1

1. Pew Research study on Poverty in India

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS:1 – poverty and developmental issues

Synopsis: A recent Pew research study report reveals increasing poverty in India. But the report also points out some serious flaws in government policy during pandemic times.

Introduction

A recent [Pew research study report](#) reveals increasing poverty in India and China in 2020. As per the report, the pandemic has pushed approximately 7.5 crore people into poverty levels (Earn less than \$2 a day). In contrast, the pandemic pushed only 10 lakh people into poverty in China.

Intensity of the Pew Research study on Poverty:

In India, the pandemic reversed the gains made in the preceding nine years in poverty reduction programmes. But in contrast, China pushed back only one year, matching the 2019 level.

Is the Pew research study reliable?

The Pew research study is based on the analysis of the World Bank's database. However, the research itself mentions that there are multiple assumptions in the report. This includes the assumption on base years for income/consumption also. In India, the base year was 2011 and for China, the base year is 2016.

This might be the reason for the large difference between the poverty data in India and China. But still, there are few significant highlights of the report.

Highlights of the report:

1. **Widening inequality in India:** The pandemic increased the inequality level in India. As the lower-income populations have borne the job and income losses due to the multiple lockdowns.
2. **The fiscal policy response of India is uncertain.** India introduced many policy initiatives to revive the economy. Especially the pre-pandemic tax cuts provided to the corporates to revive private investment and revive growth. The Pew research report data reveals that the benefits of fiscal policy measures did not reach the desired persons. So the Fiscal policy has to be assessed.
3. The National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme's record level of demand is proof of increasing Poverty in India.

Suggestions:

With the COVID-19 cases increasing once again. If the data on the report is not assessed properly then India might face two critical challenges.

1. The economic recovery might not be feasible to the desired level
2. The poverty level in India might increase dramatically.

So the government policy responses will test the government's policy on 'lives versus livelihoods'.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies 2

1. Sachin Waze Case – The Issue of Right to Legal Counsel in Custody

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 2 – Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions, and basic structure.

Synopsis – Sachin Waze was arrested recently by NIA in Antilia case. Waze has filed an application seeking permission to meet his lawyer. In this article, we will see the provisions regarding the right to legal counsel for those in police custody.

Introduction-

- In Feb. an SUV was found parked near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's multi-story residence Antilia, with gelatin sticks in it. Mumbai Policeman, Sachin Waze was arrested by the NIA for his alleged role in this case.
- The NIA recently claimed in Mumbai Court that Sachin Waze has not been cooperating in the interrogation. He has sought his lawyer's presence during questioning, while the NIA has argued that this insistence could hamper the investigation.

Is access to a lawyer, the right of an accused?

Around the world, arrestees are given various rights. It protects the accused from the use of forced methods like torture to make self-incriminating statements.

In the US, under **Miranda warning**, a police officer needs to inform the following rights to the accused, before an arrest

- The right to remain silent.
- Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.
- The right to speak to an attorney.
- To have an attorney present during any questioning.

Different Constitutional and legal rights of an arrested person in India

1. Cannot testify against himself-

- **Article 20 (3):** No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

2. Right to know the grounds of arrest

- **Article- 22(1):** No police officer can arrest any individual without informing the accused of the reason/ ground of his detention/ arrest.

3. Right to consult a Lawyer-

- **Section- 41D of CrPC** allows the accused to be able to consult with their lawyers during their interrogation. But lawyers are not allowed to be with the accused throughout the interrogation.

Are lawyers allowed to remain present during the interrogation of an accused in custody?

Although the Supreme Court also noted the difficulty and ruled that a lawyer should not be present during interrogation. However, in certain cases, the court permits lawyers to be present during the interrogation:

- In the judgment of Senior Intelligence Officer vs Jugal Kishore Sharma (2011) case, the following facilities were allowed to accused-
 - The accused's lawyer was allowed to watch the proceedings from a visible distance which is outside hearing range.
 - The lawyer was not available to the respondent to consult during the questioning.

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In the Sachin Waze case, the special court in Mumbai referred to the same judgment. **Waze's lawyer was permitted to stay in the NIA office during interrogation by the special court**, but not allowed to speak with his lawyer in private.

2. Refugees from Myanmar and India's internal Security challenge

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

Synopsis:

Mizoram and the Indian government taking a different stand on [the current issue of refugees from Myanmar](#).

Introduction:

[After the coup in Myanmar](#), at least, 1,000 people from the adjoining Chin State of Myanmar crossed the Border and currently at Mizoram. Since the Chins are ethnically related to the Mizos, The Mizoram government favours providing refuge to the Chins.

But the (Ministry of Home Affairs) [MHA issued few directives](#) to the **States and UTs for taking measures against influx**. Further, The MHA directives advised Mizoram that India is not a signatory to the **UN Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol**.

Mizoram at present facing a dilemma between acting on Humanitarian grounds or India's refugee policy.

Challenges in India-Myanmar Border management:

1. **Most of the borders are without fence:** India Myanmar is not like India's border with Pakistan and Bangladesh. The majority of the Border areas are not fenced. The Assam Rifles at the India-Myanmar border is facing challenges in maintaining strict vigil.
2. **Close people to people ties:** There are more than 250 villages with almost 3,00,000 populations living within 10 km of the India-Myanmar border. In 2018, both Indian and Myanmar agreed to streamline the movement of people within 16 km of the border.

Previous such Refugee problem in Myanmar:

- Myanmar in the past faced also Extremism, counter-insurgency, and sectarian violence. All these act as a push-factor and made Myanmar people flee into India as refugees. For example, In 2017, More than 1,200 Buddhists and Christians from Myanmar's Arakan State fled as a refugee to Mizoram.
- Thousands of Chins are living in Mizoram for more than 40 years now as a refugee. Similarly, in Manipur, the villages of the Kuki-Zomi have often had people crossing Myanmar border and staying in India for some time.

Mizoram's stand on refugee:

- Mizoram's government issued a standard operating procedure (SOP) to Deputy Commissioners of border districts. In that, they mentioned facilitating the entry of refugees and migrants.
- Further, the Mizoram government mentioned giving medical care, relief and rehabilitation, and security to the refugees.

Indian government stand on Mizoram:

- The central government expressed displeasure to the Mizoram government. However, the Mizoram government revoked the SOPs later.
 - The North East Division of the MHA issued a letter to chief secretaries of India-Myanmar border states and Director General of Assam Rifles. In that, the MHA directed few important suggestions like,
1. Not to allow refugees from Myanmar and take appropriate action as per law.

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2. The state governments **have no powers to grant 'refugee' status** to any foreigner.

Mizoram's response to Central government:

The Mizoram government mentions that they share close ethnic ties with the people of Myanmar. Further, they also clarified a few important things to the central government. Such as they don't want to provide full-time citizenship or employment to the refugees. Instead, they want to provide refugee status until Myanmar returns to normalcy.

3. The Issue of Public trust on ECI or Election Commission

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS-2: Powers, Functions, and Responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies

Synopsis: The public trust gained by the ECI (Election Commission of India) over the years is reducing. It is due to an increasing doubt over the fairness of the polls.

Background

- Recently, the **Citizens' Commission on Elections (CCE)**, released the second part of its report "An Inquiry into India's Election System."
- CCE is chaired by retired Supreme Court judge Madan B Lokur.
- The report examines the critical aspects of conducting elections. Such as,
 - The integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral rolls.
 - Criminalisation in politics.
 - The use of financial power.
 - Compliance with the model code of conduct.
 - The role of media in conducting elections etc.,

What are the important revelations made in the report?

- Since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, "grave doubts" have been raised around the fairness of the polls.
- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has failed to perform its duties. The report has stated reasons, such as
 - Exclusion of marginalized groups from voters' lists.
 - The opacity of electoral bonds.
 - The power of big money in winning elections.
- It has warned that India is becoming an "**electoral autocracy**"

How India's Election commission has built trust over the years?

Eminent bureaucrats such as Sukumar Sen, TN Seshan, and James Michael Lyngdoh worked for fair and accountable election machinery. Their work yielded citizen's trust over the election process.

- **First, Sukumar Sen, India's first Chief Election Commissioner.** He was remembered for successfully conducting the first general elections despite many barriers such as scope, scale, logistics, and social issues. **For example**, elections need to be conducted for 176 million citizens, nearly 85 per cent of whom were illiterate.
- **Second, TN Seshan the 10th Election Commissioner.** He was instrumental in implementing the model code of conduct to curb muscle and monetary power in elections. He enforced strict mechanisms to ensure fairness in the election process. For example,
 - Contestants were required to submit full accounts of their expenses for scrutiny. Those, who didn't abide by polling rules, were arrested.
 - Also, officials who were biased towards candidates were promptly suspended.

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- He also prohibited election propaganda based on religion and caste-based hatred. **For example**, he canceled the Punjab elections in 1991.
- **Third, Lyngdoh** presided over the Election commission during 2001 to 2004, the period marked by the 2002 Gujarat riots. After the dissolution of Gujarat assembly after the Gujarat riots, there was immense pressure from the political parties to hold elections earlier than intended. However, Lyngdoh insisted that polls could not be held as the state had not yet recovered from the violence of the riots.

Why the public trust on Election commission is eroding now?

