

**9pm**  
**Compilation**

**September, 2021 (First Week)**

**General Studies - 2**

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# General Studies Paper - 2

## General Studies - 2

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### 1. Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) has great potential in government applications

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Free and Open Source Software has great potential in government applications” published in The Indian Express on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS2 -E governance

**Relevance:** using open source technology to improve public services in India

**Synopsis:** India announced a policy to encourage open source in 2015. However, the true potential of this policy is yet to be realized, largely due to constraints in public procurement processes. A look at the misconceptions about FOSS and a roadmap for its optimum utilization.

#### What is FOSS?

Free and Open Source (FOSS) is a software that is licensed to be free to use, modify, and distribute. FOSS today presents an alternative model to build digital technologies for population scale. Unlike proprietary software, everyone has the freedom to edit, modify and reuse open-source code.

#### Benefits of FOSS

FOSS offers many advantages:

- Reduced costs
- No vendor lock-in
- The ability to customize for local context
- Greater innovation through wider collaboration

#### Usage of FOSS in India

Recognising its potential, in 2015, the Indian government announced a policy to encourage open source instead of proprietary technology for government applications. We have seen some great examples of public services being delivered through systems that use FOSS building blocks, including **Aadhaar**, **GSTN**, and the **DigiLocker**.

- Many other solutions launched by the government including **Digilocker**, **Diksha**, **Aarogya Setu**, the Covid-19 vaccination platform CoWIN have also been built on top of open-source digital platforms

#### Misconceptions about FOSS

1. **Lack of trust:** “Free” in FOSS is perceived to be “free of cost” and hence many think that the solutions based on FOSS are not good enough. For example, FOSS is often mistaken to be less trustworthy and more vulnerable, whereas FOSS can actually create more trust between the government and citizens.
2. **Absence of one clear owner:** Another important issue is that it can feel easier to deal with a proprietary software vendor who builds a customized software and can be held accountable for any failures. In the case of FOSS, there appears to be an absence of one clear “owner”, which makes it harder to identify who is responsible.

### Suggestions/measures

1. **Incentivize uptake of FOSS in government:** The government's policy on the adoption of open-source software requires all tech suppliers to submit bids with open source options. Suppliers also need to justify in case they do not offer an open-source option, and sourcing departments are asked to weigh the lifetime costs and benefits of both alternatives before making a decision. The present policy can go a step further by **formally giving greater weightage to FOSS-specific metrics** in the evaluation criteria in RFPs, and offering recognition to departments that deploy FOSS initiatives, such as, a special category under the Digital India Awards.
2. **A repository of "GovTech ready" building blocks:** Off-the-shelf FOSS software is often not ready for direct deployment by government. Creating a repository of ready-to-use "GovTech-ised" building blocks, can help departments quickly identify and deploy FOSS solutions in their applications.
3. **FOSS innovations can be encouraged through "GovTech hackathons and challenges"**, bringing together the open-source community to design solutions for specific problem statements identified by government departments. The best innovations emerging from these challenges can be listed on government procurement platforms such as GeM.
  - a. One such challenge — a **#FOSS4Gov Innovation Challenge** — was recently launched to accelerate the adoption of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) in government by harnessing innovation from the FOSS ecosystem.
4. **A national "FOSS Centre of Excellence":** Finally, a credible institutional anchor is needed to be a home for FOSS led innovation in India. Such an institution can bring together FOSS champions and communities that are scattered across India around a shared agenda for collective impact. Kerala's International Centre for Free & Open Source Software (ICFOSS) is a great example of such an institution that led to Kerala being a pioneering state in the adoption of FOSS. A national "FOSS Centre of Excellence" can create the much-needed momentum to build world-class "made in India" FOSS products.

### 2. Biofortified food can lead India from food security to nutrition security

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Biofortified food can lead India from food security to nutrition security" published in The Indian Express on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to poverty and hunger

**Relevance:** Tackling malnutrition

**Synopsis:** Using science to address the complex challenge of malnutrition, particularly for low-income and vulnerable sections of the society, can be a good intervention. Bio-fortification of food can come handy to address the issue of malnutrition in India along with other measures.

#### Context

The Prime Minister recently announced that, by 2024, rice provided to the poor under any government scheme — PDS, mid-day-meal, Anganwadi — will be fortified.

#### Malnutrition in India

- 15.3% of the country's population is undernourished



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- India has the highest proportion of “stunted” (30%) and “wasted” children (17.3%) below five years of age as per ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2021’ report.

**Must Read:** [Food fortification in India – Explained](#)

### Recent developments

#### Work done by ICAR

- Scientists at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) have been developing biofortified crops in India with a view to eradicating malnutrition
- As per the ICAR website, they had developed 21 varieties of biofortified staples including wheat, rice, maize, millets, mustard, groundnut by 2019-20
- These biofortified crops have 1.5 to 3 times higher levels of protein, vitamins, minerals and amino acids compared to the traditional varieties
- These varieties are not genetically modified rather they have been developed through conventional crop breeding techniques

#### National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute

- The National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute in Mohali has also developed biofortified coloured wheat (black, blue, purple) that is rich in zinc and anthocyanins

#### The HarvestPlus programme

- The HarvestPlus programme of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research is working with ICAR, state agricultural universities (SAUs), the international centres of CGIAR, seed companies and farmer organisations.
- It aims to accelerate production and improve the access of the poor in India to iron-rich pearl millet and zinc-rich wheat.
- Malnutrition, is a multidimensional problem. Nutritious food is only a part of it. Hence, it requires a multipronged approach.

#### The correct approach

- Nutrition is just one part of malnutrition challenge. Poor access to safe drinking water and sanitation (especially toilets), low levels of immunization and education, especially of women are other determinants of nutrition
- About 50% of the rural population does not have safe and adequate drinking water within premises
- About 15% of schools still lack access to basic infrastructure (electricity, drinking water and sanitation)
- the average annual school dropout rate at the secondary level (Class 9-10) is still 18 percent (as per the Niti Aayog’s SDG Index for the year 2020)
- All this calls for a multipronged approach to address the pressing problem of malnutrition

#### Suggestions/Measures

- **Improving mother’s education**– There is a direct correlation between mothers’ education and the wellbeing of children. Children with mothers who have no education

have the least diversified diets and suffer from stunting and wasting and are anemic. Hence, **targeted programmes** for improving the educational status of girls and reducing the school dropout rates, particularly at the secondary and higher educational levels, need to be promoted.

- **Increasing expenditure on agri R&D**– Innovations in biofortified food can alleviate malnutrition only when they are scaled up with supporting policies. This would require steps like, increasing expenditure on agri-R&D, incentivizing farmers by linking their produce to lucrative markets through sustainable value chains and distribution channels etc.
- **Private participation**– The government can also rope in the private sector to create a market segment for premium-quality biofortified foods to cater to high-end consumers.
- **Creating awareness**– A national awareness drive on the lines of the “Salt Iodisation Programme” launched by the government in 1962 to replace ordinary salt with iodised salt, can play an important role at the individual and community levels.

### Terms to know

- **Malnutrition, stunting, and wasting**

### 3. Time to bury Mudra ‘loan mela’ (On MUDRA loans)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Time to bury Mudra ‘loan mela’” published in The Business Standard on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes

**Relevance:** MUDRA loans, Loan mela

**Synopsis:** Mudra loans have generated no jobs, resulting in misspending of trillions of taxpayers’ money. The loans were supposed to be for a three- to five-year period. The first cycle of the experiment is over, and the result has been disastrous.

#### Context

Recently, Chairman of State Bank of India (SBI), told that 20% in its loan portfolio under the **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** scheme had turned bad.

#### Background

Mudra loans were launched six years ago. They are collateral-free or unsecured loans of up to Rs 10 lakh extended to micro and tiny businesses. However, the idea of such “equitable lending” has been tried before and had failed miserably.

This very same desire to ensure fairness in lending drove the socialist Indira Gandhi to nationalise banks and **force them to lend to “priority sectors”**.

But government control over banks led to **large-scale corruption** and their **repeated recapitalisation** through taxpayers’ money. This further reduced the money available for small businesses.

#### Criticism of MUDRA

1. In 2018, when the economy was stagnating, Mudra was publicised as a **job-generation scheme**. However, since 90% of the loans were issued **under the Shishu category** (less than Rs 50,000), they could not have generated many jobs. Besides, the default rate for shishu category is the highest.



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2. Mudra was a **populist and political move** to give away money. Not surprisingly, almost immediately bad debts started piling up and so, the scheme has remained a headache for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and banks. From **4.35%** of Mudra advances in 2016-17, bad loans shot up to **9.3%** in FY19, as political parties organised camps to canvass Mudra loans for their supporters.
3. In July 2019, the RBI blamed the **poor credit-appraisal system of banks** for rising bad debts. The biggest bad loans (12.39 per cent) were in the smallest loan category (under Rs 50,000).
4. The **scheme emphasised more on cash flow-based lending** and not security-based lending. Collateral securities were avoided, and repayment obligations were kept flexible.
5. The staff at branches **focussed more on meeting the target**. Once the loan is given, there is virtually no effective mechanism that can be employed to get the repayment. Banks have recovery agents and business correspondents, but often they are local people and the borrowers don't take them seriously.

### Way forward

Government should consider burying the scheme. More recent policies (renewable energy, production-linked incentives, timely tariff protection against dumping) where the government isn't giving any direct loan and **only helping the private sector**, would generate much more economic growth and employment.

### Terms to know

- [MUDRA Scheme](#)

### 4. [Towards a more humane race](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Towards a more humane police force" published in The Hindu on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 Police reforms

**Relevance:** To understand the requirements of police reforms

**Synopsis:** Efforts are on to improve the human rights protection regime in police stations

#### Context:

Recently, the Chief Justice of India expressed his concerns about the human rights violations in police stations. The violations happen despite various constitutional safeguards and guarantees. Unfortunately, the threat to human rights violation & bodily integrity is highest in police stations. Since the police are meant to protect human rights, efforts are needed to improve the situation in the police stations.

### Findings of National crime Record Bureau:

According to NCRB, the number of deaths in police custody varies every year. The data reveals that:

- 100 custodial deaths have taken place every year between 2010 -2019
- Of these deaths,
  - 3.5% have been due to injuries caused by the police
  - 28.1 % because of suicide
  - 8.6 %, while escaping custody
  - Rest, due to other different reasons like illness etc.

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- A judicial enquiry is mandatory for suspicious deaths. It has been conducted only in 26.4 cases
- On average, about 47.2 criminal cases were registered annually against policemen in the last 10 years

### When Arrest should not be made?

Read the following articles.

- [SC- Arrest should not be done as routine](#)
- [SC- Arrest is not always a must](#)
- [SC reminds lower courts, cops to avoid unnecessary arrests. But bureaucratic habits die hard](#)

### Supreme court judgements to protect human rights:

The Supreme Court has pronounced many judgements to strengthen the human rights regime. For instance,

1. In **Arnesh Kumar v State of Bihar (2014)**: The SC held that **even though the offence is non-bailable, an arrest is not mandatory** as per Section 41 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)
2. In **Special Action Forum v Union of India (2018)**: The SC held, the **police officer shall explain** to the magistrate **the reasons necessitated the arrest** for further detention of the accused.
3. In **Prakash Singh v Union of India (2006)**: The SC recommended **separating the investigating police from law and order police** to ensure better expertise in the investigation. Similar, recommendations have been given by the National Police Commission (1977-81), 154th Law Commission report (1996) & Malimath committee (2003).
  - a. Malimath committee also recommended that investigation officers should not investigate more than 10 cases a year.
4. In **DK Basu v State of Bengal (1996)**: The SC laid down the **guidelines to check custodial torture** and also mentioned steps to increase transparency & responsibility of police officers during an arrest.
5. In **Paramvir Singh v Baljit Singh (2020)**: The SC directed states to cover more areas of police stations under CCTV & to maintain a storage facility for audio-video recording for 18 months

### What needs to be done?

- Training of police persons to sensitize and encourage them to adopt scientific tools of interrogation. For instance, Narco test, Lie detector test etc.
- As was mentioned by the Home ministry, India needs to link police modernization with police reforms to create a police force that can meet the demands of contemporary times.

### Terms to know

- [Indian Penal Code](#)
- [Malimath Committee](#)

## 5. Guarding Democracy

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Guarding democracy” published in the Times of India on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Reforming the system to strengthen democracy

**Relevance:** To understand the significance of free speech

**Synopsis:** The governments seek to suppress free speech. However, no vibrant democracy can be formed if it lacks free speech.

### Context

The article highlights the importance of democracy in the public sphere. The essence of which is in the participation of the public in the decision-making process.

But for that to happen, citizens should be adequately informed. The health of any democracy rests on the foundation of governments **being truthful** about the current state of affairs.

### What is the role of citizens in ensuring a democratic process:

- They should ensure that media is free, especially when it is giving a critique of public institutions.

However, the government at times seeks to silence criticism. This is evident through recently introduced Information Technology Rules. It imposes Draconian restrictions on a digital medium that is fast growing. A consequence will be that fake news, which undermines the health of a democracy, will proliferate through other digital platforms.

### How can we strengthen democracy?

- **Education:** Both the education system and democracy work well when children are allowed to develop a temperament that allows them to pose questions to power. **Thus, education is the key to strengthening a vibrant democracy.**
- **Elections:** Voting is a right in India, something that people in many other countries cannot take for granted. However, this right needs more involvement from India’s more privileged citizens.

### Way Forward

The commitment to search for truth is a key aspiration of our society. The best way to realize this goal is to allow the plurality that characterizes Indian society free expression.

Thus, it can be said that democracy produces the best results when it creates a platform for multiple opinions.