- **First**, ECI remains toothless against electoral offenses. For example,
 - During the 2019 elections, the Election commission gave “clean chits” to politicians, despite provocative political statements during campaigning.
 - The EC in a return reply to the supreme court stated that its powers to punish candidates for hate and religious speeches during the election campaign is limited.
- **Second**, lack of transparency and accountability. For example, the earlier CECs used to proactively engage with the Citizens’ Commission on Elections (CCE) to discuss its reports. But currently, there has been no response from the EC.

4. NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill is against the spirit of Federalism.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers.

Synopsis: [The Government of NCT of Delhi \(Amendment\) Bill, 2021](#) gives more powers to the Lieutenant governor(LG). Further, It is against the principle of **representative democracy**.

Evolution of The Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) act 1991

1. India follows **Parliamentary democracy** with a cabinet form of government. This is a basic structure of the Indian Constitution.
2. When the Constitution came into force, there were four kinds of States. (Parts A, B, C and D States)
3. The states under C and D were directly administered by centrally appointed Chief Commissioners and Lieutenant Governors. They don’t have any elected Assemblies. Delhi came under Part C.
4. But in 1951, a Legislative Assembly was created with an elected Chief Minister for Delhi.
5. However, issues of jurisdictions and functional autonomy between the Chief Minister and chief commissioner of Delhi was always present. This led to the resignation of the 1st chief minister in 1955.
6. In 1956, following the **States Reorganisation Act**, only two categories(States and Union Territories) remained in the Indian Union.
7. Delhi became a Union Territory. Also, the Legislative Assembly of Delhi was abolished. Then, Delhi was administered by an Administrator appointed by the President.
8. In 1966, the **Delhi Administration Act 1966** provided a **limited representative Government** in Delhi. But there were repeated political demands that demanded a full statehood to Delhi.
9. To resolve this, the **Balakrishnan Committee** was set up in 1987. Consequently, the committee made the following recommendations
 - **Delhi should continue to be a Union Territory.**
 - But **there must be a Legislative Assembly and Council of Ministers** responsible with appropriate powers to ensure stability.

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10. Based on this report, the **Constitution (69th) Amendment Act** and the **Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCT) Act, 1991** were passed.
11. This act provided Delhi with a Legislative Assembly, a Council of Ministers and an elected Chief Minister.

Why Delhi is kept under the control of the Union Government?

1. **First**, our Constitutional makers feared that Delhi will acquire a predominant position compared to other States if Delhi had statehood. So they included Delhi under Part C.
2. **Second**, Delhi is the National capital. So Parliament decided to keep Delhi under Union Government on the basis of national interest.
3. **Third**, to **avoid federal disputes** and provide for smooth administration in Delhi. **For example**, If full statehood is provided to Delhi, then two different political parties at the centre and Delhi will result in higher conflicts than the present ones.

Salient provisions of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill:

The [NCT of Delhi \(Amendment\) Bill](#) has few significant provisions. They are,

1. The bill reduces the power of representative government. It provides enormous powers to the Lieutenant governor (directly appointed by the centre).
2. It makes the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor mandatory for taking any executive action.

Challenges with the NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill:

1. The Bill is against **federalism** (basic structure of the constitution). It gives more powers to the centre.
2. The bill is against the provisions of **representative democracy**. It limits the power of the people. On the other hand, it gives more powers to the directly appointed administrators.
3. The Bill aims to hand over the accountability of Delhi to an unelected, centrally appointed government functionary.
4. The bill also violated the [directions given by the Supreme Court](#). The SC provided a balanced approach. It mentions the LG has to '**aid and advice**' the matters on which the Delhi Assembly has powers under the State and Concurrent Lists.

The government must reconsider the NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill as per the advice of the Supreme Court.

5. Speculation about the disengagement agreement is baseless

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs-2 – India and its Neighbourhood- Relations.

Synopsis: The allegations against India's disengagement agreement at Pangong Tso is baseless. Rather, we need to appreciate the efforts of India's negotiators for ensuring a successful border disengagement

Introduction:

After the [India-China disengagement agreement](#) both agree to withdraw from the Pangong Lake area. The disengagement agreement ended the nine-month-long military stand-off between both countries. But, there are few speculations over the gain and loss for India.

What are the speculations against the disengagement agreement?

There are many speculations around the India-China disengagement agreement. They are,

1. Mutual withdrawal amounts to the **creation of a buffer zone on Indian territory**. It is perceived as a loss of Indian territory.

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2. The **withdrawal amounts to the surrender** of Indian territory. Especially the Finger 4 Region in Pangong Tso.
3. Some questioned the **rationality of withdrawing** from the Kailash range on the South Bank of Pangong Tso. India had an advantageous position there while signing the disengagement agreement.
4. There was also **criticism over the inadequate budgetary allocation** for the defence sector.
5. There was also speculation about the **lack of priority towards national security**. The persons who support this mentions India's "two-front situation".

Why these allegations are baseless?

1. India has accorded top priority to national security by increasing Military modernization, indigenization and defence exports. **For example,**
 - Building of strategic Darbuk-**Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSDBO) Road, Atal Rohtang Tunnel**, etc.
 - India implemented the defence reforms recommended by the **Naresh Chandra Committee**. The implementation includes,
 - The creation of the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)**,
 - The appointment of the **Chief of Defence Staff**,
 - Ongoing efforts to build **integrated Theatre Commands**.
2. There is also a false assumption like patrolling by both sides will result in a buffer zone prevailing entirely in India. This is incorrect. India has neither accepted the unilateral definition of China's so-called Line of Actual Control (LAC) of 1959 nor its subsequent amendments.
 - India still accepts the modified "**Colombo Conference Proposals**" mooted by six non-aligned countries after the 1962 war,
 - Further, India still conceives the whole of **Aksai Chin** as an integral part of India's territory.
3. The allegations that India has surrendered some parts of Indian territory is not correct. India has not surrendered any land in Galwan, Pangong Tso or Depsang since the border crisis broke out.
 - More importantly, the disengagement agreement resulted in ceasing the Chinese patrolling areas between Fingers 4 and 8 for the first time in several decades.
 - Also, China agreed to relocate its forces to the east of Finger 8. Thus, it is pulling back from its claimed "customary boundary line".
 - This is in line with India's consistent demand to restore the status quo ante. Further, It has provided an advantage to India on the South Bank.
4. Questioning the rationality of withdrawing from the Kailash range on the South Bank of Pangong is illogical. Because, if India's objective is to achieve status quo ante, India too would logically be required to revert to its pre-April 2020 status.

So the Disengagement agreement at Pangong Tso was a significant step. This agreement will act as a basis for resolving the remaining issues along the LAC.

Our military and External Affairs Ministry negotiators need to be appreciated for their efforts. Bilateral differences are best negotiated from a position of strength as has been done at Pangong.

6. Shortcomings of the 'In House inquiry Procedure'

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary

Synopsis: The shortcomings of the 'in house inquiry procedure' of the Supreme Court has again come to the limelight. This time over the appointment of the future CJI itself. The

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upcoming CJI is facing serious allegations of misconduct, but there is no clarity of 'In House inquiry Procedure' in the concerned matter.

Background:

1. The upcoming CJI will assume office as the 48th CJI (Chief Justice of India) on 24th April 2021.
2. This would make him master of the roster and give him the power to constitute benches in every case of the Supreme court. This includes the creation of inquiry committees for the In House inquiry Procedure also.
3. Thus allowing him to constitute a bench in his own case as well. This will give rise to the development of bias and undermine judicial impartiality.

What are the allegations?

1. The current CM of Andhra Pradesh has accused the upcoming CJI and one other Judge of abusing their judicial position. The CM also wrote a letter to the present CJI in this regard in October 2020.
2. The allegation related to the creation of favourable benches to support the opposition party in Andhra Pradesh.
3. In 2017 as well, a senior Supreme Court judge had addressed the upcoming CJI in the same issue. He also wrote a letter to the then CJI.
4. Nonetheless, the issue has certainly highlighted the shortcomings of the In House inquiry procedure of the Supreme Court.

In House inquiry Procedure:

- It was formulated by the higher judiciary in 1997. It helps in determining whether a judge has acted against accepted values of judicial life or not.
- Under this, a complaint of misconduct may be filed by any person to CJI or the President of India.
- The CJI will then examine the complaint, he/she may constitute a 3 member committee for inquiry or dispose of the complaint as per his discretion.

Shortcomings of the 'In House inquiry Procedure':

1. There are **no timelines for the completion** of the inquiry. So the inquiry time is getting unnecessary delays.
2. The procedure **gives wide discretionary powers to CJI**. This can breed favouritism in Judiciary.
3. Further, the **procedure doesn't forbid the CJI from being part of his/her own complaint** of misconduct. Thereby **undermining the principle of natural justice**.
4. There is **no need to disclose the report of the inquiry into the public domain** or to the complainant. This is against transparency in the Judiciary.

Suggestions to improve the In House inquiry procedure:

1. As the issue revolves around high constitutional offices, the allegations deserve a **thorough, expeditious and transparent inquiry**.
2. Post inquiry a **remedial measure** should be taken like:
 - Inducing the concerned judges to resign if he is guilty of misconduct. Further initiation of removal proceedings can also be started if judges don't honour the resignation request.
3. **Citizens should be informed** regarding the inquiry committees outcomes. This would strengthen trust in the functioning of the judiciary.

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The Bar Council of India has failed to demand greater transparency in the inquiry process. Now, the masses are the last hope to reform the self-serving and non-transparent judicial setup.

7. The Issue of Cross Border Electricity Trade in South Asia

Source; [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Synopsis: India should plan a stable institutional model for governing electricity trade across borders. It should avoid imposing restrictive rules which is against the free market economy.

Background

- Currently, **Guidelines for Import/Export (Cross Border) of Electricity-2018** govern the trade of electricity across its borders.
- In 2014, India through the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) framework**, liberalized its electricity trade.
- **China entered the market** in the south Asian region to take advantage of it.
- India countered by **taking back** the free market advantages. Further, it imposed **strong restrictions** that prevented regional Private entities and joint ventures from participating.
- After long years of protest by Nepal and Bhutan, **new guidelines in 2018** (Guidelines for Import/Export (Cross Border) of Electricity-2018) were formulated.
- The new rules **allow private sector participation** but exclude Chinese investments. Through the new electricity rules, India attempts to balance China's growing influence in the region.
- The new rules have clear limits on who can buy from and sell into India.
- However, it has the potential to disturb the electricity markets of Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal.

What are the important provisions?

- **First**, According to the new rules, Power plants owned by a company based in the country, not having a bilateral agreement with India on power sector cooperation, cannot participate.
- **Second**, the rules place the same security restrictions on tripartite trade.
- **Third**, the rules establish a surveillance procedure to detect changes in the ownership patterns of entities trading with India.

What are the issues involved?

- **First**, the institutional structure that governs the trade of electricity across its borders is India-centric.
 - India is in a Geographical advantage as it is placed in the middle of south Asian countries. Moreover, India at present is the fourth-largest global energy consumer. It puts India in a dominant position.
 - However, India's monopolistic tendency in power will attract displeasure from its neighbours as their economic growth will hurt.
 - Also, the prospect of an independent regional body governing electricity trade is unlikely in the near future.
- **Second**, lack of impartial institutions for planning, investments, and conflict resolution regarding electricity trade will impact india's vision of **One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG)**.
 - The OSOWOG aims to connect West Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. An impartial institution is important for making it functional.

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- However, the South Asian lesson, contained in these latest rules tells us that political realities will hamper the vision of borderless trade.

India should plan for an attractive institutional model by setting standards that profit investors and utilities. India needs to create a rule-based regional institution that can counter Chinese offerings in other theatres. It will also set free South Asian power m

8. Significance of Supreme Court Guidelines on Gender Stereotypes

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS – 2 – mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections

Synopsis: The Supreme Court advocated certain important steps to avoid gender stereotypes while setting aside the Madhya Pradesh High Court order. Now it is time for us to work towards its implementation.

Introduction:

The Supreme Court set aside the controversial *rakhi-for-bail* order of Madhya Pradesh High Court. Further, the top court issued [a set of guidelines for dealing with sexual assault cases](#). The Courts in the country have to follow the guidelines in entertaining such cases. Further, the SC also mention a few important things about gender stereotypes in India.

The Supreme Court mentioned the quote of a famous Norwegian play writer Henrik Ibsen to explain the gender stereotypes in India. (His playwright uses feisty women characters who break free of traditions of familial confines). The Court mentioned that the **Woman ‘cannot be herself’ in an ‘exclusively masculine society, with laws framed by men’**.

Avoidable gender stereotypes:

The SC listed a host of avoidable gender stereotypes. Such as,

1. Women are physically weak.
2. Men are the head of the household and must make all the decisions related to family
3. Women should be submissive and obedient.

Level of gender stereotypes in India:

The SC observed certain important observations about gender stereotypes in India. Such as,

1. Gender violence in India is often covered by the culture of silence.
2. The court also observed that there is an unequal power equation between men and women. This includes cultural and social norms, financial dependence, and poverty
3. The actual data of cases may not reflect the actual incidence of violence against women.

Other judicial interventions on gender equality:

The SC expressed gender equity through its judgments. Few important cases in this regard are,

1. **Secretary Ministry of Defence vs. Babita Puniya case:** In this case, the court held that men and women working in the Army are equal. The court held that they work as “equal citizens” in a common mission.
2. **Anuj Garg vs Hotel Association of India case:** In this case, the court mentioned that the “notion of romantic paternalism” is used to put women “in a cage”.

Note: Romantic Paternalism: It is a belief based on the “*romantic*” notion that women are the weaker sex than Men.

In conclusion, Women are battling societal prejudices. To achieve that, everyone must take responsibility, especially institutions and those in important positions.

9. MTP Bill 2021 is not progressive enough

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2: mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections

Synopsis: The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2021(MTP Bill) aims to improve women's reproductive rights. But it will restrict women's bodily autonomy if implemented.

Introduction:

The Lok Sabha passed the [Medical Termination of Pregnancy \(Amendment\) Bill, 2021](#). Now the bill is in the Rajya Sabha. The Rajya Sabha has to maintain caution in passing the Bill as it enforces societal prejudices against women.

Important Provisions of the MTP Bill:

The bill is hailed as a much-needed departure from the existing MTP Act, 1971 for two reasons.

1. The MTP bill replaces "any married woman or her husband" with "any woman or her partner". This step will facilitate the termination of pregnancy due to contraception failures and destigmatize the pregnancies outside marriage.
2. The MTP Bill increased the time limit. The Bill increase the pregnancy termination time from the current 20 weeks to 24 weeks. There are two categories for that.
 - o **Termination of Pregnancy from 12 weeks to 20 weeks:** Women can terminate the pregnancy after consulting one RMP (registered medical practitioner).
 - o **Termination of Pregnancy from 20 weeks to 24 weeks:** Women can terminate the pregnancy after consulting two RMPs.

Challenges with the MTP Bill:

There are a few [significant challenges with the MTP bill](#). They are,

1. **The problem with the upper limit:** The government increased the upper age to 24 weeks(Category 2). But, that does have certain conditions like
 - o the life of the pregnant woman or pregnancy can cause grave injury to her mental or physical health.
 - o If the child were born it would suffer from any serious physical or mental abnormality.But these limitations are not useful when the **opinion of the medical board is necessary**. So, the medical board can certify any pregnant woman as not having 'substantial foetal abnormalities' and **force her not to terminate the pregnancy**.
2. **Restricting the bodily autonomy of women:** The Bill still enforces the Patriarchal setup. As the woman alone cannot terminate her pregnancy. She always needs the opinion of one or two RMPs.
3. **The scientific necessity of the 24-week ceiling:** There might be abortions is essential after the 24 weeks also. For the reasons like,
 - o Development of foetal abnormalities after 24-week
 - o **A sudden change in circumstances** (due to separation from or death of a partner), etc.But the MTP Bill does not cover these points into consideration.
4. **Reduced access to termination facilities:** Pregnant women will also fail to approach termination facilities for having a fear of judgment from medical practitioners.
5. **Against the Supreme Court judgment:** The SC in KS Puttaswamy v Union of India case upheld the women's constitutional right to make reproductive choices. But the MTP Bill is a clear violation of women's Fundamental Right to make choices individually.

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So, the government has to reconsider the MTP Bill in a holistic manner of women's development.

10. NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 is against the Principle of Federalism

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers

Synopsis: Lok Sabha passed the Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021. It is against constitutional morality and needs to be declared unconstitutional.

Background

- **Article 239AA** of the Constitution of India granted Special Status to Delhi in 1991 through the **69th constitutional amendment (CAA)**.
- The 69th CAA provided Delhi with a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers (CoM). CoM was made responsible to the legislative Assembly and empowered to deal with matters of concern to the common man.
- The recently introduced Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 is against Article 239AA.

What are the changes made in the National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021?

- **First**, the Bill says the expression "Government" referred to in any law to be made by the Legislative Assembly in Delhi shall mean the "Lieutenant Governor".

READ MORE ABOUT THE GNCT OF DELHI BILL, 2021

What is the related court's ruling on this issue?

- **First, Govt. of NCT of Delhi v. Union of India (2018) case:** The court stated that the Council of Ministers should keep the LG (Lieutenant Governor) informed of its decisions. The rationale of this decision was to resolve the difference of opinion between the LG and the Delhi government by referring it to the President.
 - Further, the court said the LG should be guided by the concept of **constitutional morality**. And the exercise of power to refer to the President should be an exception.
- **Second**, in **Samsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974)** the court warned against giving excessive powers to an individual like the Lieutenant Governor. The reasons stated by the court are,
 - **One**, elections will not have any meaningful value.
 - **Two**, the voice of the Citizens will go unrecognized. Because elected representatives chosen by the citizens are not given appropriate power to perform their functions
 - **Three**, it is against the concepts of **pragmatic federalism** and **collaborative federalism**.

Read more – NCT of Delhi Bill Critically Explained

What are the issues in the recent amendments?

- **First**, the Lieutenant Governor has been made synonymous with the Government. The government that is a collective voice of millions of citizens is replaced by one individual.
- **Second**, the bill provides the LG with enormous powers to refer all matters to the President.
- **Third**, it provides for a mandate to take the opinion of the lieutenant governor before taking executive actions.

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- The above two provisions are against the Supreme Court ruling in **Govt. of NCT of Delhi v. Union of India (2018) case and doctrine of Pith and substance.**
 - The doctrine of Pith and Substance states that within their respective spheres the state and the union legislatures are made supreme. They should not encroach upon the sphere demarcated for the other.