## 6. The purpose of literature

**Source:** This post is based on the article “The purpose of literature” published in The Hindu on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to education

**Relevance:** To understand the value of Indian literature

**Synopsis:** It is through inclusive and diverse writing that we get a socio-cultural understanding of the nation

### Introduction

Recently, Delhi University dropped Mahasweta Devi’s renowned short story “Draupadi” & two Dalit writers “Bama & Sukirtharani” from their BA Hons syllabus

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### What should be the purpose of literature?

- To understand who we are, or ought to be, as people
- To understand where and how we live and the challenges that face our time and society
- To understand literature better, all over the world, the literature syllabus is being redrawn to ensure inclusion and diversity.

### What is special about writings that have been removed?

1. Draupadi—it details the hardships of tribals, which still exist in today's world.
2. Bama's Karakku: It gives a brief about subjugation, caste oppression & exclusion from society.
3. Sukirtharani poems: It's about Dalit feminist politics.

These are the important writings that highlight concerns that help us in getting a socio-cultural understanding of the issues that plague Indian society. These kinds of writings help us to encourage critical questioning & thinking among young minds.

### What should be done before removing any such writings?

- There should be proper scrutiny by the experts
- Proper reasoning why the particular text is chosen to be removed.
- Ensure that there is no political interference/pressure.

### Previous instances

This is not the first time such incidents have happened. There are many examples where such writings have been dropped from the University syllabus. The prominent ones are,

- **AK Ramanujan's** Three hundred Ramayanas
- **Rohinton Mistry's** A fine balance

### Way forward

- We should focus on Indian literature along with world literature.
- An introduction to Indian writing will go a long way in creating passionate learners and critical thinkers.

### 7. [The broken promise of justice in rape cases](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the following articles.

- "Rape & insensitivity" published in The Hindu on 30th August 2021
- "The broken promise of justice in rape cases" published in the Indian Express on 30th August 2021

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

**Relevance:** To understand crimes against women

**Synopsis:** Despite stringent laws, crimes against women continue. The problems go far beyond law and point to the legal and socio-political system.

#### Introduction

The issues of violence against women continue unabated in India. While the Nirbhaya case still lives in our collective memory, on August 24, an MBA student was gang-raped near Chamundi hills in Mysuru.



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In such incidents, the Apex court has been viewed as a saviour by the weak and marginalized groups. This is also true because of power asymmetry in a society where often Police are seen to side with power holders.

### Issues associated with the Indian legal and socio-political system

- **Legal system:** Our legal system records that rape survivors are routinely killed or kill themselves in protest. But the legal system does not take any action on the root cause.
- **Media:** Media discourse on rape is mostly spectacularised and sensationalized for TRP ratings.
- **Society** immediately starts focussing on anti-rape protests and not on the welfare of the victim. Further, society also **put restrictions on the women** movements to prevent that from happening.
- **State response** is focused on criminalizing anti-rape protests.
- **Victims** are counter cased are filed and victims are victimized further.
- **Judiciary:** There is no Judicial enquiry on why the victims are imprisoned on false counter cases?

### Impact of the lockdown on rape survivors:

- Victims were subject to intimidation as the system was busy fighting Covid
- No moratorium was declared against arbitrary arrests of women and victims of violence
- Guidelines on how to treat rape survivors during the lockdown were not announced

### Judicial observations to protect freedom of women:

- In June, the Supreme Court had to order police protection for a couple in a live-in relationship. As earlier they were denied relief by the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

### What needs to be done?

- Recent rulings by the **Chhattisgarh High Court and the Kerala High Court**, reiterating that **any sexual act by a man against his wife**, even if it involved force, **is not rape**. This can be course-corrected.
- In the **Aparna Bhat & Ors vs. State of Madhya Pradesh case**, the Supreme Court accepted the “paternalistic and misogynistic attitudes that are regrettably reflected at times in judicial orders and judgments”. This has to be **course-corrected by the judiciary**.
- Instead of curbing the freedom of women, society and the state must ensure the protection of women both in public and private places.

### 8. Seize the opportunity to institutionalise accountability

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Seize the opportunity to institutionalise accountability” published in The Hindu on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to health

**Relevance:** India’s vaccination program

**Synopsis:** India’s vaccine program is underperforming, and India should speed up vaccine acquisition from foreign manufacturers.



### Context

India's vaccination drive, though in full swing, is underperforming given the size of the Indian population. India has granted approval to a few vaccines, while many are seeking approval. We should not let the delay in approval to jeopardize the vaccination drive.

### What options does India have to boost vaccination?

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) granted Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) to the COVID-19 vaccines manufactured by Moderna and by Johnson & Johnson, at the end of June and early August 2021.

Further, India also has an opportunity to receive 5 to 10 crore doses of Pfizer-BioNTech's mRNA-based vaccine, including through the COVAX mechanism, before the end of 2021.

### The government initiatives to boost vaccination

- The government had modified regulations like providing for fast track trials for Vaccines approved by UK, US, Japan etc.
- The government has done away with requirements like bridging trials and the mandatory batch testing for vaccines manufactured abroad.
- But a **key bottleneck has been the demand of manufacturers seeking indemnity.**

**Must read:** [What is "Indemnity" and why vaccine manufacturers are demanding that?](#)

### Why India is not granting Indemnity?

Vaccines usually meet all safety parameters as immunobiological substances. But sometimes vaccines can be associated with rare and serious Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFIs).

For instance, vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VIT) and Myocarditis are well known AEFIs. This is the major reason India is not granting indemnity.

The other reasons are,

- **First**, the supply from these manufacturers is likely to be a very small proportion of total vaccine availability in the country.
- **Second**, if foreign manufacturers are granted this indemnity, manufacturers currently supplying vaccines might make similar demands.
  - The manufacturers of the 3 vaccines currently being administered in India (Covishield, Covaxin, and Sputnik V) have not been granted indemnity.
- **Thirdly**, if indemnity is granted, in case of legal issues Government might have to pay the compensation.
- **Fourth**, the stand of manufacturers to not supply vaccines till indemnity is granted is too rigid.

### What are the existing provisions for compensation in India for AEFIs?

- **If the person is a trial subject**, then the rules governing clinical trials in India specify that **compensation must be granted** in case of injury or death of a trial subject.
- If any problem **occurred in the government immunization programs**, then **no such compensation** mechanism exists.
- If any problem **occurred during private vaccinations**, then the legal responsibility for any vaccine-related injury lies with the manufacturers

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### Why do we need an urgent review of these procedures?

- India's Covid-19 vaccine drive is underperforming.
- As per the data, only 11% of the total population has been fully vaccinated, and 35.5% have received the first dose.
- One of the major reasons for this is the insufficient supply, which has consistently been less than the projected vaccine availability.

### Other mechanisms in India to ensure the safety of vaccines

However, going beyond indemnity, India has mechanisms in the current legal framework to ensure safety and legal remedy for any harm.

- **First**, the Drugs Controller General of India, while granting registration certificates, is empowered to take action against companies found to be in violation of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- **Second**, any individual seeking compensation can file petitions before consumer courts and the High Courts
- **Third**, recent amendments to the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 disallow individuals but permit the regulatory bodies to initiate class-action suits (cases representing groups of people who have suffered from the same loss)' based on individual complaints.

### Way Forward

India's need to take a comprehensive view and not be rigid about indemnity alone:

- As long as citizens can redress the complaint, it makes little difference if compensation is paid by the Government or manufacturer.
- India should also examine the safeguards in place in other countries which have granted indemnity, like America's Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program (CICP).
- Given the needs of India's health, Government should work innovatively to speed up the vaccine supply to meet the demands of its vaccination program.

### 9. Soft power, India's strength in Afghanistan

**Source:** This post is based on the following articles:

- **The Hindu**
  - "Near and present" published on 28th August 2021
  - "Afghan situation uncertain, says India" published on 28th August 2021
  - "The Afghan theatre and judging India's responses" published on 30th August 2021
- **The Indian Express**
  - "Soft power, India's strength in Afghanistan" published on 28th August 2021
  - "India's limited options in Afghanistan" published on 28th August 2021
  - "India important, want to maintain ties: Taliban leadership in Qatar" published on 30th August 2021

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

**Relevance:** This article explains the recent developments in Afghanistan.

### Context

Recently, the Taliban has declared that it will not allow any further evacuation of Afghan nationals. Following the announcement, a suicide bombing also took place in Kabul airport

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which claimed close to 100 lives. This shattered any optimism that the world had to hand over Afghanistan to the Taliban.

But a member of the Taliban leadership in Qatar has said that India is “**very important for this subcontinent**” and that his group wants to continue Afghanistan’s “**cultural**”, “**economic**”, “**political**” and “**trade ties**” with India “**like in the past**”. This explains India’s soft power investments in Afghanistan is reaping benefits.

### Background

Please read the following articles for a better understanding:

1. [The script of the new endgame in Afghanistan](#)
2. [Return of Taliban has implications for India](#)
3. [New Delhi’s Af-Pak: Old friends versus old foes: Should India accept Taliban, betray Afghans or support resistance movements like Saleh’s?](#)
4. [History over geography](#)
5. [Modi, Putin discuss Afghanistan; India flags terror concern at BRICS, UNHRC](#)
6. [Fourth evacuation from Kabul since 1992 & The legal challenges in recognising the Taliban](#)

### Taliban leadership opinion on India

Recently, a member of the Taliban leadership has said that India is “very important for this subcontinent” and they wanted to continue relations like in the past. This is the **first categorical statement directed at India** by a senior leader of the Taliban.

The Taliban has also mentioned that they **will give due importance to Afghan’s political, economic and trade ties** with India. Further, he mentioned that **Trade with India through Pakistan is very important** for them.

Furthermore, he also mentioned that the Taliban would **address the issues holding up Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline** project after the formation of the government.

### India’s investment in Afghanistan

India is currently the fifth-largest donor in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is also among the top five recipients of India’s external assistance. India’s total development assistance over the years has been worth over \$3 billion.

### Hard power investments:

- [Read this post to know about India’s Afghanistan investment.](#)

### Soft power investments:

India’s soft power investments have helped India to build goodwill and greater people-to-people contact. It involves measures focusing on health, education, capacity development and food security, among others.

Many Indian projects have been community-driven, thus helping engage a large section of people in development efforts.

For instance, the **Afghan Women’s Empowerment Programme** is a collaboration between USAID and the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) for providing vocational education for Afghan women.

### How India's development aid and cooperation distinguishes it from other donors?

1. India follows a demand-driven approach, which implies that the **sectors for investment are chosen by the recipient government.**
2. India's aid and investments come without any political trappings. For instance, the US and Germany invested funds with the condition to have peace talks.
3. In PPP terms, the value of the Indian rupee is often underestimated. This means with the rupee, one can buy substantially more goods and services at adjusted exchange rates.
  - o For example, a study by the Stimson Centre found out that even though **Indian aid in 2015-16 totalled \$1.36 billion, in PPP terms it could be pegged at over \$5 billion.**

### Criticism against India's approach to Afghanistan

Despite India's achievement in soft power, India also faces criticisms like:

1. India **did not follow an independent or national interest-based policy** towards the events in that country. For example, India **blindly accepted the governments installed by the US.**
2. India's investment in Afghan earned goodwill among the people, but it did **not earn any role in the political consultations.**
3. Further, India also **did not engage or endorse the Taliban in the past.** This makes it **hard to begin negotiations at present.**

### India's response to the condition in Afghanistan

Recently, the External Affairs Ministry has stated, "Currently, there is **no clarity on any entity forming a government in Kabul.** There has been a lot of stories going around about who will be represented in the government". He also mentioned that India is "monitoring the situation and are in touch with partner countries".

India's External Affairs Minister has mentioned that the Government is pursuing a "wait and watch" policy. India needs to establish itself as a neutral entity that is keen on the development of the region, but ready to work with all parties concerned. The recent statement of India's External Affairs Minister has affirmed that.

#### Terms to know:

- [Taliban](#)
- [e-Emergency X-Misc visa](#)
- [Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India \(TAPI\) gas pipeline project](#)

### 10. Taliban has put geo-economics on top in India-US ties

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Taliban has put geo-economics on top in India-US ties" published in the Livemint on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS – 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

**Relevance:** This article explains the issues surrounding developed countries vs developing and least developed countries.



### Afghan issues mentioned in the article

Please read the following articles for the recent developments in Afghanistan:

1. [The script of the new endgame in Afghanistan](#)
2. [Return of Taliban has implications for India](#)
3. [New Delhi's Af-Pak: Old friends versus old foes: Should India accept Taliban, betray Afghans or support resistance movements like Saleh's?](#)
4. [History over geography](#)
5. [Modi, Putin discuss Afghanistan; India flags terror concern at BRICS, UNHRC](#)
6. [Fourth evacuation from Kabul since 1992 & The legal challenges in recognising the Taliban](#)

### Context

There are two upcoming multilateral meetings over the next four months. These are,

1. The upcoming CoP-26 in Glasgow, scheduled to kick off on 31 October.
2. The World Trade Organization's (WTO) ministerial is scheduled this December.

Some key determinants are likely to emerge from the meetings. But, the fight between rich nations vs developing and poor nations will also get intensify.

### What are the issues surrounding climate change negotiations?

1. Developed nations, led by the US, are **not yet willing to accept the developing bloc's principle of common but differentiated responsibilities**. Instead, they are focusing on net-zero targets.
2. Under the Paris Agreement, **rich countries had promised to provide \$100 billion every year to developing and poor nations**. This fund will primarily help them to cope with the effects of climate change and gradually shift from polluting factories to greener ones. So far, **the promise of \$100 billion has remained only on paper**.