The bill is violative of the principles of **participative democracy, cooperative federalism, collective responsibility to the House and, constitutional morality**, and needs to be aborted

11. Assessment on India's counter to International criticism

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

Synopsis: India needs to address the international criticism of declining democratic values. It will strengthen the world's largest democracy further.

Background

Many countries are scrutinising the functioning of Indian democracy due to the alleged diminishing democratic space in India. For example,

- Recently, annual reports of the United States-based Freedom House and the Sweden-based V-Dem Institute **downgraded India from a free democracy to a "partially free democracy"**.
- Similarly, issues of Farmer's safety and freedom of press have been debated in the British Parliament.
- Despite these criticisms, India has countered its critics strongly displaying hard **sovereignty**.
- By countering the critics India has missed out to address the fundamental point of the critics, that human dignity and freedoms are universal.

How India has responded to the criticism of eroding democratic values in India?

1. **First**, India has resorted to the new approach of Emphasizing **hard sovereignty**. It has repeatedly mentioned that the issues mentioned are internal to India.
2. **Second**, countering the criticisms aggressively.
3. **Third**, India's statements from high level offices are being fine-tuned to silence the critics.
4. **Consider the following examples,**
 - **One**, to counter U. K's criticism, India has taken up the issue of Racism in the UK, and it was discussed in Rajya Sabha. It pointed out Systemic racism in the UK.
 - **Two**, Similarly, India's External Affairs Minister highlighted the lack of public trust in the electoral process of western countries. Example the U.S
 - **Three**, The high-level statements are being fine-tuned to counter the allegations and to assert the autonomy of Indian institutions. For example, the statement from Indian High Commission in London mentioned India's 'well-established independent democratic institutions.
 - **Four**, India's response to the celebrity tweets was also aggressive. A Statement by the Ministry of External Affairs referred to international critics as 'fringe elements' and linked them to desecration of Gandhi statues.

How the global situation is aiding India to counter international criticism aggressively?

- **First**, the Pandemic has helped India to engage in 'vaccine diplomacy' and has positioned India in a central role in global politics. The goodwill generated by 'Vaccine Maitri' has been used to counter the criticisms. For example, India's has supplied critical health aid to 70 countries.
- **Second**, the crisis within western democracies has damaged their reputation, privilege, and their moral right to criticize other countries.
- **Third**, the growing significance of India for economic, environmental, and geopolitical reasons, gives India considerable space for an aggressive response.
- **Fourth**, India's conservative allies in western countries have also helped to undermine international criticism. For example, in October 2019, right-wing Members of the European Parliament visited Kashmir and gave a clean chit to the government against the allegation of human rights issues in J&K.

Evaluation of India's response to international criticism?

- India's response has been good with respect to limiting the cultural arrogance of west and their 'knowledge imperialism'.
- But India has failed to address the fundamental point of the critics. That, human dignity and freedoms are universal and an assault on them anywhere is an assault on them everywhere.

12. Lessons from the Bangladesh's Growth story

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora

Synopsis: India and other South Asian countries can learn from the growth story of Bangladesh.

Background

- March 2021 marks 50 years of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and India and 50 years of Bangladesh independence.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to visit Dhaka as the guest of honour in Bangladesh's 50th Independence Day celebration.

Growth Story of Bangladesh

- Bangladesh's GDP growth in 2019 was 8.4% (2 times that of India). It was one of the few countries that maintained a positive growth rate during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Its GDP per capita is around \$2,000 which is almost equal to India.
- Further, in the next 5 years, Bangladesh will move from the least developed country status to developing country status.

The Vietnam Growth Model

- Economic reforms (**Doi moi**) in 1986, enabled Vietnam to achieve rapid economic growth and industrialisation.
- Growth story of Vietnam started with the manufacturing of textiles and garments and later diversified to mobiles and electronics. Also, it has largely benefitted from China's supply chain.
- It also remains the biggest beneficiary of the **China+1 strategy** leading to rising investment from Asian countries like Japan and Thailand.

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- Further, the signing of smart trade agreements such as ASEAN FTA and free trade agreements with the US and with India, Japan, and China through ASEAN has immensely benefitted.
- It provided scope for Vietnam to skill-up its population for labor-intensive manufacturing at a large scale. Thereby, it brought down costs and increased exports.

What aided the success of Bangladesh?

1. **Focus on the intensive manufacturing sector:** Bangladesh has followed the same strategy as Vietnam. Its GDP growth is directly connected with the growth in the textiles and garments industry. It accounts for 80 percent of the country's exports.
2. **Signing of beneficial Free trade agreements:** It also got benefitted from **preferential trade treatments** with the European Union, Canada, Australia, and Japan with negligible or zero tax. With India too, Dhaka has a zero-export duty on key products like ready-made garments.
3. **Liberalised FDI regime:** it has helped to attract more investments. For example, Bangladesh allows 100 percent equity in local companies and no limits on repatriation of profits in most sectors.
4. **Innovative microfinance models:** For example, successful and pioneering microfinance organisations like Grameen and BRAC have aided small businesses in the country. It also helped in empowering women by supporting them with financial independence and encouraging them to work outside the home. Consequently, Bangladesh's workforce in its textiles sector is almost all women (95%).
5. **Effective public health schemes:** For example, government schemes like **Pushti Apas** (Nutrition Sisters) and community health clinics. It **has** helped Bangladesh to perform better in development indices such as infant mortality, sanitation, hunger, and gender equality better than India.

What India can learn from Bangladesh's successful development trajectory?

Some of the key lessons that could be learned from Bangladesh are,

- Increasing women in the workforce,
- Liberalising internal and external trade,
- Making micro lending accessible,
- Building special economic zones with adequate infrastructure, connectivity and environment friendly design.
- Supporting Domestic entrepreneurs

13. Need for an Integrated Digital System in Indian Justice System

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS

Synopsis: The implementation of an integrated digital system for the criminal justice system will help in speedy justice.

Background

43 years old Vishnu Tiwari, was recently found innocent by the Allahabad High Court. Vishnu was sentenced to life imprisonment for rape under the Indian Penal Code and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. He spent 20 years in prison before this decision.

- His appeal before the Allahabad High Court was pending for 16 years. The reasons behind that usually were missing documents or documents in the wrong format for listing the case. However, Vishnu's lawyer had no interest in pursuing the case. So, the appeal stayed defective.

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- Shweta Singh Rana, a legal aid lawyer, was given the case in 2019, at the request of jail authorities to the High Court. The High Court pointed out in its verdict that the State government did not consider converting his life sentence after 14 years.
- A sincere lawyer and aware family members are essential to secure justice. However, these facilities have become luxuries that only prisoners with good economic conditions have access to.

How a poorly designed system is to be blamed in this case?

An effective justice system should be strong enough to ensure justice for everyone, irrespective of the economic condition of an individual.

1. **Firstly, there is an absence of an integrated digital platform** for the criminal justice system. Moreover, present systems are designed poorly.
2. **Secondly**, Digitisation has transformed the delivery of public services like passports. Whereas, the criminal justice system is still functioning with old procedures and paper-based processes.
 - The eCourts project has made significant progress in digitising the works of courts. Still, large gaps are present in the system.
3. **Thirdly**, criminal cases involve coordination and communication between various institutions such as the police, prosecutors, legal services authorities, and forensic labs. **These interactions are not smooth.**

How will an integrated digital system help?

It allows the interaction between various institutions through a digital platform. This system normalizes the format and content of data across all the systems. Thereby, it helps in smooth communication and avoiding duplication of data.

- **Firstly, this system will notify the registry about the defects** in a particular appeal, un-rectified for an extended period. The system would also inform the accused that his lawyer was not pursuing his case carefully.
- **Secondly, the legal service authority would be informed** of the case and the lawyer could be replaced. The quality of representation of the lawyer could be monitored by the system.
- **Thirdly**, after 14 years of imprisonment, the system would have notified the State government that **the prisoner was eligible for re-sentencing of his sentence.**

Conclusion

Priority must be given to speeding up the implementation of such a system. It will help in providing transparent, real-time access to criminal justice information to all stakeholders, including accused persons.

14. Why Electoral Bond Scheme should be declared unconstitutional?

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability.

Synopsis: The electoral bonds scheme violates the core principles of the Indian Constitution. It must be declared unconstitutional by the courts.

Background

- The Electoral Bond Scheme was notified by the Government of India in 2018.
- For the last three years, electoral bonds have been the dominant method of political party funding in India.
- It allows for limitless and anonymous corporate donations to political parties.

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- Anonymous electoral funding of elections without any limit is against the democratic electoral process. It violates core principles of the Indian Constitution.
- So, petitions were filed in the supreme court to scrap the unconstitutional Electoral Bond Scheme.

Why the Electoral Bond Scheme is unconstitutional?

The **electoral bond scheme** is unconstitutional because it,

- Violates the right to know of the citizens.
- Provides a way for uncapped political donations,
- Violate equality before the law.
- Against multi-party democracy.
- Provides a source for black money in elections.
- **First**, it violates the fundamental rights of citizens- the **Right to Know**. The Supreme Court has stated that the “right to know”, is an integral part of the **right to freedom of expression** under the Indian Constitution.
- **Second**, it will give rise to a **Corporate-political nexus**. It has been largely accepted that across democratic societies, money is the most effective way of buying a policy. Due to a lack of information on the source of funds, it is impossible to assess whether a government policy is designed to benefit its funders.
- **Third**, limitless and anonymous donations **increase** the role of money in politics. It will hamper the healthy functioning of Democracy.
- **Fourth**, it creates unequal contests between the Opposition and the ruling party. Since the donations are channeled through the State Bank of India, it is possible for the government to find out the source of donations of opposition.
 - Government has the power to restrict donations to rival political parties. For example, in the last three years, the ruling party has received more donations compared to other parties.
- **Fifth**, it will result in increasing **institutional corruption**. The electoral bonds scheme allows even foreign donations to political parties. This is also against the defense of the government that states the purpose of the electoral bonds scheme is to prevent the flow of black money into elections.

What is the role of courts and how they have responded?

- In a functioning democracy, the role of an independent judiciary is to protect the fundamentals of the democratic process.
- The courts need to be cognizant of the laws and rules that violate the democratic process.
- Despite the Electoral Bond Scheme creating unequal competition, and seeking to enforce one-party rule over **multi-party democracy**, the judiciary has remained silent.
- The petition challenging the constitutional validity of the electoral bonds scheme was filed in 2018. But it has been left unheard for three years.

What is the way forward?

- **First**, to reduce the role of money in elections, public money should be used for funding elections. This will create a level playing field among the political parties contesting elections.
- **Second**, there needs to be caps or limits on financial contributions to political parties.
- **Third**, the judiciary should fast-track cases that are vital to the future health of Indian democracy.

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- **Fourth**, the [Electoral Bond](#) Scheme that gives undue advantage to the ruling party needs to be declared unconstitutional.

The entire purpose of democracy, which as B.R. Ambedkar rightly pointed out, was not just to guarantee **one person, one vote**, but **one vote one value**.

15. Brief Analysis of India- Bangladesh Bilateral Relations

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS2: India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Synopsis: An evaluation of India- Bangladesh bilateral relation from the past to the present.

Background

- India played an important role in Bangladesh's independence. India provided political, diplomatic, military and humanitarian support during **Bangladesh's Liberation War**.
- For example, India lost 3,900 Indian soldiers and provided accommodation to an estimated 10 million Bangladeshi refugees.
- Following Bangladesh's Independence, India- Bangladesh bilateral relation had many high and lows.
- For example, during President [Sheikh Mujibur Rahman](#) (1st Bangladesh President) India- Bangladesh relations were in full swing.
- However, after his assassination on August 15, 1975, the relation between India- Bangladesh hit a bottom. Between 1982-1991 a military-led government by General H.M. Ershad ruled the country.
- But since the last decade India- Bangladesh relation has boosted up. Both countries have moved beyond historical and cultural ties. Cooperation is increasing in areas of trade, connectivity, energy, and defence.

What are the positive developments in India- Bangladesh relation?

- **First**, finding peaceful solutions to settle Land boundary issues. For example, Both countries ratified the historic **Land Boundary Agreement in 2015**.
- **Second**, the government of Bangladesh was cooperative in eradicating anti-India insurgency elements from its borders. This has allowed India to make a massive redeployment of resources in other contentious borders. (LAC, LoC)
- **Third**, increasing trade relations. **For example**, Bangladesh is India's biggest trading partner in **South Asia. (FY 2018-19- Export- \$9.21 billion, Import- \$1.04 billion)**. Bangladesh enjoys duty-free access to multiple Bangladeshi products.
- **Fourth**, deepening cooperation in developmental activities. **For example**, India has extended three lines of credit to Bangladesh in recent years (\$8 billion) for the construction of roads, railways, bridges, and ports.
- **Fifth**, increasing cooperation in Medical tourism. **For example**, Bangladesh accounts for more than 35% of India's international medical patients and contributes more than 50% of India's revenue from medical tourism.
- **Sixth**, cooperation in connectivity has increased many folds. **For example**,
 - A direct bus service between Kolkata and Agartala running through Bangladesh.
 - Three passenger and freight railway services running between the two countries.
 - Recently, the **Maitri Setu bridge** was constructed. It connects Sabroom in India with Ramgarh in Bangladesh.
 - Improved Connectivity to landlocked Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura states. Bangladesh allows the shipment of goods from its Mongla and Chittagong

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seaports carried by road, rail, and water ways to Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura.

What are the issues in India- Bangla relations?

- **First**, water security is one of the major issue hampering India- Bangladesh relation. **For example**, the unresolved **Teesta water sharing issue**.
- **Second**, increasing border killings against illegal Bangladeshi cattle traders. **For example**, the year 2020 saw the highest number of border shootings by the Border Security Force.
- **Third**, the implementation of the **National Register of Citizens** has offended the religious sentiments of Bangladeshis. Also, many of the illegal Muslim immigrants belong to Bangladesh.
- **Fourth**, India's neighbours are increasingly tilting towards China due to its attractiveness of massive trade, infrastructural and defence investments. Despite, India's '**Neighbourhood First Policy**' approach, India is losing its influence in the south Asian region. **For example**, Bhutan's withdrawal from the BBIN (Bhutan-Bangladesh-India-Nepal) motor vehicles' agreement.
- **Fifth**, poor project implementation due to Red tapism in India is hampering developmental activities in Bangladesh. For example, only 51% of the first \$800 million lines of credit has been utilised. While the amount from the next two lines of credit worth \$6.5 billion has not been mobilised yet.

India and Bangladesh need to continue working on the three **Cs (cooperation, collaboration, and consolidation)** to materialise the recent gains.

16. Discrimination in taxing provident fund (PF)

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

Synopsis: The Finance Minister has enhanced the Provident Fund(PF) limit up to 5 lakhs from the previously proposed 2.5 lakh. This is a discriminatory proposal for taxing PF should be reconsidered.

Background:

- The finance bill 2021 was passed with 127 amendments. This included a proposal to tax income on PF contributions over Rs. 2.5 lakh rupees a year.
 - The rationale behind this was to prevent abuse of the process as 93% of users fall below 2.5 lakh category.
- Recently, a contradictory provision of doubling the annual threshold to Rs. 5 lakh was also introduced. This enhanced limit was given to only those individuals whose employers do not remit any contribution to their retirement fund account.

Current Threshold limits for Provident Fund:

- Annual investments made into individual PPF accounts are capped at Rs. 1.5 lakh per year.
- EPF contributions beyond 1.5 lakh are not tax-deductible under Section 80C of the I-T Act. However, income on such contributions beyond 2.5 lakh will be taxable.
- Similarly, employer contributions into the EPF, NPS, or any superannuation pension fund can't exceed 7.5 lakh per year.
- Income on GPF(General Provident Fund) contributions would be tax-free up to 5 lakh per year.

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Concerns with such a move

- It amounts to **discrimination with private employees** who have an EPF (Employees Provident Fund) account as:
 - Employer-employee relationship is an implicit requirement to open an EPF account.
 - Employees can contribute beyond the statutory wage limit of Rs. 15,000 but employers contribution can never reach zero.
- It **suggests a bias in favor of some government employees** as:
 - Only some senior government staff who joined service before 2004 and are not part of the NPS will benefit from this move.
 - They possess a unique profile that allows them to contribute to the GPF account and get a defined benefit pension separately.
- The move also **conflicts with other policy measures like Wage Code Bill**.
 - The calls for enhancing employers contribution in EPF accounts. This may make EPF contribution cross the 2.5 lakh limit thereby coming under the tax net.
- It shows a **disconnect between policymakers and the aspirations of the working class** to save for their retirement years. It appears that the government is willing to jeopardize the retirement benefits for augmenting tax collections.

Way Ahead:

- The government could offer the same cap of 5 lakh annual contribution to EPF account holders in order to bring equity. For capping the annual amount, employers' contributions can be counted as well.
- Until this is done, the government can put the new tax structure on hold and think through its implications.

India possesses a huge informal workforce that must be given equitable retirement benefits like the government sector employees.

17. India's stand on Human Rights violation in Sri Lanka

Source: [Click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – India and Neighbourhood relations

Synopsis: India maintained the balance between diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka and its support to Tamil minority people in Sri Lanka.

Introduction

The previous government in Sri Lanka made some **commitments to the UNHRC**. The commitments include constructive engagement with the international community on the Human Rights violation in Sri Lanka. Further, the government also committed to provide a consensual resolution to the problem of the Tamil people. But The **current government of Sri Lanka withdrew from the commitments**.

So, the 46th session of the [United Nations Human Rights Council \(UNHRC\)](#) adopted a resolution titled "Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka". But, India abstains from the [UNHRC resolution against Sri Lanka](#). This is done to indicate the following things.

1. India attempted to preserve its diplomatic space. Further, India wants to contain persistent Chinese influence in Sri Lanka.
2. At the same time, India is also maintaining its support for the Tamil minority to achieve equality, justice, dignity and peace.

The Present Status of the Human Rights violation in Sri Lanka:

The UN High Commissioner's report has raised certain concerns on the following issues in Sri Lanka. They are,

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1. Increasing militarization in Sri Lanka
2. Intensified surveillance against rights defenders and NGOs,
3. Interference with trials in certain symbolic cases from the past
4. The dangerous anti-minority rhetoric among other sections of people.

What has been India's stance on the Human Rights violation?