**Read more:** [Net Zero Emissions Target for India – Explained, Pointwise](#)

### What are the issues surrounding trade negotiations?

- **Agricultural trade** remains a bone of contention. Rich nations have consistently bullied developing countries at every trade negotiation. Rich nations tried to **restrict farm subsidies of developing countries while refusing to touch their own**.
  - The rich nations mention that there is an asymmetry in the 1995 agriculture agreement. But one has to remember that the rich nations only introduced the agreement during the morphing of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade into the WTO.
- Apart from that, the rich nations have also been trying to **shift the goal-post by questioning special and differential treatment provisions** for developing countries.
- The rich nations also **add new issues** to the agenda in which **they have a competitive advantage, such** as e-commerce and investment facilitation.
- A permanent solution to the **public stockholding for food security** has been pending since 2013. The pandemic has shown the importance of public stockholding by India and other poor nations. The issues with public stockholding are,
  - The formula is based on average crop prices of 1986-1988.
  - The developed countries are of the opinion that the minimum support price system in India is trade-distorting.

**Read more:** [WTO rules on domestic support and food security](#)



**Terms to know:**

- [The United Nations Climate Change Conference 2021 or the CoP 21](#)
- [World Trade Organization](#)
- [Common but differentiated responsibilities \(CBDR\)](#)
- [Agreement on Agriculture \(AoA\), Blue | Green | Amber Box, Peace clause](#)

**11. Key priorities for employment policy**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Key priorities for employment policy” published in Business Standard on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre

**Relevance:** Employment Generation in India and Employment strategy for India.

**Synopsis:** Measures that generate income for the poor are more important than modifying the applicability threshold for labour laws.

**Context**

Several decades of relatively high growth has failed to generate enough quality employment for the majority of Indians. The consequences of this failure are visible in

- rising inequality of income,
- the social unrest and vigilante violence fuelled by unemployed youngsters,
- a growing politicization of the tension between locals and migrants from other parts of India,
- stagnation, and
- a decline in the living conditions of millions trapped in low-quality employment.

Hence, India needs to focus on **creating a sound employment strategy for youth** because out of the 22 million who are unemployed in terms of usual status, 18 million are workers in the 15-29 age group.

**Employment strategy**

It should be based on the following dimensions:

- **Employment** approach that strengthens the links between **growth and job creation**.
- Increase opportunities for educated youth.
- Improves substantially the conditions of work and remuneration for the millions at the bottom of the work pyramid.
- Increases substantially the participation of women in the workforce.

**What needs to be done?**

- First, improve the **quality of education** from pre-primary upwards and improved child nutrition. For example, the **new education policy includes a proposal for mandatory skill acquisition** programmes in schools.
- Second, **giving incentives to encourage school and college leavers** to participate in these skilling programmes. Provide all secondary school and college leavers with an **unemployment benefit** on the condition that they participate in an organised skill development course.
- Third, **connect the skill programmes and the institutions implementing them** to potential employers by involving them in the funding and management of skill development.

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- Fourth, provide every employed person with a **written contract and the strict enforcement** of minimum wage legislation.
- Fifth, **improving the conditions of work for the vast majority of workers.** In agriculture, the number of employers is so large that the best strategy is programmes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act that provide supplementary employment and underwrite statutory minimum wages in rural areas.
- Lastly, **raising the participation of women in the workforce.** At present, only 23% of women are in the labour force, as against 57% of men. There is a wide range in the Labour Force Participation Rate of women, from 6% in Bihar to 52% in Himachal Pradesh. This suggests that the differences are partly because of variations in the local pace of development and due to social practices.

### Conclusion

If we improve the earnings for people at the bottom of the income pyramid, there will be substantial economic gain with a better connection between growth and job creation.

### 12. The vaccine's last mile problem

**Source:** This post is based on the article "The vaccine's last-mile problem" published in The Hindu on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

**Relevance:** Universalisation of vaccination programme.

**Synopsis:** In vaccination programmes, which have complex delivery requirements, the last mile means to make or break.

#### Context

The article highlights the problem of increased inequalities in vaccination, which have been aggravated by the Covid pandemic. Now, as vaccines are becoming available, the next important task is to vaccinate the whole world.

This is especially true for the most vulnerable people or places like the mountains of Afghanistan and Amazon, nomadic populations etc. The debates **over vaccine nationalism, intellectual properties or technology transfer should not be allowed** to stifle the drive of vaccinating the entire world.

#### What are the issues that require immediate attention?

For vaccines, to be delivered to everyone, we need to address the following challenges:

1. **Logistical Issues:** There is a need to address logistical challenges like cold chain delivery requirements, supply chains etc.
2. **Infrastructure:** There is a need to provide proper transport infrastructure, electricity availability to store vaccines.
3. **Health system:** For the successful rollout of vaccines, there is a need to upgrade the health infrastructure with proper training to vaccinators to full availability of health staff.
4. **Communication:** Communities should be fully aware of the purpose of the vaccination drive.
5. **Sustainability:** There is a need to ensure sustainable methods to dispose of medical waste generated from the vaccination drives.

### What are the long term benefits of extensive vaccination?

The extensive vaccination drive may also provide certain long term benefits. Such as:

- It provides the opportunity to build resilient health systems.
- If the infrastructure was created in a sustainable way at present, then it will serve the communities after the pandemic also. For instance, the solar water heaters, cold chain facilities, medical waste incinerators, etc can be used by the local community for the long term.

The pandemic revealed the inequalities and also the gaps in our health infrastructure. Thus, it should be seen as an opportunity to revitalize our health infrastructure and health systems.

### 13. Still hanging fire on transparency

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Still hanging fire on transparency” published in The Hindu on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS -2 Structure, organization and functioning of the judiciary

**Relevance:** Understand issues of criminalization of politics.

**Synopsis:** Courts need to go beyond appealing to the fictional conscience of our lawmakers.

#### Context

Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) fined 8 political parties for being in contempt of the Court's decisions to inform citizens about criminal antecedents of their candidates.

#### Criminal cases against the politicians:

There has been an increase in criminal cases against politicians. In 2004, 24% of the Members of Parliament had criminal cases pending against them. This figure rose to an alarming 43% after the 2019 general elections.

**Read more:** [Functioning of Parliament: Challenges and way forward – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### Instructions by SC

In various judgements, the SC directed political parties to inform the electorates about:

- The criminal antecedents of candidates.
- Why the party found these candidates more suitable than those without criminal backgrounds?
- Party should give reasons for selections with reference to qualifications, achievements and other merits.
- Despite these clear directives, parties have not worked as per these directives.

#### There are many instances in the past where political parties have shown contempt to directives of court:

- In **Union of India vs ADR (2002)**: Court directed all candidates to file an affidavit declaring their educational, financial and criminal backgrounds. But, political parties amended the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to nullify the disclosure requirements. The Court later struck down the amendments.
- In 2013, the Central Information Commission (**CIC**) declared six national **political parties as 'public authorities'** under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. Parties were required to appoint Public Information Officers(PIO) and submit themselves to provisions of the transparency law.

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- Political parties immediately introduced a bill in Parliament to amend the RTI law to exclude political parties from the ambit of the RTI legislation. It was only due to strong public opposition that the amendments were finally dropped. But still, Political parties have not appointed PIOs.

### Introduction of Electoral Bonds

Political parties often oppose the scrutiny of political funding by the public. Further, they do not want any examination which may reveal the names of their donors (who give financial support to parties). So, the introduction of **electoral bonds has created a further blow** to people's right to know and consolidated the role of money in electoral politics.

**Must read:** [Electoral Bond and its challenges – Explained, Pointwise](#)

While **hearing the challenge to the instrument of electoral bonds, the Supreme Court in 2019 observed** that the transparency of electoral bonds is vital for the sanctity of the electoral process. Unfortunately, the case has not received the urgent attention that it requires, and the petition has been pending for nearly four years.

### What should the courts do?

- It needs to urgently hear the matter of the electoral bond, along with the issue of the refusal of political parties to comply with the CIC's order.
- Judiciary needs to put in a mechanism that ensures that its directives are followed before the conduct of elections.
- It should debar candidates who violate its orders.

### What further steps are needed to bring transparency in electoral funding?

The country can no longer afford courts to become mere spectators of the erosion of democracy.

In the public interest, the courts should intervene and not just limit themselves to appealing to lawmakers to formulate strict laws. The courts **need to make decisive judgements and lay down directions to enhance the transparency** in the matter of public funding.

### Terms to know

- [Representation of people Act, 1951](#)
- [Right To Information Act, 2005](#)

## 14. Marital Rape: An indignity to women

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Marital Rape: An indignity to women" published in The Hindu on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

**Relevance:** Understand the issue of Marital Rape.

**Synopsis:** The marital rape exception is antithetical to women's dignity, equality and autonomy.

### Introduction

Recently, the High Court of Chhattisgarh decided a criminal revision petition. The charges were framed against the husband based on the allegations of his wife. The High Court upheld charges under Sections 498A (cruelty towards wife by husband or relatives) and Section 377(unnatural sex) but discharged the husband under Section 376 (rape).



### Why the person has been discharged from Section 376?

This was done as an Exception 2 to Section 375 (the definition of rape). As this section provides that sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife (provided that wife is over the age of 18) would not amount to the offence of rape. This is based on the premise that all sex within marriage is consensual.

Earlier in the **Independent Thought vs Union of India (2017) case**, the government defended these provisions by stating that making marital rape a crime would destroy the institution of marriage.

### However, there are many inconsistencies in this provision of the law:

- **First**, the husband may be tried for sexual offences like sexual harassment, molestation etc as they make no exception for the marriage.
- **Second**, a husband can be tried for unnatural sexual intercourse under section 377 instead of under section 376.
  - In **Navtej Singh Johar vs Union of India**, 2018, the SC ruled that Section 377 is applicable only when the intercourse is done without the consent of the other partner.
- **Third**, it is argued that marriage is a sexual relationship. So, determining the validity of allegations of marital rape is difficult. However, one should keep in mind that marriage does not grant permanent and perpetual consent.
- **Fourth**, this section goes against the constitutional goal of individual autonomy, individual

### 15. 7 years of PM Jan Dhan Yojana

**Source:** This post is based on the article “7 years of PM Jan Dhan Yojana” published in the PIB on 28th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes

**Relevance:** To Understand PMJDY

Recently, PM Jan Dhan Yojana (PM-JDY) has completed its 7 successful years of implementation.

### What is PMJDY?

It is **National Mission for Financial Inclusion** to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

**Read more:** [PM Jan Dhan Yojana](#)

### Impact of PMJDY:

- PMJDY has opened the gates of financial inclusion for poor and marginalized households. It brings the benefits of credit, insurance, remittances and government services through DBT.
- It has aided many government schemes as schemes like PM-KISAN, MGNREGA etc. are dependent on active bank accounts.



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- Not only that, but it has also been of great help during the lockdown as within 10 days of lockdown, 20 Crore women PMJDY accounts received the money in the form of government assistance.

### Achievements of the scheme

1. **Accounts: More and more people are coming under financial inclusion through JDY.**
  - a. More than 43.04 crore beneficiaries were linked to the banking system.
  - b. It has also helped in social empowerment as no. of women account holders in total JDY accounts is 55.47%.
  - c. In fact, 66.69% of Jan Dhan accounts are in rural and semi-urban areas.
2. **Currency circulation through operative accounts:** Out of the total 43.04 crore PMJDY accounts, 36.86 crores (85.6%) are operative, which helps in reviving credit and currency flow in the economy.
3. **Deposits:** Deposits have increased about 6.38 times. This is another indicator of increasing usage of accounts and inculcation of saving habits among the account holders.
4. **Rupay Card:** The number of RuPay cards and their usage has increased over time.
5. **Jan Dhan Darshak App:** It was launched to provide a citizen-centric platform for locating banking touchpoints such as bank branches, ATMs, Bank Mitras, Post Offices, etc. This app is also being used for identifying villages that are not served by banking touchpoints.
6. **PM Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) for PMJDY women beneficiaries:** Under this, an amount of ₹500 (for 3 months) was transferred to women PMJDY account holders during Covid lockdown.
7. **Ensuring smooth DBT transactions:** Close monitoring by the government with banks and NPCI (national payment Corporation of India) has reduced the DBT failures. The share of DBT failures due to avoidable reasons as a percentage of total DBT failures has decreased from 13.5% (FY 19-20) to 5.7% (FY 20-21).

### What should be further done?

1. We should endeavour to **ensure coverage of PMJDY account holders under micro-insurance schemes**, such as PMJJBY (PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana) and PMSBY (PM Suraksha Bima Yojana).
2. We should work for the promotion of digital payments including RuPay debit card usage among PMJDY account holders through the **creation of acceptance infrastructure** across India.
3. Furthermore, we should work towards improving access of PMJDY account holders to Micro-credit and micro-investment such as Flexi-recurring deposit etc.

### Terms to know

- [National Payment Corporation of India](#)

### 16. Break the deadlock: Increase women's representation

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Break the deadlock: Increase women's representation" published in The Times of India on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 Representation of women in Indian Legislature.

**Relevance:** Reservation for women in the legislature.

**Synopsis:** Providing reservations for women in a way that makes the parliament gender equal.

Context:

With women performing excellently in sports, cinema & other fields, it is time that women get adequate representation in the legislature also. Despite consensus across all major political parties on increasing the representation of women in political parties, their numbers in the legislature are still disappointing.

**Status of women in legislation:**

In terms of numbers, presently there are **less than 15% women legislatures** in most state assemblies and Parliament. Most of these legislators happen to be from urban areas where there is good access to education. There are certain exceptions to this general rule, like:

- Women coming from political families and
- Women who received recognition in other fields (mostly films, TV)

**What are the roadblocks which prevent women's entry into politics?**

1. **Reservation Policy:** There is less support from male legislators because of the process of how reservation policy works.
  - If we decide 30% of seats to be reserved for women, then women alone are allowed to contest from those seats. This is not acceptable to many, as they may take decades to build their reputation in their constituency. If a constituency suddenly becomes reserved, it would bar them from contesting.
2. **Followers:** Political parties and leaders take years, even generations, to build followers. They would not like to hand over their constituency to anyone, as they are apprehensive of losing their followers. So, despite verbal support, political parties are not keen on reservation for women in the legislature.