- India has never supported externally mandated investigative mechanisms. India voted in favour of a **credible investigation into human rights violation** in 2012. But India mentioned the importance of Sri Lanka's acceptance to solve the human rights dispute.
- **India has emphasised meaningful decentralization** to meet Tamil aspirations. Also, India demanded the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.
- **India's concerns in Sri Lanka have been different** from the rest of the international community. India is well-informed by a sense of the long-term well-being of the Tamils. Hence, India **stresses devolution** rather than accountability.
- **India has its own limitations in expressing** disappointment over Sri Lanka's stand on Human Rights violation. Reasons such as the Chinese presence in the Sri Lankan region can be one of them.

Conclusion:

- India did not change its position on tactical neutrality on the Human rights violation in Sri Lanka. When practicality and principle needed an equal measure, the Centre has chosen non-participation as an easy way out. This is a welcome move.

18. Declining Role of Parliament in Ensuring Accountability of Executive

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Synopsis: Parliament needs to ensure scrutiny over the actions and bills passed by the government. Its role is declining in ensuring the accountability of the executive.

Background

- Parliament sessions are ending prematurely due to various reasons. **For example**, the recent budget session of the parliament ended two weeks ahead of the original plan.
- Partly, the impact of the pandemic led to the reduction of the Budget session of 2020 and the monsoon session of the parliament.
- However, during the Pandemic, the Parliament could have adopted remote working and technological solutions, similar to other countries.
- The result was, the fiscal year 2020-21 witnessed the lowest ever parliamentary sessions. The Lok Sabha (34 days), the Rajya Sabha (33 days).
- Unproductive parliament sessions resulted in a lack of public scrutiny over government functioning, financial expenditures, government bills.

What are the issues associated with the functioning of the parliament?

1. **First**, declining Parliament's responsibility to scrutinize important Bills passed by the parliament. **For example**, During the last session, 13 Bills were introduced, and none of them was referred to the parliamentary **committee** for examination. The important bills introduced are
 - **The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021:** It was aimed at shifting the governance from the legislature and the Chief Minister to the Lieutenant Governor.

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- **The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2021:** it was aimed at removing end-use restrictions on mines and ease conditions for captive mines.
 - **The National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Bill, 2021:** it aims to create a new government infrastructure finance institution and permit private ones in this sector.
 - **The Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021:** it aims to increase the limit of foreign direct investment in insurance companies from 49% to 74%.
2. **Second**, the role played by Parliamentary committees was undermined. Parliamentary committees are instrumental in suggesting constructive changes to the bill to make the Code work better. **For example, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, Motor Vehicles Act.**
- The percentage of Bills referred to committees declined from 71% in the 15th Lok Sabha to 27% in the 16th Lok Sabha and just 11% in the current one.
3. **Third**, diminishing the role of Rajya Sabha by classifying ordinary bills as money bills. For example,
- Non-financial items such as **restructuring of tribunals**, the **introduction of electoral bonds**, and amendments to the foreign contribution act introduced as part of Finance bills.
4. **Fourth**, lack of debate, discussion over the demand for grants. For example,
- In the last budget session, the Lok Sabha had only listed the budget of just five Ministries for detailed discussion and only three of these were discussed. The remaining 76% of the total budget was approved without any discussion.
 - Whereas, the Constitution requires the Lok Sabha to approve the expenditure Budget of each department and Ministry.
5. **Fifth**, delay in appointments of key constitutional functionaries in Lok Sabha also impacted parliamentary functioning. **For example,**
- the current Lok Sabha did not appoint a Deputy Speaker which is a constitutional mandate.

What is the way forward?

The central role of the Parliament is to scrutinize the work of the government. In order to fulfill its constitutional mandate, the parliament has to

- Create an effective research support system to aid Members of Parliament.
- Provide sufficient time for MPs to examine issues.
- Parliamentary Committees should be made to examine the Bills and budgets.
- Finally, Public feedback should be taken before finalising the bill.

19. Lack of Transparency in the Supreme Court's In-house Inquiry Procedure

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Structure, Organization, and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Synopsis: In-house inquiry procedure needs to be made transparent

The issue:

- Recently, The Supreme Court dismissed the complaint from Andhra Pradesh CM against Justice N.V. Ramana, on the basis of in-house inquiry.
- But the court declined to disclose the findings of the in-house inquiry. This has raised issues of transparency in the court's process.
- According to a 2003 judgment of the supreme court, In-house inquiry is meant only for "the information and satisfaction" of the CJI, and not for the public.

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Background

- CM of Andhra complained to CJI that Justice Ramana (the senior most judge of the Supreme Court) has been influencing the Andhra Pradesh High Court against his Government.
- He also accused that the family members of Justice Ramana were involved in Amaravati land scam. The prior knowledge that Amaravati was to be declared the State's capital was used for speculative buying of land in Amaravati.

Why the confidentiality procedure needs to be changed?

- **First**, it leads to opaqueness and arbitrariness in the court's functioning. **For example**, the evidence used to dismiss the complaint is unknown.
- **Second**, dismissal of the complaint means that a serving CM has levelled false charges against a senior Supreme Court judge. This will invite **contempt of the court** if the committee found no merit in the allegations. So, at least the complainant should get to know the fairness of the procedure.

SC must remove the confidentiality rule to demonstrate that justice was both done and was seen to be done.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies 3

1. Vehicle Scrappage Policy: Challenges and Suggestions

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS-3

Synopsis: Vehicle Scrappage policy will work if incentives are aimed at increasing fuel-efficiency..

Introduction

The Transport Ministry announced the Vehicle Scrappage policy, after the move for a green tax on ageing and polluting automobiles. This step promises economic benefits, a cleaner environment, and thousands of jobs.

- Vehicles belonging to the government and the public sector will be scrapped by April 1, 2022. It will require another year to identify junk heavy commercial vehicles through compulsory fitness checks and other vehicles by 2024.
- Vehicle scrappage and replacement are viewed internationally as **a path to revive COVID-19-affected economies** by favouring green technologies, notably electric vehicles (EVs). It is seen as an initiative to achieve net zero emissions by mid-century under Paris Agreement commitments.

What are the challenges in implementing the vehicle scrappage policy successfully?

Enforcement of this system will be important to get the vehicles scrapped once they are found unfit for use and to stop them from moving to smaller towns.

1. **Firstly, states must support this step by providing road tax** and registration discounts. The automobile industry is expected to offer genuine discounts on new vehicles.
2. **Secondly**, the centre has the difficult task of **making sure that the scrappage plan gets the state's support**.
3. **Thirdly, 1.7 million heavy commercial vehicles** do not have fitness certificates. This poses the biggest challenge. Many of these vehicles cannot be replaced quickly in the absence of financial arrangements for small operators.
4. **Fourth**, Fitness testing will be a difficult task. There is a requirement for a huge and reliable system of automated fitness checking infrastructure. It will measure the roadworthiness of commercial and private vehicles after 15 and 20 years.

Suggestions

- The automobile industry is important. Its share before COVID-19 was about 7.5% of GDP with significant downstream employment. **The Centre has to arrive at a balanced solution and incentivize** the manufacturers of fuel-efficient vehicles.
- Implementation of very high standards and increased taxes on fuel consumers, without prioritizing fuel efficiency is not correct. It will only repeat the mistakes of vehicle exchange programmes abroad. They failed to realise full environmental benefits and taxpayers ended up subsidising inefficiency.
- Ecological scrapping, as a concept, must lead to high rates of materials recovery, reduce air pollution, mining and pressure on the environment.

2. Concerns with the Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-3: changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth

Synopsis:

The Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021 has few important concerns. But the move is a welcome step to the Insurance sector.

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Introduction:

The Lok Sabha has passed the Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021. The Bill had earlier been cleared by the Rajya Sabha also. Now it only requires the presidential assent to become a law.

About the Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2021:

1. The Bill amends the Insurance Act, 1938. The Bill seeks to increase the maximum foreign investment allowed in an Indian insurance company from 49% to 74%.
2. However, such foreign investment may be subject to additional conditions as may be prescribed by the Central Government. The conditions include,
 - o The majority of directors on the Board and key management persons in health and general insurance companies has to be resident Indians.
 - o At least 50% of directors of the Insurance companies have to be independent directors.
3. The bill also removes restrictions on ownership and control.

[Click Here to Read more about the Insurance \(Amendment\) Bill](#)

Concerns with the Insurance (Amendment) Bill:

There are certain key concerns raised by the critics of the bill. These include,

1. The **present actual share of FDI** in the insurance sector is less than the current limit of 49%. Further, the present target was aimed to achieve within 5 years. But that **is not achieved** so far. Hence, there is no justification for increasing the limit to 74%.
2. **Infusion of market funds in the insurance sector is not viable.** The critics mention the time when financial institutions like DHFL, Yes Bank have collapsed, infusing market funds **might lead to the collapse of insurance institutions** also.
3. The Bill **does not have a provision to prevent financially weak foreign companies** from entering into the Indian insurance sector.
4. Many Indian insurance companies are already in Joint Venture with foreign companies. Hence, the Government's claim that foreign investment is needed for bringing newer technology to the country is not substantiated.

Government's response to the concerns:

1. The bill is aimed at solving some **long-term capital availability** issues in the insurance sector.
2. The banking and insurance industry fall under the strategic sectors according to the government's **strategic disinvestment policy**. The 74% cap is just a limit posed on the FDI. Hence, there should be no apprehension on privatization.
3. The bill will increase competition in the insurance sector. This will in turn **facilitate affordable schemes for middle-class** people.
4. Half of the market share of the Indian insurance sector is already held by private companies. The public sector insurance market share is merely 38.78%. On the other hand, the private sector enjoys 48.03% of the market share. So the increase in FDI is essential to improve the insurance penetration further.

The Insurance (Amendment) Bill might facilitate insurance penetration among middle-class Indians. But the adequate safety mechanisms have to put in place to check the insurance companies.

3. Bad Bank for strengthening the banking sector

Source: Indian Express

Syllabus: GS 3 – Issues related to banking sector

Synopsis: The Indian banks have started to recover post the pandemic phase. Further, strengthening will be witnessed after the creation of a bad bank as promised in the budget.

Background:

- During pandemic, NPA(Non-Performing Assets) was expected to rise. Thus, Indian banks written off their balance sheets.
 - A write-off is an accounting term, through which the book value of an asset is declared to be zero.
 - An NPA is a bank loan that is subject to late repayment or is unlikely to be repaid by the borrower in full.
- However, Later at the end of the year, a positive recovery was observed. Restructuring requests were reduced and Provision Coverage Ratios (PCR) improved.
 - PCR is the ratio of provisioning to Gross Non-Performing Assets.
 - It indicates the extent of funds a bank has kept aside to cover loan losses.
- In the recent budget 2021, the government announced a dedicated bad bank.

Reasons behind improvement in the banking system at the year-end

Before pandemic, banks held substantial capital and **built a sizable buffer** for dealing with NPAs. This prevented major degradation of their balance sheets during the pandemic. Further many other reasons were behind this performance.

1. Before the pandemic, the RBI instilled a **prudent degree of financial discipline** in the market. This included decreasing exposure in riskier assets and devising a system of ratings for the borrowers.
2. A **surge in disposable income** and spending capacity of middle-class people will be witnessed. This would cause the valuation of personal financial assets in Asia to reach \$69 trillion by 2025. Therefore, bringing more business to India as well.
3. Further, the **robust monetary management skills of RBI** and **budget announcements** created a sense of positivity in the sector.

Budget Announcements:

- A bad bank will be created under an Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC)-Asset Management Company (AMC) structure.
- National Asset Reconstruction Company (NARC) will acquire stressed assets in an aggregated manner from lenders. National Asset Management Company (NAMC) will act as a resolution manager for the acquired assets.

Benefits of Bad Bank:

- Banks will get the recovered value of the stressed asset and their balance sheet will not appear stressful. This will improve their valuations.
- Banks will get **more lending leverage** as:
 - Less provisioning is done for stressed assets if a robust bad bank exists
 - Bad Banks generally pay 85% in sovereign receipts and remaining in cash. This can be used for giving more loans.
- It will drive the consolidation of stressed assets and help in **faster decision-making**.
- Banks will get **more management space** as recovery work will be undertaken by bad banks. This would allow them to focus more on credit growth.

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- As per some experts, transferring Rs. 400 assets to bad banks work out to around Rs 526 for the economy (a multiplier of around 1.3). **Further, benefits worth Rs 2.2 lakh** can be witnessed at just a **20% recovery rate**.

Way Ahead:

- The Banks have realized the growth potential of the sector. They are constantly developing new business models, rationalizing costs, and providing superior services to attract more customers.
- Along with this, the focus should on creating a favorable environment for the development of Bad banks that includes:
 - Keeping majority ownership in the private sector
 - Putting together a strong and independent board
 - Linking AMC compensation to their performance

4. India's potential as a Global investment hub

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Synopsis: India has the potential to become a Global Investment Hub. India's unique advantages attract global companies to invest in India.

Background

- In 2020, despite sharp economic contraction, India witnessed the fastest growth in **Foreign Direct Investment** (FDI) inflows among all the major economies. (>60 billion)
- Big firms like Google, Facebook, Walmart, Samsung, Foxconn, and Silver Lake made FDI contributions in India.
- However, India's latest FDI totals still lag behind other market economies such as China and Brazil.

Why India still lags behind China and Brazil in attracting FDI?

Even after three decades of liberalization (1991), India remains a complex and challenging place to do business because,

1. One, frequent shifts in the policy landscape. For example, **Retrospective taxation**. India lost the Vodafone case and Cairn Energy case at the **Permanent Court of Arbitration**.
2. Two, Persistent market access barriers. For example, anti-dumping duty, negative list, mandatory localized procurement, etc.,
3. Three, Government's push towards "self-reliant" India also created distrust among the investors.

Then, why multinational companies are investing in India?

- **First**, India's huge market with growing purchasing power makes India an attractive destination for investments. **For example**, India has a market of 1.4 billion people and a rising middle class of 600 million.
- **Second**, shift in contemporary geopolitics due to rising U.S.-China competition. It has forced multinationals to reimagine their supply chain and production hubs. For example, Samsung has invested billions in the Indian market.
 - Additionally, manufacturers such as Cisco, Nokia, Ericsson, and Flex are planning to invest in India to take advantage of India's incentives in the manufacturing sector.

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- **Third, the** rise of the 'next-gen netizens' is one of the key reasons why leading global tech companies are investing in India. For example, India has 700 million Internet users.
- **Fourth,** a showcase of India's resilience during adversities. For example, India has managed the pandemic better than many of its western peers and restored economic activity.

What is the way forward?

Increasing FDI investment should not result in a drain of wealth from India. MNC's should be made to demonstrate their commitment towards India. It can be done through,

- Placing shared value creation at the heart of their business strategy.
- Tying corporate success to India's growth and development.
- Increasing Investments in Indian talent.
- Aligning products with Indian tastes.
- Helping to tackle the problems faced by society at large.

Thus, to make India a Global Investment Hub, all the issues in the way of FDI shall be removed.

5. Water conservation is must for preventing another pandemic

Source: [Click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 – Natural resources + Pollution and degradation

Synopsis: NITI Aayog has expressed concerns over the poor water quality in India. This gives a conducive environment for the spread of another pandemic through the water. Thus, it requires an effective mechanism for water conservation.

Background:

- NITI Aayog, Water Aid, and others have found that **over 70% of India's surface and groundwater is contaminated** by human and other waste.
- The contaminated water can be a breeding ground for numerous viruses causing another Pandemic.

How virus spreads through contaminated water?

Dangerous viruses can spread from animals to humans through the consumption of their meat. The closeness creates an artificial environment that can give birth to mutations in erstwhile dormant viruses.

- After infecting a human, the virus can easily proliferate in wastewater.
 - For instance, several wastewater samples were tested and were found to carry **traces of SARS-CoV-2 in England, Wales and Scotland.**
 - Traces of the virus have also been detected in raw sewage across Sydney.
- Astrovirus, hepatitis A and norovirus are some water-transmitted viral pathogens.

Need for water conservation in India

- The wastewater gets discharged into the river. Thus, it becomes a very **generous host for viruses** by carrying human waste, sewage, and toxic waste. This breeds more proliferation.
- Further, a huge population is **dependent on polluted water sources** for meeting their drinking requirements thereby enhancing the vulnerability. There is also a concern of growing demand in the future due to the **rising population.**
- The **success of schemes** like Nal se Jal demands the conservation of water.
 - The scheme aims to provide drinking water connections to every rural household by 2024.

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- The **techniques used for water purification** like RO (reverse osmosis) are very costly and unaffordable for the majority population. Further, they extract the essential minerals from the water along with contaminants.
- **Destruction of natural resources** is happening at a rapid pace as our development model focuses on building artificial infrastructure. This involves the creation of highways, industrial plants, high-rise structures, etc. at the cost of natural infrastructure.

Is there any clean source of water left?

- There are two unpolluted freshwater sources left in the country –
 - Water lying below our forest
 - Aquifers below the river floodplain
- Both provide natural underground storage and are annually recharged by rain water.
- The **modest drinking requirement (2-3 litres)** can be met with water below our forests.
- Similarly, **river floodplains are a great source of water for cities.**
 - The Delhi Government is already using water from Yamuna floodplains to meet the requirement of million people.

Way Forward:

- We must focus on conservation techniques for solving the water problem like:
 - **Using only a fraction** of the annual recharge of water bodies and aquifers.
 - Declaring Forests and floodplains as **water sanctuaries.**

There is no technological substitute for living natural resources like pristine natural water and soil. The focus should be shifted from artificial infrastructure to natural infrastructure.

6. Similarities between Disinvestment and fiscal deficit

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 – mobilization of resources

Synopsis: Selling of Public assets (Disinvestment) has similar macroeconomic results to fiscal deficit. Both increase wealth inequalities in the society and hence should be avoided.

Background

- The government has set a target of 1.75 lakh crore rupees from the disinvestment of PSUs in the current financial year.
- The only rationale shown by the government behind such a move is to generate additional resources for spending.

Basic Terms:

- **Fiscal Deficit:** It is the difference between the total revenue of the government (excluding borrowings) and its total expenditure. A fiscal deficit situation occurs when the government's expenditure exceeds its income.
- **Disinvestment:** It simply means the withdrawal or reduction of investment.

Fiscal Strategy of selling Public Sector Undertakings:

- Under disinvestment, equity (shares) of PSUs is offered for sale to the private sector.
- However, the purchase of public assets crowds out private investment in other sectors.
 - This happens as the amount kept for investment in varied projects like road, rail, energy, etc. is used for the purchase of Public assets. It reduces the pool and hence crowding out takes place.