**What can be done to improve women legislators?**

Given the reluctance of the political parties, following approaches we can adopt

- Introduce **phased increase in women representation** e.g. 20% in 2024 elections, 25% in 2029 elections
- Instead of constituency-wise reservation, India can ask the recognised political parties to reserve a required percentage of seats for women.
- India can also request all political parties to field the mandated percentage of women candidates in those constituencies where they have either won or have been runner-ups in previous elections.

**How would the above approaches prove beneficial?**

- With no particular constituency reserved for women, the fear of losing the male seats will be eliminated.
- Unlike sports, where men and women compete separately, here they can compete with each other. And as the process would be gradual, and would provide parties enough time to nurture the women candidates.

Thus, through this approach, the deadlock can be broken, and we can pave the way for increasing women's reservation in the Parliament.

### 17. The strategic signal of an Indian presence in the South China Sea

**Source:** This post is based on the article “The strategic signal of an Indian presence in the South China Sea” published in The Livemint on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

**Relevance:** This article explains India’s presence in the South China Sea.

#### Synopsis

India’s naval manoeuvres in the South China Sea annoy China, but such bold signalling plays a role in safeguarding national interests.

#### Context

The last year’s border clash and continuing tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) have raised questions on India’s China policy. In a major message to China, the Indian Navy made its presence felt in the waters of the South China Sea.

This month, a task force of four warships sailed to the South China Sea. They performed last week’s Malabar 2021 naval exercises with India’s Quad partners. They will also conduct various bilateral exercises with naval forces from South China Sea littoral states, including Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines.

**Read more:** [Explained: The Malabar Exercise of Quad nations, and why it matters to India](#)

#### What is the significance of the move?

1. India claimed that these maritime initiatives are **aimed at enhancing synergy and coordination between the Indian Navy and friendly countries.**
2. At a time when tensions with China are high along the LAC, India is signalling that it is **willing to challenge China in the maritime sphere** along with other like-minded nations.

#### How global countries are showing their presence in the South China Sea?

- The South China Sea is claimed by China as its sovereign territory almost in its entirety. The claims of other countries are tackled by China through artificial islands heavily fortified with missiles, runways and weapon systems.
- **Several ASEAN member countries**, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, **have counterclaims** on China.
- The US also mentioned, “nowhere is the **rules-based maritime order under greater threat than in the South China Sea**”.
- In recent weeks, a **British aircraft carrier strike group** and an **American surface action group** have marked their presence in the South China Sea region.

**Read more:** [Quad Summit and its relevance – Explained, Pointwise](#)

#### What is India’s interest in the South China Sea?

India has wider stakes in the South China Sea, as nearly **55% of India’s trade with the Indo-Pacific region** passes through these waters. So **India’s interest is primarily to keep the region’s trade routes safe and secure**, thereby helping uphold **regional stability and freedom of navigation.**

So, India has been **pushing for a rules-based order** in the region, including by means of upholding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This is evident as in the recent meeting of the East Asia Summit, India stressed that **any Code of Conduct in the**

**South China Sea should be fully consistent with the relevant UN convention** and negotiations.

#### **What India needs to do?**

India is willing to reciprocate and play its role, as seen in its recent deployment of Indian Navy vessels. But China is gaining greater operational control over the disputed territories in the South China Sea. Thus, the challenge for India is rising by the day. So, **Greater activism**, both diplomatic and military, **is needed** and is beginning to shape up with the involvement of Quad and other military exercises.

India is waking up to the challenge by trying to increase its presence and influence in China's backyard. This will annoy China, but **rattling China is necessary if India** is to suitably **protect its interests from the Himalayas** to the maritime domain.

#### **Terms to know:**

- [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#)

#### **18. Its time to build BRICS better**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Its time to build BRICS better" published in The Hindu on 1st September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 important International institutions.

**Relevance:** To study the importance of BRICS.

**Synopsis:** Although BRICS grouping succeeded up to a point, it now confronts multiple challenges.

#### **Context:**

The 13<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit is set to be held under India's chairmanship on 9<sup>th</sup> September. This meeting will be held in digital and virtual format.

#### **What is BRICS?**

- It is the acronym coined for an association of five major emerging national economies that have similar economic development. The five countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- The acronym was first used in 2001 by economist Jim O'Neill. Originally, the first four were grouped as "BRIC". In 2010, South Africa was officially admitted as a BRIC nation. Thus, making the current acronym BRICS.

#### **Structure of BRICS**

- The Chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym BRICS.
- Currently, India is holding the chairmanship of the BRICS. India was the chair in 2012 and 2016 too.

#### **What is the Importance of BRICS?**

The BRICS nations collectively represent,

- 42% of the world's population,
- 30% of the land area
- 24% of global GDP



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- 16% of international trade

### Working of the BRICS

The grouping has gone through a reasonably productive journey.

- It attempts to serve as a bridge between the Global North and Global South.
- It developed a common perspective on a wide range of global and regional issues.
- Furthermore, the BRICS established the New Development Bank with the objective of financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries.
- It created a financial stability net in the form of Contingency Reserve Arrangement.
- It is about to set up a Vaccine Research and Development Virtual Center.

**Read more:** [BRICS Environment Ministers adopt the New Delhi Statement on Environment](#)

### What are the immediate goals of the BRICS Group?

As India holds the current chair, it outlined four priorities:

- **Reform of multilateral institutions:** BRICS was founded on the desire to end the domination of the western world over institutions of global governance (IMF, World Bank, UN) and strengthen multilateralism.
- **Combat Terrorism:** Terrorism is an international phenomenon impacting all parts of the world. Recent developments in Afghanistan stressing the need to bridge the gap between rhetoric and action.
  - In this context, BRICS is attempting to shape its counter-terrorism strategy by crafting the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Action Plan. It contains specific measures to fight radicalisation, terrorist financing and misuse of the Internet by terrorist groups
- **Promoting technological and digital solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals:** This will help to improve governance and will also prove beneficial in the current situations e.g. Global pandemic response.
- **Expanding people-to-people cooperation:** This will improve gradually once all the travel restrictions are eased.

### What are the challenges facing BRICS?

1. **Relations with other countries:** There are differences within BRICS and with other countries like:
  - a. There is a rift between India and China. This is because of various reasons like Chinese aggression in Eastern Ladakh.
  - b. China and Russia have strained relations with the west. On the other hand, the other BRICS member has a liberal approach with the west. This is also impacting the functioning
  - c. Internal challenges of Brazil and South Africa.
  - d. BRICS countries have not done enough to assist the Global South to win optimal support for their agenda
2. **Trade:** Though BRICS seeks to deepen trade ties, Chinese domination of trade creates apprehensions in the minds of other countries that the Chinese economy may threaten their economies.
3. **Maintaining Internal Balance:** Current pandemic exposed the over-dependence of value chains on China and their vulnerability. Thus, there is a need to deepen intra-



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BRICS cooperation in areas like agriculture, trade etc. But at the same time, the BRICS have to ensure there is no critical dependency on anyone partner country.

4. **China policies:** China's economic rise has created a serious imbalance within BRICS. Also, its aggressive policy, especially against India, puts BRICS solidarity under exceptional strain
5. It is necessary for leaders, officials and academics of this grouping to undertake serious soul-searching and find a way out of the present predicament.

### What should be done?

BRICS should narrow down its goals and focus on areas of immediate concern. Tangible deliverables will help in strengthening the group and its global perception.

### 19. Making the Paralympics count

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Making the Paralympics count" published in The Hindu on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

**Relevance:** Paralympics empowering disabled people

**Synopsis:** This is the chance to improve the conditions of the disabled pursuing sports and to refresh the way we view disability.

#### Context:

Indian athletes have given their best performance in Paralympics 2021. It gives a platform for disabled people to perform and shine. It also offers everyone the chance to watch them in action. Media attention ensures that athletes with disabilities capture the public imagination. Though they have made India proud, but they face numerous challenges in society which they have to overcome on a daily basis.

**Read more:** [Sports sector in India: Issues and challenges – Explained, Pointwise](#)

### What are the problems disabled people are facing?

1. **Stereotypes:** In India, persons with disabilities find it difficult to live a life of equal dignity. The status of Divyang — persons with divine bodies — presents them as beings with supernatural powers. However, despite all efforts, stereotypes and unfounded biases about the disabled people's incompetence, inability to make informed choices and asexuality etc. continue.
2. **Access to Recreational activities:** Disabled people have to face multiple obstacles as most facilities do not provide a conducive environment for them, e.g. Parks, swimming pools etc.
3. **Unfriendly sports governance Framework:** Section 30 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, requires appropriate governments and sporting authorities to take measures to improve access to meaningful sporting opportunities for the disabled. These include redesigning infrastructural facilities and providing multisensory essentials and features in all sporting activities to make them more accessible.

### What India should do?

1. There is need for proper introspection of all the existing rules/laws.
2. There is need to reorient the strategy/ plan as per the need of disabled people.

### What Indian Government has done?

1. At the systemic level, India brought governance reforms to the Paralympic Committee of India.
2. The Union Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs brought parity to the cash rewards structure for medal-winning Paralympians by placing them on equal footing with their able-bodied counterparts at the Olympics.

### What more can we do?

1. **At the individual level:** We should view athletes with disabilities in a holistic sense, while also acknowledging their additional challenges. We should strive to create more opportunities for disabled people so that they can participate in all walks of life.
2. **Sports Broadcaster:** The government should take steps that enable disabled people to watch and participate in sporting activities.
3. **Media:** Pictures of the Paralympics in electronic media and on social media should be accompanied by image descriptions for the visually challenged.
4. It is easy to admire the courage of our para-athletes from far. But, with intent, resolve and action, we can make the Paralympics count for India, not just in the medals tally but in the lives of disabled people.

### Terms to know

- [Right of persons with disabilities Act](#)

### 20. [The next step in democratic evolution is overdue](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “The next step in democratic evolution is overdue” published in The Hindu on 1st September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability

**Relevance:** The article highlights the importance of democracy and the base or structure on which it is built i.e constitutions and laws.

**Synopsis:** India must change, from an elected authoritarianism towards participative governance.

### What is the difference between democratic and authoritarian regimes?

The democratic regime is different from the authoritarian regime due to,

- **Citizen Participation:** In a democracy, citizens participate effectively in shaping policies and laws by which they are governed.
- **Democratic constitutions** provide elected assemblies of citizen’s representatives to shape new policies and pass laws.

### What are the problems with democracy?

- Inter and Intra Party politics
- Floor battles are often seen in Parliament
- Citizens being dissatisfied with the performance of their elected representatives

### What is required for a healthy democracy?

- **Open-minded discussions:** These are necessary for a good democracy. It can provide an effective and acceptable solution to various problems like climate change, historical inequities, increasing economic inequalities etc from different perspectives.

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- **Democratic deliberations among citizens:** Democracies are not limited to elections alone. People from different walks of life, with different views and perceptions, must come together to deliberate and solve the problems.
- **Filling the gaps:** There is a huge divide between people like ‘us’ from ‘people not like us’ – especially in the Indian context. Majoritarian electoral systems of democracy further harden these divisions. Therefore, stronger processes are urgently required for democratic discourses among citizens to bind the fabric of the nation before it frays further.
- **Role of media:** The media used to provide space for diverse perspectives. But now, with fake news and paid news, the role of media itself is under the scanner. The media should regain its role as the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of democracy.
- **Role of Technology:** Technology backed smart algorithms have created echo chambers of people who like each other. They do not listen to the opinion of those in other chambers. This blocks the other viewpoints and reinforces and hardens their own partisan beliefs. Technology should in fact act as an enabler for the open exchange of views.

### What can be done?

Consent of the governed is about more than periodic elections. So we should go beyond period elections through widespread inclusion of people in the political arena.

A civil society movement, Citizens for Europe, has proposed a solution: a European Citizens’ Assembly — **a permanent transnational forum for citizens’ participation and deliberation.**

**Read more:** [Why the citizen assembly is an idea whose time has to come](#)

### What is the significance of dialogues?

We need to understand that the debates have a broader purpose. The aim of the debate is not to listen to what the other person is saying, but to understand ‘why’ or his/her perspective on his/her view. India, which has had a diversity of views from its inception, should strengthen the culture of debates and discussions to strengthen democracy.

## 21. Where liberalism and nationalism are placed in Asia

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Where liberalism and nationalism are placed in Asia” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd September 2021.**

**Syllabus:** GS 2– Important aspects of governance

**Relevance:** This article explains India’s presence in the South China Sea.

### Synopsis

**Liberalism and nationalism** mean different things to different people, and the two concepts are often considered mutually exclusive.

### Introduction

Nationalism may take various forms but essentially, it is about collective identity, whereas liberalism implies the defence of individual freedom and self-determination.

The liberal tradition contributes the ideas such as free trade, international law, multilateralism, environmental protection and human rights. But the problems arise when such ideas become a doctrine for nation-building.

**What is the difference between nationalism and liberalism?**

**Nationalism** may take various forms but essentially, it is about collective identity, whereas **liberalism** implies the defence of **individual freedom and self-determination**.

**Liberalism** can underpin universal rights and Adam Smith's natural laws of economics. But its **appeal is mainly to the professional**, educated class and lacks nationalism's emotional appeal.

**How was nationalism in India got shaped during independence?**

Before Indian independence, nationalism was regarded with suspicion. For instance, **Rabindranath Tagore** had considered it a malign ideology and **supported the values of internationalism and universalism**. On the other hand, **VD Savarkar** supported **Hindutva nationalism with Buddha's universalism**.

On the other hand, **Jawaharlal Nehru** saw merit in nationalism. For instance, in 1953, he mentioned, "**nationalism has been and is a very good thing**. It has been a great liberating force in certain stages of a country's history". But he also feared that **extreme nationalism** could **degenerate into fascism and expansionism**.

**How the Asian Democracy is different from Western Democracy?**

**Democracy in Asia** is not shaped by the liberalism of the West. The **centrality of civil and political rights is less** and a **degree of state intervention** is considered acceptable when it comes to individual autonomy.

**How will nationalism and liberalism be reflected in a future Asia?**

Both India and China were at the **receiving end of western imperialism** and emerged as **supporters of principles of international society** reflected in the Panchsheel, namely sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference.

The two leading Asian nations, **India and China**, used the **present world system to their rise** while **protesting against the control of the United Nations** and world financial institutions.

But they both have not formulated any alternative based on Asian nationalism. Their current rivalry makes any such formulation an impossible one.

**22. Better policing, please: Court observations on investigations in Delhi riots should be required reading for all major police forces**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Better policing, please: Court observations on investigations in Delhi riots should be required reading for all major police forces**" published in **The Times of India** on **1st September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Police reforms

**Relevance:** Understand lapses in the police investigation.

**Synopsis:** There are few major lapses in the police investigation. These can be corrected by paying heed to the advice of the Delhi court.

**Introduction**

Recently, the police investigation in the February 2020 riots case has come under the scanner of Delhi Trial Courts. These critical observations have to be considered seriously during the police investigations in the country.



### What are the judicial observations about the police investigations?

**Inconsistency:** The courts noted many inconsistencies in witness statements, which should have been noted by police during their investigation.

**Poor Evidence:** In multiple bail orders, judges have cited poor evidence as to their reason for granting bail. For example, in the context of the Delhi High court's bail for three anti-CAA activists in June, despite they have been charged with the **UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act)**, the police were not able to produce strong convicting evidence.

**Policing methods:** Courts are also finding basic lapses in policing methods. E.g. In one case involving acid burn injuries to police personnel, police did not collect chemical samples from the crime scene for forensic analysis.

**The behaviour of investigating officers:** Investigating officers are not briefing prosecutors properly or answering their queries.

**Methods of framing charges:** In some cases, investigation appeared "inefficient" and "unproductive". Police are framing charges of vandalism without thinking how such evidence and the investigation will withstand a higher degree of scrutiny during trials. For example, in a riot victim's gunshot injury complaint, police had clubbed this case with incidents from other localities of some other day.

### How can the investigation be improved?

If Police all over India pay close attention to the Delhi court's observations, investigation processes can be made efficient, which will help in the quick delivery of Justice.

#### Terms to know

- [Unlawful Activities Prevention Act \(UAPA\)](#)

### 23. The Paralympic paradox

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**The Paralympic paradox**" published in the **Business Standard** on **1st September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections

**Relevance:** Paralympics empowering disabled people.

**Synopsis:** Indians with disabilities need more attention.

#### Introduction

Indian athletes have given their best performance in Paralympics 2021. It gives a platform for disabled people to perform and shine. But, at the same time, it shows the embarrassing truth about Indian society that neglect disabled people.

**Read more:** [Making the Paralympics count](#)

India has been participating in the Paralympics since 1988, but their coverage has been rarely featured in India in any significant way. Rarely, people knew about their achievements. It is time that we understand the issues faced by disabled people and work on them.

### What are the government's efforts to improve Paralympic athletes performance?

**Khelo India Scheme:** The government introduced this scheme in 2017. Three sports bodies were recognized under this, including a Paralympic Committee of India. Its aim is to provide differently-abled sportspeople access to more special facilities and coaching centres.

**Read more:** [Khelo India Scheme](#)



**TOP (Target Olympic Podium) Scheme:** The scheme offers support for high potential para-athletes.

Read more: [TOP Scheme](#)

### What will be the impact of Private Sector Cooperation?

Greater interest from the private sector, which has been the driving factor behind the commercial success of sporting events.

There is positive momentum in this direction, as automobile makers have now decided to design special vehicles for two of the medal winners.

Apart from that, Toyota also signed a sponsorship with the Worldwide Paralympic Partner.

### How should we start?

A government report recently pointed that **only half of the disabled people in India have a disability certificate**, effectively depriving the other half of all the government benefits. A good first step would be ensuring the **issuance of disability certificates to all**.

### Terms to know

- [Rights of Person with Disability Act](#)

## 24. [Three doses not two: Israel sets new benchmark for full vaccination. It is on India's horizon as well](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“Three doses not two: Israel sets new benchmark for full vaccination. It is on India's horizon as well”** published in the **Times of India** on **1st September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

**Relevance:** To understand the immunization process.

**Synopsis:** With Israel adopting a 3 dose policy, what should be India's policy going forward?

### Introduction

Recently, Israel stated that every Israeli over 12 years is now entitled to a booster shot after the second dose. Other countries from the UK to Indonesia are also planning to offer booster doses to vulnerable groups.

### Why has Israel adopted this Policy?

It is well known that antibody responses weaken over time, especially with new viruses rapidly mutating and producing new versions.

An Oxford University study of 3,391,645 test results found that – 92% and 69% efficacy is seen two weeks after the second Pfizer and AstraZeneca doses. However, after 90 days efficacy slips to 78% and 61% respectively.

### What should India do?

With more than 65.26 crore vaccine doses administered, multiple studies will be helpful in getting an optimal handle on complex efficacy issues. For Covishield, India can take inputs on policymaking from international studies. For Covaxin, we have our own data.

Regarding the third dose, ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) must take the lead and conduct field-level studies.

### What should be the priority of India?

For India, the first priority is giving two doses to all adults. India must ramp up the vaccine supply and vaccinating all eligible Indians with two doses before formulating a policy for 3 doses. To achieve that, large hospitals also need to step up vaccination drives.

#### Terms to know

- [Indian Council of Medical research](#)

### 25. [What the global flow of guns tell us about how states fail](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “[What the global flow of guns tell us about how states fail](#)” published in **Indian Express** on **2nd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2- Effect of Policies & Politics of Developed & Developing Countries on India's Interests

**Relevance:** Understand the role of arms in society.

**Synopsis:** The supply of weapons matters. If not controlled, then the weapons guide the nation in a different direction. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan is the latest example.

#### Introduction

The global flow of guns serves as a very useful indicator of the flow of power and money. This can be understood from numerous historical examples.

### What are the historical examples of weapons flow and gun control?

**Colonial countries:** In Asia, colonial empires used guns for their own self-protection. But, the British **controlled colonies by disarming citizens**.

The British Empire in India not just dispossessed Indians of weapons, it also **disarmed them of indigenous knowledge in weapon-making** that had begun to emerge in the 17th century.

For instance, **the Arms Act 1878** tightly controlled arms ownership in India. It was an exercise of colonial and racial subordination that even Gandhi wanted to overturn.

**The example of America:** It has ensured that places it intervenes, are flooded with weapons. The US has a historical tradition of gun ownership to assert racial privilege. It also has a history of an armed militia winning a war of independence and becoming a modern state.

### How do guns inflict violence in society?

**Developed countries vs conflict zones:** Afghanistan has a death rate of 59.8/1,00,000 resulting from violence and weapons use. Even in Pakistan, it is 5.9 but in countries like the USA and Japan, it is less than 1. This reflects that gun culture breeds violence and tends to persist in society.

**India:** India has followed the British policy of arms control, fearing rebellion by people. In 1959, India enacted restrictive arms laws to control lower-class rebellion.

### What is the Small Arms Treaty?

It is the **Treaty adopted by UN General Assembly in 2013**. The Treaty aimed to establish the highest possible common standards for regulating conventional arms, and prevent their diversion and illicit trade.

**US:** has withdrawn from the Treaty because of an ideological commitment to exporting weapons.

**India:** India is not a member, as it thinks that the Treaty protects arms exporters more than importers.

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This shows that major powerful countries are not keen on controlling the flow of weapons as it gives them economic benefits along with the power to influence other countries. Overall, the Treaty is not strong enough on arms transfers to non-state actors, which is where a significant part of the problem lies.

### What do we learn from the history of weapons flow?

It is true that weapons are needed to control violence. But peaceful societies cannot be built by the indiscriminate proliferation of weapons.

### 26. Noble intentions: About the UNSC resolution on Taliban

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Noble intentions” published in **The Hindu** on **3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – India and Neighbourhood relations

**Relevance:** This article is about the recent UNSC resolution on the Taliban.

#### Synopsis

The UN must ensure that the Taliban uphold human rights and give up terror tactics.

#### Introduction

Recently, the UN Security Council, under India’s Presidency, adopted Resolution 2593. The resolution was sponsored by France, UK and USA. Along with 13 other members, India voted in favour of the resolution and amongst permanent ‘members’ Russia and China both abstained from voting.

### What are the key provisions of UN Resolution 2593?

**Must Read:** [India in chair, UNSC adopts resolution on Taliban; Russia and China abstain](#)

#### What are the issues associated with the UN resolution 2593?

**Failed to provide countermeasures:** The resolution does not contain any language that would hold the Taliban more accountable for their violation of the resolution.

**Division amongst the P5 Members:** Both Russia and China abstained from voting. This divide in the P-5 nations will only prove to be counterproductive if the UNSC wants to impose any sanctions in future.

**Indirectly recognise Taliban:** Further, the resolution **appears to accept the Taliban regime as the default force** in Afghanistan.

#### How to hold the Taliban accountable?

The **Taliban Sanctions Committee** is going to meet under India’s chairmanship. The committee needs to ensure that **no designated leader of the Taliban and their associates are given recourse to funds, arms or travel permission unless they show a commitment to international principles.**

The committee also has to **renew the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).**

**Read more:** [UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan \(UNAMA\)](#)

### 27. **India’s humanitarian missions are guided by Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “India’s humanitarian missions are guided by Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” published in the **Indian Express** on **3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations.

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**Relevance:** About India's recent evacuation missions.

**Synopsis:** The Indian government is coordinating and executing a round-the-clock evacuation of not just Indians but also nationals of other countries during various relief operations.

### Introduction

India's humanitarian mission is guided by the principle of "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**" (the world is one family). There are several stories of India's grit and successful diplomatic interventions during the crisis.

### The recent example of India following "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam":

The latest such example comes from Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of foreign troops, Afghanistan has plunged into a humanitarian crisis. By evaluating the situation there, the Indian government has launched,

**Operation Devi Shakti:** It is launched to evacuate Indian citizens and foreign nationals from war-torn Afghanistan. Also under this operation, the evacuation of three of the last six "Saroop" of the Sikh holy book has also been done.

**Read more:** [Operation Devi Shakti and other missions](#) and [The Saroop of Sikh Holy Book](#)

### What are the earlier operations carried out by India to fulfil "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"?

Some of the missions conducted by India are:

**Vande Bharat Mission:** It brought back the Indian nationals stranded abroad due to COVID-19 and the resultant lockdowns.

**Operation Sankat Mochan:** Under this mission, 46 Indian nurses were rescued from a Tikrit hospital from the clutches of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in war-ravaged Iraq.

**Operation Raahat:** It was launched by the Indian Navy and Airforce, to evacuate Indian citizens and foreign nationals of 41 countries from Yemen during the 2015 Yemen Crisis.

**In March 2016:** India carried out the successful evacuation of 250 Indians following multiple bombings at Brussels airport in Belgium.

### What does this signify?

Such massive and successful operations, boost the morale of the Indian diaspora and people around the world, that wherever they are, India will do all that is necessary to ensure their safety.

### Terms to know

- [Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam](#)

## 28. CJI flags "Communal content" in media

**Source:** This post is based on the following articles:

- "YouTube channels, portals have no accountability: Supreme Court" published in **The Times of India** on **3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021**.
- "CJI flags 'communal content' in media" published in **The Hindu** on **2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021**.
- **Syllabus: GS 2** –Significant provisions of Indian Constitution: Fundamental rights, Free speech.

**Relevance:** Regulation of digital media

**Synopsis:** To understand how to balance free speech with accountability for digital media.

### Introduction



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Recently, the Chief Justice of India has raised his concerns over the **fake information published on various web sources** like **Facebook, YouTube etc.** He also mentioned that it has the **potential to incite communal tensions** and can bring communal disharmony. This would ultimately result in giving the country a bad name.

### What is the Supreme Court's view?

While hearing the petition highlighting how some media outlets aired communal content linking the spread of the coronavirus to a Tablighi Jamaat meet held at Nizamuddin in Delhi. In that petition, the SC said although the role of a free press in a democracy must be respected, the **rampant misuse of the Right to Speech should be controlled.**

The SC also asked the government, whether “there was **any regulatory mechanism**” in place for the web or against the people who are misusing their Right to Speech.

### Why does the misuse happen in web sources?

**No accountability:** There is no accountability from web-based platforms like Twitter, Facebook etc.

**No regulatory control:** No presence of regulatory control over the publishing of fake news. For e.g., various channels on YouTube publish the news without verifying the facts.

**Misuse of social media by criminals:** Anti-social elements exploit it to run weapons, drugs, contraband and pornography. Hate and violence are shared and spread through these virtual platforms.

### What actions have been taken by the Government?

To control the spread of fake information, the government introduced:

**Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:** It tends to strike a balance between the media's right to Free speech and citizen's Right to correct information. Its objective is to stop the circulation of fake news and hold web portals and channels accountable for who published the fake news.