Moreover, there is not much difference between fiscal deficit and disinvestment.

Relationship between Disinvestment and Fiscal Deficit:

- In Fiscal Deficit, the government issues bonds to the private sector for raising money. While in case of disinvestment, ownership of public assets is offered.
- Both have similar macroeconomic consequences:
 - Enhancing private savings
 - Crowding out some private investments
 - Allowing the production of idle output and resources by increased government spending
 - Creating wealth inequalities
- The only difference is the nature of the paper handed over to the private party.

How does fiscal deficit increase wealth inequality?

Fiscal Deficit generates additional private savings. It enhances wealth inequality.

- The government expenditure financed by fiscal deficit generates additional demand in the economy.
- This further increases output and incomes until additional savings generated out of such incomes match the fiscal deficit.
- These savings are generally more in the case of the rich who have a higher propensity to save.
- These additional savings result in greater wealth creation for the rich and enhance wealth inequalities.

How selling of public assets increases wealth inequality?

- The process of disinvestment involves the transfer of ownership of public assets to the private sector.
- Wealth Inequality gets enhanced as:
 - **Additional savings are created** in the economy just like in the case of fiscal deficit, which enhances inequality.
 - Further, the transfer usually happens at prices well **below the capitalized value of earnings**. This makes new owners more wealthy in the future and enhances inequalities in society.
 - Capitalized value refers to the current value of an asset, based on the total income expected to be realized over its economic life span.

Alternative of disinvestment for increasing spending:

- The focus should be on **tax-financed government expenditure**. In this case, there would be no addition to private wealth, and hence no increase in wealth inequality.
- In the current scenario government can take the following steps:
 1. It can impose a **wealth tax** that would help it extract a bigger chunk of private profits and doesn't increase inequalities.
 - Elizabeth Warren had proposed the idea during her nomination for the American presidency and 18 billionaires supported this.
 2. **Increase the GST rate on luxury goods** with due consultation with states. This should be complemented with a proportional increase in government spending. The result would be an increase in employment and output in the economy without impacting post-tax profits in real terms.

Thus, the multiple benefits associated with PSUs like social empowerment (role in green revolution), protection against the dominance of multinational corporations, etc. cannot be ignored.

Even if we ignore these, the sale of public assets to finance government spending is undesirable and unnecessary on purely fiscal terms.

7. Cost and Benefits of Adani's Carmichael Coal Project in Australia

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways, etc

Synopsis – Adani is making one of the world's largest new coal investments in the Carmichael coal mine project in Queensland. This article analyzes the Costs and Benefits of the Project.

Introduction-

New investment in coal will be a major factor if India is not able to meet its commitment against Climate Change.

Recently the Adani's \$16.5 billion dollar investment in the Carmichael coal mine project in Queensland has sparked debate. Being a primary buyer of this project, India would also face its environmental consequences.

Proposed benefits of Adani's Carmichael coal project-

- **Economic benefits** – It would be the largest coal mine in Australia and one of the largest in the world. It will produce 60 million tonnes of coal per year at full capacity. The mine is expected to produce 2.3 billion tonnes over the next 60 years.
- **It will create employment opportunities** and generate revenue for Australia's economy.
- **Australian government's subsidies-** Despite the G20 commitment to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, the Queensland and Australian governments have proposed various forms of assistance to the Carmichael coal project.

Issues

- **Financial viability-** With coal prices falling, the mine may not be able to produce enough income to cover its costs.
 - A number of major international banks ruled out financing the Carmichael Mine and Rail Project. It is due to its poor return on investment and environmental risks.
- **Environmental and climate impacts** – The project is likely to emit 4.7 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. This is more than 0.5% of the remaining global carbon budget for limiting warming to 2 degrees C.
 - Climate change is already affecting Australia. The frequency and intensity of droughts and extreme weather events such as heat-waves, storms and flooding, and bushfires are increasing.
- **Health Impact-** Coal mining causes fine particle pollution, which contributes to heart diseases, lung diseases, and lung cancer.
 - In Australia, health damage due to CO2 emission alone costs \$2.6 billion annually.
 - In India, coal is responsible for 100000 premature deaths each year.

Way forward-

India's carbon-neutrality would be hampered by the approval for Adani to mine and export coal to India.

To avoid dangerous climate change and increased risks to human health, it is required to keep the global temperature rise within 2°C. This means Australian and Indian coal reserves need to stay under the ground.

8. Why India should adopt Net-Zero Emission Target?

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

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Synopsis: India should adopt the net-zero emission target like others. It will lead to simultaneous attainment of net-zero emission and economic growth. Some temporary challenges may arise, but they can be tackled with robust policy measures.

Background:

- Recently 58 countries have made a commitment to attain net-zero emission by 2050. They currently emit more than 50% of Greenhouse gases (GHGs). So, being a responsible nation, India also needs to adopt a net-zero emission target.

What are Net-zero emissions?

It is a state in which GHGs emitted by a country is balanced by absorption of GHGs using advanced technologies or planting trees.

Why India Need to adopt net-zero emissions?

- IEA (International Energy Agency) findings indicate that the **majority of India's future emissions** are supposed to come from **things that are yet to be made**.
 - This includes transport infrastructure, buildings, industry, etc.
 - Therefore, adopting net-zero emissions will give the country an opportunity to build a cleaner economy.
- However, India did not adopt a net-zero emissions target due to its goals related to economic growth.

How Net-zero emissions can fuel economic growth?

Although, some experts believe that simultaneous attainment of net-zero emissions and economic growth is possible.

- Adoption of clean sources of energy will **reduce the water demand** by thermal power plants. It is expected to reduce from 2.5 billion cubic metres per year(bcm) to less than 1 bcm in 2050.
- Reduction in carbon emissions will result in **reducing pollution** thereby improving the health of the masses.
- It will also **generate 24 million jobs in 15 years** across multiple sectors.
 - For instance, promoting e-vehicles, clean energy, and hydrogen electrolysis can create jobs in the auto manufacturing, electricity, and construction sectors.
 - Electrolysis is the process of using electricity to split water into hydrogen and oxygen.
 - Hydrogen gas released in this way can be used as hydrogen fuel.
- Switching to clean fuels will also **reduce the country's crude oil import bill**.

Challenges in adopting Net-zero emission targets:

- At present, nearly 25 % of government revenue comes from the energy sector (including the taxes on fuel). So, phasing out of Fossil fuels will **reduce the government's tax revenue**.
- A **job reduction** might arise in the vehicle maintenance and repair sector.
 - This will happen as e-vehicles contain fewer engine components than a traditional fossil fuel-based vehicle.
 - Similarly, learning new techniques to repair e-vehicles will also need significant time.
- There are **certain issues with new jobs created**. Such as,
 - The new job may not be created in the same place where job losses occurred. For example, A coal-based power plant worker working in coal collection will lose the job.

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- However, the alternative employment created by the adoption of new technologies may remain inaccessible to vulnerable sections (especially women).
- For example; new jobs might arise in battery fabrication. Coal workers lack expertise in this field.

Way Ahead:

- The **focus should be on greater electrification**. Further, The government has to encourage using hydrogen as a fuel in industries like cement, iron and steel, and chemicals. Further the current coal plants can be **pre-retired** to improve energy efficiency.
- A **carbon tax** can be imposed on the industry to offset the tax revenue loss. The government has to start initially with the amount equivalent to the present Coal Cess. The amount can be increased gradually to Rs. 2500 for per ton emission by 2050.
 - The portion of carbon revenue can be **used for supporting poor households**. Especially for those who are badly hit by the emission reduction strategies.
- The government has to encourage all states and UTs **to make their respective carbon-neutral plan**.
 - The UT of Ladakh and Sikkim state are already planning such a carbon-neutral plan.
 - Further, at the local level cities like Bengaluru and Chennai, the Panchayat of Meenangadi in Wayanad, Kerala also planning such a carbon-neutral plan.
- Apart from strong climate policies, the government has to focus on **strong social policies and local institutions**. This will ensure that the clean energy transition is fair and just.

In conclusion, India needs to adopt net-zero emissions targets. Better policies, strong institutions, and finance will help India to declare freedom from polluting fossil fuels.

9. Recurring Fire accidents in India – Suggestions

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs3: Disaster and Disaster Management.

Synopsis: Recurrent fire accidents in India show the apathy of the government towards public safety.

Background

- Recently, the fire accident in Mumbai hospital (located inside Mumbai's Dreams Mall) resulted in the death of 10 people so far.
- An effective fire safety protocols could have prevented the devastating effect on lives and property.
- The tragedy points towards the failure of the government to make fire safety a systemic compulsory in public buildings.
- It has to be noted that, after a fire in Rajkot last November, the Supreme Court took suo motu cognizance of the incident. It issued directions, to task an officer with fire safety for each COVID-19 hospital.

What needs to be done?

1. **First**, strict measures need to be taken to implement The **National Disaster Management Guidelines of 2016** in Public buildings. For example, the requirement of open space to move patients in an emergency should be strictly implemented.

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2. **Second**, the need for periodical assessment of public buildings on safety protocols. **For example**, the quality of infrastructure, specifically electrical installations, ensuring the retrofiting of structures with flame retardant materials, etc.,
3. **Third**, States must create scientifically designed public health facilities that meet the needs of populous cities.

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