The government also requested to transfer cases challenging the Information Technology Rules of 2021 from the various High Courts to the SC for quick resolution of the cases.

**For complaints against broadcasters:** The government introduced **Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules of 2021.** The Rules provide for a three-level grievance Redressal mechanism.

### What needs to be done?

There is an urgent need for a “properly framed regime” to establish accountability. The first step can be the ability to trace the “originators” of messages on social media platforms.

#### Terms to know

- [IT Rules, 2021](#)
- [Cable Television Network Amendment Rules 2021](#)

### 29. Why a Caste Census is needed-and why it may not see light of the day

**Source:** This post is based on the article” **Why a Caste Census is needed-and why it may not see light of the day**” published in the **Indian Express** on **4th September 2021.**

**Syllabus:** **GS 2 – Fundamental Rights**

**Relevance:** To understand the reservation policy.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of September (First Week), 2021

**Synopsis:** Although caste-based census would provide up-to-date data to calibrate reservation, it also threatens social justice as it can roll back the discrimination regime.

### Introduction

Recently, the Indian Parliament passed the 127th Constitution Amendment Bill, 2021. It overrides the Supreme Court's (SC) interpretation of the 102nd Constitutional Amendment. SC judgment in the Maratha case had concluded that the 102nd Constitution Amendment curtailed the state government's power to identify backward classes.

### Read more:

- [Maratha reservations and Reservation policy in India](#)
- [Cabinet passes bill restoring power of states to make their own OBC lists](#)

### What are the limitations of this Statute?

**Firstly,** A 50% limit on caste-based quotas ([Indra Sawhney Judgment](#)) imposes a serious limitation on states' power to expand the composition of backward class beneficiaries. This is because in most States the existing quotas for SC, ST, OBC and SBC already breach this benchmark.

**Secondly,** The rise of the private sector coupled with the privatisation of Public Sector Undertakings has led to the erosion of the public sector jobs. This also impacted the reservation framework.

For instance, between 2011-12 and 2017-18, due to a fall in employment of 2.2 lakh jobs in Central Public Sector Enterprises, the reduction in employment of SCs amounted to 33,000 jobs.

**Thirdly,** the introduction of a 10% quota in 2019 for economically weaker sections (EWS) has altered the standard definition of backwardness. By setting an income limit of ₹8,00,000 per annum, the government has made this quota accessible to about 99% of the upper castes – not just the poor.

This issue is further compounded by the reluctance of the Government to enumerate OBCs in the Caste Census.

### What is the need for a caste-based census?

This would help in analysing the accomplishments and limitations of reservation policies. It would show the gap between economic and social capital holdings within and between the general category as well as the reserved sections. It would also help in revising the benchmark for social, economic and educational backwardness. Further, it would help in authenticating the findings and recommendations of Union and state-level backward caste commissions.

**Read more:** [Caste based census in India](#)

Lastly, a caste census would facilitate compliance with recent court decisions. For example, **Chebrolu L Prasad v State of AP (2020)** case: The court directed the Centre to periodically revise the list of reservation beneficiaries based on sound data and evidence.

**Davinder Singh v State of Punjab (2020)** case: The judgment opened the question of sub-classification within the SC category. Thus, raising the need for credible data on internal differentiation and sophisticated educational and occupational profiles.

Thus, the move of passing the power to enumerate OBC's to State's may not solve the problem of affirmative action for the backward classes. The larger need is for evidence-based policymaking backed by caste census data.

# General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

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**1. Genetically changed mosquitoes could transform Africa's long fight against malaria**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Genetically changed mosquitoes could transform Africa's long fight against malaria" published in The Down to Earth on 29th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nanotechnology, Bio-technology and issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights

**Relevance:** Tackling Malaria via genetic programming of Mosquitoes

**Synopsis:** Genetic programming of mosquitoes along with traditional methods of Malaria prevention could help us reduce the increasing cases of Malaria globally and help reduce associated mortality.

**Context**

For Malaria prevention, some countries heavily depend on using insecticide treated bed nets and house spraying. These efforts, together with effective treatment, have greatly reduced the malaria burden across the continent. But lately, some countries, in Africa, have been reporting increases in cases because of resistance to insecticides.

Malaria control must, therefore, move away from relying too much on insecticides to **more sustainable options**.

A World Health Organisation (WHO) panel in 2016, concluded that even with the best use of current approaches, there would still be 11 million malaria cases in 2050. It called for long term strategies to complement current methods.

One of the solution is the release of **genetically programmed mosquitoes**.

**About gene drive**

In nature, there's a phenomenon called **gene drive** which operates in the process of reproduction. This is when a genetic element is able to increase the chance that it will be inherited by offspring

- The general underlying principle of all gene drives is an organism that will produce offspring similar to themselves.
- Some characteristics are randomly passed on from parents to the next generation. However, gene drive forces a different type of inheritance that ensures a specific characteristic is always present in the next generation. Scientists engineer gene drive using various molecular tools.
- Gene drive is not just a human invention; some occur naturally in insects
- Unlike traditional genetic modification, **gene drives enable extremely rapid spread of the desired characteristics**

**Genetically-programmed mosquitoes**

- The genetically programmed mosquitoes, are also called as "**protector mosquitoes**".
- Upon mating with wild mosquitoes they produce offspring that are either incapable of any further reproduction or unable to transmit malaria parasites
- Researchers are using **gene-editing tools** to modify what certain mosquitoes are capable of, and make sure these capabilities are passed on to the next generation
- The genetically programmed mosquitoes could take over wild populations of disease-carrying mosquitoes in just a few generations.

### Concerns/Issues

- **Ethical concerns** about gene drive are often motivated by larger issues, such as how to stop gene drive from being used in biological weapons by engineering insects that are more dangerous. Then there is the question of who should decide which gene drive projects move forward and what types of insects with gene drive can be released into the environment.
- **Ecological concerns**– Gene drive might cause unintended consequences in the ecosystem. What will happen to the natural ecosystem if a population, even of mosquitoes that make people sick, is driven to extinction? Potential threats to natural biodiversity and the security of food? etc, are some serious questions that need answering.

### Way forward

More education and risk assessments are needed to inform further development of the technology. Regulatory and accountability systems are required so that regulations are adhered to and public safety is protected.

## 2. Infrastructure development and eco-conservation should go hand-in-hand

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Infrastructure development and eco-conservation should go hand-in-hand” published in The Hindu on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

**Relevance:** Balancing economic development with environmental conservation

**Synopsis:** Infrastructural development, though necessary, must be rooted in regional ecological and environmental realities.

### Context

Infrastructure development in the Himalayan region such as Hydropower is disturbing fragile ecosystem and leading to issues such as landslips, avalanches and the loss of lives and property.

The avalanche in Chamoli this February, that destroyed two power projects and killed at least 200, was only the latest reminder. It has brought attention back to development and conservation dilemma.

### Background

- In the aftermath of the devastating Kedarnath floods of 2013, the Supreme Court ordered a halt to hydroprojects in the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi river basins pending a review on whether they exacerbated the damage.
- The future of hydroprojects is closely linked to the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) programme. For the health of the river, it must be allowed to flow unimpeded, and hydropower projects are an obstacle

### Present scenario

**Division of views b/w ministries:** The Water Resources Ministry, which manages the NMCG, is opposed to hydropower projects while the Ministry of Power supports for them. Whenever a group of experts has recommended a cessation of infrastructure development, there is always another group of experts that differ and recommend the opposite.

### Way forward

Uttarakhand, like all other States, is not immune from the demands for reliable power and infrastructure from its people. Along with better dialogue, power companies and the Centre must inspire greater trust in the residents of the region.

Infrastructure development will have to necessarily account for the region's constraints.

### Terms to know:

- [NMCG](#)

### 3. It makes sense to extract value from underutilized public assets (On Asset monetisation)

**Source:** This post is based on the article "It makes sense to extract value from underutilized public assets (On Asset monetisation)" published in The Live Mint on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

**Relevance:** Resource Mobilisation

**Synopsis:** National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP), should be welcomed.

### Background

- **Read here:** <https://blog.forumias.com/national-monetization-pipeline-explained-pointwise/>

### Rationale behind Asset Monetisation

- **Additional Fiscal resource for states:** Public assets like roadside parking slots, municipal grounds and advertising surfaces and parade grounds of police and defence services remain unused for most part of the year. Revenue-starved governments across the country could find new resources to finance higher demands on public expenditure.
  - For instance, imposing parking charges on a mere 1.5% of Bengaluru city roads could add 5% to its annual budget
- **Improved Governance and Public services:** Corruption and inefficiency are often blamed for the poor state of public services like policing, health, education, transport and so on. However, cash-strapped governments are the single biggest reason for the poor public delivery of services. With increase in public finances governance and public services will improve substantially.

### Suggestions/measures

- To control corruption and cronyism (*giving undue favors to friends and associates*), **policy design should be corruption-resistant**, insist on transparency, promote market competition and punish wrong-doers.
- NMP implementation should allocate assets in a way that the lessee has a **natural incentive to maintain public assets**.
- **Recommendations by NITI Aayog:** NITI Aayog has made the following recommendations to make NMP a success,
  - First, government should give **income tax breaks to attract retail investors** into instruments such as Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs). More **tax-efficient and user-friendly mechanisms** like allowing tax



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benefits in InvITs as eligible security to invest under Section 54EC of the Income Tax Act, 1961, are important for **initiating retail participation** in the instruments.

- Second, it also suggested bringing **policy and regulatory changes** to scale up monetisation instruments such as InvITs and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs). Section 54EC allows taxpayers to **offset long-term capital gains** from transactions in immovable properties through investments in bonds issued by some government-backed infrastructure firms.
- Third, it suggested expanding the investor base, which is a critical element for the NMP.
- Fourth, it also called for bringing such trusts **within the ambit of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** to provide greater comfort to investors.

### 4. GoI Plus India Inc (On lack of trust b/w govt & businesses)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “GoI Plus India Inc (On lack of trust b/w govt & businesses)” published in the Times of India on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Effects of Liberalization on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

**Relevance:** Industry-Government partnership

**Synopsis:** No nation became prosperous without trust between government and business. A look at some such events that indicate lack of trust.

#### Context

In the past few weeks, a series of events have raised the question of trust between government and business. It brought back unhappy memories of the Licence Raj.

#### What are those events?

1. Present signs of distrust came in late July with the **failure of the Indian Railways to attract a single private player to run 150 trains**. The reform failed because of a lack of trust. Bidders had repeatedly insisted on an independent regulator to create a level playing field, flexibility in timings, routes and a fair exit. They didn't trust the current regulator. However, the railways were not ready to heed to their demands.
2. Second, **govt released draft e-commerce rules** and created uncertainty among foreign and Indian investors. E-commerce offers such hope to thousands of India's small businesses of entering the world market via global e-commerce. It is India's ticket to massive exports and millions of jobs.
3. Third, **differences** came out in the open between **India's outward looking businesses**, who want to integrate with global chains, versus the **government's inward looking atmanirbhar policy**. In an intervention at a CII forum, the commerce minister reportedly said Indian industry doesn't always act in national interest. He reportedly censured businesspersons of structuring foreign investments against the spirit of the rules.
4. Fourth, the commerce ministry announced an online essay competition for students. One of the two topics was **'Import substitution: Atmanirbhar ki Aur'**. Surely, it was a mistake to revive a discredited policy of the 1960s that did so much harm to India's exports.

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5. Fifth, **Infosys was “summoned” by the finance ministry** to explain failures with income tax e-filing. It could have been sorted out quietly. The vendor could be penalised for its faults without public messaging.
6. Other issues that hamper Industry-Government connect
  - **Criminalising short spending on CSR philanthropy.**
  - **Draconian amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act** brought mistrust and panic among NGOs

### Implications of distrust

The prosperity of Germany, United States and Japan has been attributed to high levels of trust between business and the state.

In India, however, low trust has led to **over-regulation, complicated laws, higher costs** and **making the nation uncompetitive.**

Business was thus skeptical of Rs 6 trillion monetisation plan announced recently. Although its brownfield projects are free of risks of land acquisition, environment clearance, **industry fears hassles at each stage** of execution, from unfair PPP contracts to lack of justice from weak regulators.

Reforms of 1991 ushered in a new age of trust and prosperity. As tax rates came down, compliance rose, taxes collected went up. When a government weakens trust, it harms itself. People do not want a pro- or anti-business government. They want one open to new ideas.

### 5. Getting finance onside for climate

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Getting finance onside for climate” published in Business Standard on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Environment

**Relevance:** Role of finance in alleviating climate crisis.

**Synopsis:** Climate crisis demands enormous economic and societal changes. The challenge is manageable. But if it is to be managed well, finance must play its part.

#### Context

The world has finally awoken to the need of securing a rapid transition to a green economy. Finance will play a pivotal role in that process. But while some financial institutions have done their part, far too many continue to provide capital to the fossil-fuel industry and support other parts of the economy that are incompatible with a green transition.

Such type of financing activity is irresponsible.

#### Creation of stranded assets

Many of the investments currently being financed in the fossil fuel industry are long-lived. **For example:** Discovering, developing, and fully exploiting a new oil field takes decades. This means they stretch well beyond the time in which the world must become carbon-neutral. As such, these projects almost certainly will become “stranded assets”.

- **Stranded assets** are holdings that have lost their value and usefulness amid the fight to save the planet.

#### Impact of creation of stranded assets

Losses suffered in the form of stranded assets pose a risk to the investor and, potentially, to the economic system and the planet.

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- **Lobbies to fight green transition:** Most owners of stranded assets will selfishly fight to exploit their holdings no matter what, hence, financing for these investments creates an adverse political dynamic. Powerful lobbies, heavily invested in such projects, will fight the green transition, because otherwise they'll be the ones left with stranded assets.
- **Demands for compensation:** Moreover, if the transition succeeds, these same groups will demand compensation.

### Suggestions/measures

- **Deploy regulatory tools:** Since markets are short-sighted and often fail to account fully for key risks, the obligation to ensure financial stability lies with those overseeing the economy, including central banks.
- **Disclosure of climate risk:** It should be obligatory to disclose the full climate risk of any fossil fuel-based project to the regulator. Risk must include not just physical dangers, but also direct and indirect financial risks based on various scenarios listed in the IPCC reports.
- **Smooth transition:** We need a smooth, efficient transition to carbon neutrality, with gradual adjustments in asset prices. For this to happen, finance must not only stop providing funds for investments that destroy our environment but also provide funds for the investments needed to move us in the right direction.
- **No subsidization:** Those investors who continue to make investments in fossil fuels should not effectively be subsidized by the public through the deductibility of losses.
- **Compensation guarantee:** To encourage investments that are based on a high carbon price, governments could issue “guarantees” that if the price of carbon turns out to be lower than expected in, say, 20 years, the investor will be compensated. This would function as a kind of insurance policy, pressing governments around the world to uphold their commitments under the Paris climate agreement.

### Green development banks

These and other similar policies will assist the green transition. But even then, the private financial sector is unlikely to do enough on its own. Hence, to help fill the gap, **green development banks** have already been created in many jurisdictions, including the state of New York. In some other countries, existing development banks' mandates have been broadened to include green development.

These institutions are making an important contribution not just in providing finance, but also in assisting with the design and structuring of the green projects themselves.

### 6. Banks could end up beholden to online platforms with reach

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Banks could end up beholden to online platforms with reach**” published in Livemint on 30th August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

**Relevance:** Disruption in the banking sector by tech giants.

**Synopsis:** Deposit mobilization through Big Tech apps might weaken banks.

### What has happened?

According to a press release, Equitas Small Finance Bank will now offer Google Pay customers up to 6.85% interest on one-year funds.

Alphabet's Google already provides one of the two most popular payment wallets (Google Pay) in the country. But now, Google Pay wants to push time-deposit products (fixed deposits) of small Indian banks.

### Significance

- It exposes the **weak nature** of the financial institutions on a core operation like deposit-taking, and their **vulnerability** to an assault from an online search, social media and e-com giants.
- Alphabet, Facebook and [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) may pose a **far bigger challenge to brick-and-mortar lenders** than fintech startups that don't have the scale of platform businesses.
- In India, banks short on deposits might face problems as tech intermediaries have hundreds of millions of active users. Once these giants enter the sector, even larger banks will lose control of banking.

### Implications

- **Consumers will gain:** Equitas doesn't have a pre-existing relationship with the Google Pay customer, and even after getting the money, the lender might not get to build one. Once the deposit matures, the money will simply go back into whichever bank's account it came from, [And] if another lender offers a better deal, idle funds might go there next. Customer loyalty, which is often just inertia, will no longer ensure stickiness. Savers will gain.
- If the move is successful, the likes of PhonePe and WhatsApp Pay might also want to copy it. For a fee, platforms can easily extend their insights into consumer behaviour and payment flows to influence deposit mobilization. The higher the commission, the lower the banks' profit.

### Global examples

**China's** tech giants have already shown how easy it is to dislodge traditional lenders. In a growing network of users, real-time non-financial data can be a more powerful predictive tool than credit scores relied upon by banks. Adding a layer of financial activity to an online platform brings in yet more information. Before Beijing stepped in, **Jack Ma's Ant Group** pursued this advantage to its maximum.

### The present scenario in India

Silicon Valley never had a chance in China. However, it's in a stronger position in India.

- **Traditional bank strongholds are being challenged by tech innovation:** For instance, the government's digital identification system [Aadhaar] has made paper trails and physical presence redundant. A wallet can establish a customer identity as easily as a bank and manage the process of seeking her consent. This has turned the cumbersome KYC procedure into a simpler process.
- **Customers prefer to use other apps/wallets:** Even in the case of retail money, India's banks have no special advantage. They still hold the accounts for sending or receiving funds but rather than transacting on their bank apps or cards, customers prefer to use



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Google Pay or Walmart's PhonePe to pay one another and merchants. The two wallets were used to transfer ₹5 trillion in July 2021, giving the duo an 85% share of a market that has more than 50 apps, including from banks.

### What must Indian PSBs do?

India's state-run lenders will need to become more efficient. Or they'll have to lobby regulators to rein in tech giants. Amazon, Google and Facebook were all competing to build a new payment network in India, but the central bank put the licence on hold because of data safety concerns.

### Conclusion

Regulated banks may hold licences to take deposits, but platforms will decide if their offers are displayed prominently or put in a corner. What happened to print media after publishers lost their influence over readers may be waiting to happen with the banking too.

### 7. World freed from toxic leaded petrol: A global win

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**World freed from toxic leaded petrol: A global win**" published in the Down to Earth on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Relevance:** removal of lead from petrol

**Synopsis:** It is a remarkable achievement for the global community to remove lead from petrol across the world. It will have positive impact on human health, especially on children and vehicle system. Let's have a brief look into the topic.

### Context

Globally, automotive fuel is completely lead-free now. Not a single fuel outlet sells leaded petrol any more anywhere.

It was announced formally by the **United Nations Programme on Environment (UNEP)** at a press event August 30, 2021. It has taken 100 years to stop the use of leaded fuel finally.

Furthermore, it is one of the most consistent, persuasive and aggressive global campaigns to fight the poison to protect public health, especially the brain health of children.

### Background

- The practice of adding **tetraethyl lead** to petrol had spread widely to all countries soon after its **anti-knock and octane-boosting properties** were discovered. This deadly **neurotoxin** has already done a great deal of harm since then.
- While all countries have followed different timelines for the lead phaseout, developing countries, especially those in Africa and a few in Asia, have taken the longest time.
- **Algeria** was the last country to phaseout lead from petrol.
- The campaign was led and supported by **the UNEP** and its **Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV)** in accomplishing the global objective.

### What led to this success?

- Setting of clear objectives agreed by all partners representing major target groups.
- Adoption of a voluntary approach

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- Early attention given to high level political commitment such as the **Dakar Declaration** for sub-Saharan Africa

### Effects of lead

- **On Human health**– Fumes from petrol vehicles using leaded petrol has been a significant source of lead exposures. According to the WHO, lead is **toxic**. It affects multiple body systems and is particularly harmful to young children. It affects the **brain, liver, kidneys** and **bones**. Lead in bone is released into blood during pregnancy and becomes a source of exposure to the developing foetus.
  - According to WHO, **there is no safe level for lead exposure**.
- **On emission control system of vehicles**– The lead has damaging impact on the emissions control systems of vehicles. Evidence suggest that lead in petrol damages the catalytic converters.

### Efforts by India

- India was among those countries that took early action to phase out leaded petrol.
- Initially, **low-leaded petrol** was introduced in Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Madras in 1994, followed by unleaded petrol in 1995.
- The entire country got low-leaded petrol in **1997** while leaded fuel was banned in the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
- The final introduction of unleaded petrol in the entire country was **mandated in April 2000**.
- India's experience has also highlighted the **importance of regulatory vigil** on other harmful octane enhancers that could potentially replace lead in petrol.
- After the lead phaseout, Indian refineries took voluntary steps to not use **MMT (Methylcyclopentadienyl manganese tricarbonyl)**. It is a dangerous neurotoxin which several developed countries have virtually banned by setting an exceptionally low permissible limit for its use.

### Conclusion

There is a great learning from this experience for future clean air action. This is relevant for similar and ongoing campaigns like reducing sulphur in fuels to enable application of advanced emissions control systems. It is also important to achieve much cleaner emissions worldwide.

### Terms to know:

- [Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles](#)
- [UNEP](#)

### 8. [Making NMP work](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the following articles published on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021:

- Asset monetization mustn't end up as a Potemkin show – Livemint
- A monetization move that doesn't tick most boxes – The Hindu
- Making NMP work – Business standard

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

**Relevance:** Resource Mobilisation

**Synopsis:** Challenges in the Implementation of National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) and suggestions to overcome those challenges.

### Is asset monetization new to India?

Asset monetization is not a new concept in India. The **Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act of 2002** introduced the concept of monetization of stressed assets to turn the illiquid ones among them fungible and create a market for non-performing assets.

**Must Read:** [National Monetisation Pipeline \(NMP\) project – Explained](#)

### Issues/Challenges

1. **India's Poor record in contract enforcement:** India ranks No. 163 among 190 countries on the World Bank's index for contract enforcement, and not much progress has been made on this. The case of India's insolvency code shows how weak judicial infrastructure and a poor debt market can pose a challenge to the success of a well-designed law.
2. **Asset recycling is not a silver bullet that always works well for the public or eases the sovereign debt:** For instance, In Chicago, the US, where 36,000 parking slots were handed over to a private consortium, asset recycling only made parking more expensive. In the case of Transport of London, which was being operated by a private operator, it had to be bailed out twice by the UK government from near bankruptcy.
3. **Risks involved in the prescribed modes of implementing the monetisation:** The main instruments proposed for implementing the NMP are public-private partnerships and a stock market-based investment trust (InvIT). Both have serious shortcomings, as experience demonstrates.
4. **Issues in PPP:** PPP in infrastructure has been a financial disaster in India. After the 2008 financial crisis, as the world economy and trade plummeted, and as India's GDP growth rate slowed down, many PPP projects failed to repay bank loans.
5. **Issues in Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT):** An Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) is being mooted as an alternative means of raising finance from the stock market. The idea is based on the current stock market boom. However, the current high stock prices seem like a bubble with heightened uncertainties in the global financial market. With the U.S. Fed committed to reducing its assets purchase programme, it may cause financial instability.
6. **External Instability:** Rising external debt by foreign portfolio investors carries a greater risk to external instability. Foreign portfolio investment has skyrocketed by 6,800% in 2020-21, over the previous year, to \$38 billion as per RBI data. This, perhaps, poses a greater financial hazard as portfolio investment is risky.

### Suggestions/measures

1. **Asset Monetisation Plus Privatisation:** The government could adopt both measures of selling and leasing assets, depending on the nature of each asset and also the associated risk and return, etc. The centre should retain its ownership only of those assets that have a chance of offering the Centre higher returns in the future.
2. **Resource Mobilisation:** Government should also cash in the other two methods of raising resources;
  - o Setting up of a development finance institution (DFI).

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- Raising the share of infrastructure investment in the central and State Budgets.
- 3. **Trust building measures by the government:** In order to make the NMP work, the government will have to make matching investments of its own i.e., In institutional and regulatory capacity.
- 4. **Independent Regulators:** If the NMP is to work, each sector in which assets are to be monetised will need an independent, empowered regulator with no connections to the bureaucracy.
- 5. **Participatory governance:** In a democracy, policymaking must be done through public consultation. This is especially so for any project that has wide ramifications and could affect the lives of citizens at large.

### 9. How private businesses imperil our health as well as prosperity

**Source:** This post is based on the article “How private businesses imperil our health as well as prosperity” published in Livemint on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth

**Relevance:** Corporate Responsibilities, Indian Industries and growth.

**Synopsis:** Private sector receives so much from the government such as tax breaks and subsidies but offers very less in return to the citizens of India. It considers consumers more as a source of profit than the reason for its existence.

#### Problems with India’s private sector

- The so-called excellent companies, **treat customers in an indifferent manner, and** they end up cheating not just their consumers but the **entire economy**. This culture that employees imbibe seeps into their psyche. Even if some of them step out to become entrepreneurs, they practice the **art they had learned while employed**.
- Some of these firms **conceal data** regarding healthy foods or drinks. For example, former head of the **Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** revealed the difficulties that the statutory body has faced in trying to announce standards. On one hand, processed and packaged food manufacturers have been stalling efforts on labelling their products with color codes for their fat, salt and sugar content. And on the other hand, Indian children suffer **from obesity and malnutrition** because food products do not carry adequate information on their sugar content.
- **Self-governance is all but rare**. These industry bodies implore the government to **remove red tape, lower tax rates, provide tax breaks and offer subsidies**. They want interest rates to go down, which serves business borrowers well, but they have not stepped up and offered something in return.
- **Lastly**, industry organizations do not spearhead a campaign on any issue of national significance such as supporting MSMEs by making large firms pay their bills on time.

#### Conclusion

The private sector should be held accountable for matters of national importance as it receives a tiny fraction of the scrutiny that governments face for their acts of omission and commission.



#### 10. India is indeed walking the green talk

**Source:** This post is based on article “**India is indeed walking the green talk**” published in The Hindu on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Relevance:** India’s effort to mitigate climate change

**Synopsis:** India is doing its part to fulfill its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under Paris Agreement. When compared with other countries, India is doing better than its capacity.

#### **Context**

Global pressure is intensifying on India to commit more towards climate change at the Conference of the Parties (COP26) meeting, scheduled for November 2021 in Glasgow.

#### **India’s achievements**

- India is the only G20 nation compliant with the Paris Agreement.
- It has been ranked within the top 10 for two years consecutively in the Climate Change Performance Index released by Germanwatch.
- The Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) scheme is the world’s largest zero-subsidy LED bulb programme for domestic consumers.

#### **Comparison of India with other countries**

- **With China**– According to World Bank data for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (metric tons per capita) over two decades, both China and the U.S. could emit five times more than India in 2030. China is aiming to peak CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030 for bending the emissions curve. China remains committed to supporting the coal industry while the rest of the world experiences a decline.
- **With USA**– the U.S. rejoined the Paris Agreement and committed to reducing emissions by 50%-52% in 2030 and reaching net-zero emissions economy-wide by 2050. It will require much more near-term investment than even the U.S. President Joe Biden’s \$2.3 trillion infrastructure package.
- **With France**– Despite French government’s efforts to make aviation industry green, the analysts say that no baseline for reducing emissions from domestic flights has been fixed.
- **With Australia**– Domestic politics in Australia is keeping it away from fulfilling its commitment towards climate change.

#### **Progress made by India**

- **India is on track** (as reports/documents show) to meet and exceed the NDC commitment to achieve 40% electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based sources by 2030
- Similarly, against the voluntary declaration for reducing the emission intensity of GDP by 20%-25% by 2020, **India has reduced it by 24%** between 2005-2016.
- India is implementing one of the **most extensive renewable energy expansion programmes** to achieve 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022 and 450 GW by 2030.
- As part of the fiscal stimulus, the Government has announced several green measures. It includes a \$26.5-billion investment in **biogas** and **cleaner fuels**. Further, \$3.5 billion

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in incentives for producing efficient solar photovoltaic (PV) and advanced chemistry cell battery, and \$780 million towards an afforestation programme.

- India provided leadership for setting up the **International Solar Alliance**, a coalition of solar-resource-rich countries.
- India is also at the forefront of the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**, a partnership of governments, United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, the private sector, and knowledge institutions.

### Conclusion

India has indeed walked the talk. Other countries must deliver on their promises early and demonstrate tangible results ahead of COP26. The responsibility of sustaining the entire planet does not rest on a few countries; everyone has to act.

### Terms to know:

- [Climate change performance index \(CCPI\)](#)
- [ISA](#)
- [Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure \(CDRI\)](#)

### 11. Conserving groundwater: Role of women crucial in bringing about significant change

**Source:** This post is based on article “**Conserving groundwater: Role of women crucial in bringing about significant change**” published in Down to Earth on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Relevance:** Role of women to address the water crisis of India.

**Synopsis:** Increased women participation in groundwater management will shift the intended objectives from technology to governance, demand management, efficiency, improved crop choices and enhancing soil moisture.

### Context

India is facing one of the worst water crisis. India is entirely dependent on groundwater and is pumping out the lion’s share of the global volume. Moreover, women, who have a limited say in groundwater governance, are the ones who suffer the most from the water crisis.

This needs to change.

### Why women are at the forefront of the issue?

- Women, who have no decision-making role in investments on such wells, are forced by authorities to take over the liabilities.
- They are the first respondents to the crisis and are responsible for repayment, overcoming drinking water shortages, finding alternative livelihoods and running the farm and family.

### Need for women led approach

- Women prefer for crops with a lower water footprint.
- They do farming integrated with animals, which reduces their vulnerability.
- They have easy market access for vegetables / flowers / fruits.
- Women have strong desire for use of green water (rainwater that collects in soil) over blue water.

### Benefits of women participation

- Women's judgement on crop plans, water demand and footprint of crops is different from that of men. For example: In Chipko movement, women settled for nothing short of a complete ban on the felling of trees to help protect the environment, while their male counterparts conceded to controlled logging in exchange for livelihood.
- The **scope of reducing irrigation is immense** when Gram Panchayat-level governance seriously acknowledges recommendations by women.

### Alternative models

Any solution to groundwater distress need women collectives and non-profits to focus on alternative models that are based on:

- regulated pumping
- enforcement of local governance and
- adoption of sustainable cropping systems.

### Suggestions/Measures

Any future approach to groundwater conservation needs to be centered around:

- **Organising small farmers in villages into registered bodies**, federated at the district with equal participation of women responsible for managing the entire value chain
- **Technical tools and skills for women** to monitor distress
- **Displaying daily technical data** at the village centre, bringing value to data through sales to government as well as commercial agencies
- **Creating barefoot groundwater experts** with a diploma through year-long farmer water schools
- **Conducting annual groundwater audits** at different units scaled up to river basin
- **Capping groundwater pumping** for each farm based on approved crop plan. This will increase water availability for future generations.
- **Imposing local governance** through Gram Panchayat, with penalties for offenders
- **Linking crop outputs to markets** through dedicated marketing channels
- The yardstick of success will be the volume safeguarded within the aquifer, instead of what is pumped out. Appropriate incentivisation on water savings will accrue to the collectives.
- Following this approach will also lead to reinventing of grass-root democracy, strengthening local institutions and exercising local governance on natural resources.

### Terms to know:

- [Blue water](#)

## 12. A Power Cut For India

**Source:** This post is based on the article "A Power Cut For India" published in The Times of India on 31st August 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

**Relevance:** This article explains the link between India's economic performance and geopolitical developments.

### Synopsis:

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The setback in Afghanistan highlights a recent decline in the country's geopolitical & economic weight.

### Context

India's external environment and domestic foundations have facilitated India's rise as a major power in the post-Cold War period. But the geopolitical setback in Afghanistan and prolonged economic underperformance at home have raised questions about the government's policy, priorities and strategic objectives in the near term.

### What is the state of India's economic performance?

After three decades of annual average growth of national income of around 3.5%, during 1950-80, the economy grew at 5.5% during 1980-2000 and 7.5% thereafter. During the 'golden era' of growth, 2003-10, the economy grew at over 8.5%.

This acceleration of economic growth enabled a **decline in poverty, a rise in employment and urbanisation, a doubling of the share of external trade** in national income and more than a doubling of the share of Indian exports in world exports. The **emergence of globally competitive Indian firms and professionals defined the 'rising India' narrative.**

### How economic performance helped to increase India's geopolitical performance?

A report of the Indian National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) (chaired by the late K Subrahmanyam) was observed in 2000, "**Economic power is the cornerstone of a nation's power in the contemporary world.**" India has so far lived up to the point. For example,

1. The **global countries, especially the US, Japan and Australia, imposed sanctions** on India after the Pokhran-II nuclear weapons test in 1998.
  - o But the ability of the Indian economy to withstand the impact of economic sanctions attracted global countries for Indian markets.
  - o Now, **India is a part of the Quad with the same countries that imposed sanctions.**
2. Economic prosperity helped India to address two key geopolitical challenges.
  - o India is able to withstand the economic rise of an authoritarian China.
  - o India is able to control the cross-border terrorism fuelled by 'global jihad'.
3. Further, India's economic rise has also made the global environment more conducive. For instance,
  - o India's sustained economic rise and its **ability to weather** storms such as the **2008-09 trans-Atlantic financial crisis reinforced positive perceptions** about its rise.
  - o **After the signing of the 'strategic partnership' agreement** between India and the US, the **international community began to adopt a benign approach** towards India.
4. Based on the above points, it is clear that India's rise in the post-Cold War period has been defined principally by its economic performance.

### What is the status of India's economic performance at present?

- The slowdown of the Indian economy was initially viewed as a temporary blip. But the slowdown now appears as longer term. The Covid-19 pandemic has only made matters worse but is not the starting point of the slowdown.



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- Despite several policy interventions aimed at jumpstarting growth, there is no evidence yet that the economy will return to the 7.5% trajectory of the 2000-14 phase.
- This has already **imposed fiscal limits on domestic public investment and on external soft and hard power capabilities**. In this situation, the rise of the Taliban can only further hurt India's national security environment.
- So, to restore the momentum to the economy, India **requires a stable domestic and regional environment**. A new and honest strategic dialogue is needed between India and the US to secure an objective reassessment of their partnership.

### 13. Sand and dust storms impact over 500 million in India: Study

**Source:** This post is based on article “**Sand and dust storms impact over 500 million in India: Study**” published in Down to Earth on 1st September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Disaster and Disaster Management.

**Relevance:** Impact of sand and dust storm.

**Synopsis:** More than 500 million people in India and more than 80 per cent of the populations of Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Iran are exposed to medium and high levels of poor air quality due to sand and dust storm. It also impacts agriculture, energy, environment, aviation, human health and cities.

**Context:** A recent report titled “**Sand and Dust Storms Risk Assessment in Asia and the Pacific**” is released by the **Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM)**. The report highlighted various concerns both positive and negative associated with sand and dust storm.

Findings of the report:

- Sand and dust storms contribute significantly to **poor air quality** in Karachi, Lahore and Delhi in 'southwest Asia'. Nearly 60 million people in these places experienced more than 170 dusty days a year in 2019.
- The situation is much worse for six million residents of eight cities across the region. Out of these three in China, two in Iran, two in Pakistan and one in Uzbekistan. These places had **unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter** in the air every day for at least ten months in 2019.
- It identified 'east and northeast Asia', 'south and southwest Asia', 'central Asia' and the 'Pacific' as the four main sand and dust storm corridors of Asia-Pacific. The region is the second-largest emitter of mineral dust.
- **Impact on energy**– India, China and Pakistan lost 1,584 gigawatt-hours (gWh), 679 gWh and 555 gWh of **energy loss**, respectively, due to sand and dust storms in 2019.
- **Impact on agriculture**– Dust deposition impacted large portions of farmland in Turkmenistan (71%), Pakistan (49%) and Uzbekistan (44%). The dust has high salt content which is toxic for the plants.
- **Impact on the environment**– The deposition of dust on glaciers induces a warming effect, **increasing the melting of ice**.
- The risk of impacts from sand and dust storms is projected to increase in the 2030s due to more extreme drought conditions in parts of Western Australia, south-eastern Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.

**The positive impacts of sand and dust storm:**

- It can **increase the nutrient content** in the areas of deposition and benefit vegetation.

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- Dust deposited on water bodies can alter their chemical characteristics, triggering both positive as well as adverse outcomes.
- Dust particles that carry iron can enrich parts of oceans, **improving the phytoplankton balance** and impacting marine food webs.

### Correlation with SDG:

Sand and dust storms directly affect 11 of the 17 United Nations-mandated sustainable development goals (SDG):

- Ending poverty in all forms
- Ending hunger
- Good health and well-being
- Safe water and sanitation
- Affordable and clean energy
- Decent work and economic growth
- Industry innovation and infrastructure
- Sustainable cities and communities
- Climate action
- Life below water
- Life on land

**Terms to know:** Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM)

### 14. Land, freshwater species in Asia-Pacific impacted by plastic pollution: UN Study

**Source:** This post is based on article “**Land, freshwater species in Asia-Pacific impacted by plastic pollution: UN Study**” published in Down to Earth on 1st September 2021.

#### What is the news?

Recently a study titled “**Impacts of Plastic Pollution on Freshwater Aquatic, Terrestrial and Avian Migratory Species in the Asia and Pacific Region**” was conducted by CMS (**Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals**) secretariat. The study looked at species in the Ganga and Mekong basins that together contributed an estimated 200,000 tonnes of plastic pollution to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean every year.

#### Findings of the study

- Both **Ganges and Irrawaddy dolphin** species faced threats due to entanglement in plastic waste such as fishing nets and lines. This could prevent them from coming up to the surface to breathe and thus drown them.
- **The dugong or sea cow** also faced threats of entanglement in plastic gear as well as ingestion of plastic.
- Migratory birds such as the **Black-faced Spoonbill and the Osprey** had been observed making nests out of plastics, using fishing lines and shipping debris, often resulting in the entanglement of their chicks.
- Terrestrial and avian species in addition to freshwater ones had been reported getting entangled in **discarded fishing gear** as well as **kite strings** in the Mekong basin.

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- Protected under CMS since the 13th Conference of the Parties in 2020, the **Asian Elephant has been observed scavenging on rubbish dumps** in Sri Lanka and ingesting plastic in Thailand.
- The study highlighted that the **problem of plastic pollution is only going to get worse**. Some 53 million tonnes of plastic could enter aquatic systems annually by 2030, which could eventually increase to 90 million tonnes.

### Recommendations

The report calls for

- More effective waste management
- Recycling
- Design of products
- Preventing plastic pollution at the source.

It also cites the **need for increased research efforts** to understand the negative effects of plastic pollution on organisms and ecosystems, particularly on terrestrial species that have been poorly studied.

### Terms to know:

- [CMS](#)
- [Dugong](#)
- [Gangetic Dolphin](#)
- [Irrawaddy Dolphin](#)
- [Black-faced Spoonbill](#)

### 15. Substantial Investment Subsidies for Solar Power

**Source:** This post is based on article “**Substantial Investment Subsidies for Solar Power**” published in Down to Earth on 1st September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Relevance:** solar power’s role in addressing the issues of groundwater exploitation and DISCOM distress.

**Synopsis:** Substantial investment subsidies on solar pump has the potential to address the irrigation-energy nexus in Indian agriculture sector. Along with its potential, it is also necessary to check its viability, drawbacks etc.

#### Context

The Government of India (GoI) has been promoting solar irrigation pumps (SIPs) by offering substantial investment subsidies. These SIPs promise a low carbon footprint, consistent energy availability, zero fuel costs and low operational costs.

#### Background

- The **west-south corridor** spanning from Punjab to Tamil Nadu has **lower groundwater availability** than the Ganga-Brahmaputra belt. **Electric water pumps for irrigation dominate** this corridor. This domination of electric water pump led to severe depletion of the water table, along with leading to the DISCOMs crisis.
  - Farmers in this corridor also face **frequent power cuts**, low voltage and receive stable electricity only at night.

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- The **Ganga-Brahmaputra basin** in the eastern corridor is a water-rich and flood-prone area dominated by diesel water pumps.

### Potential of SIPs

#### West-South corridor:

- **Benefit to farmers of west-south corridor:** The west-south corridor will benefit significantly from introducing SIPs since the region has many solar hotspots and receives peak sunlight hours.
  - This ensures a **regular and efficient supply of electricity** to farmers.
- It will also help relieve the DISCOM's subsidy burden from Rs 30,000-35,000 per year per SIP.
- SIPs will help move towards a **zero-carbon footprint** in the groundwater economy by decreasing reliability on fossil fuel-based electricity production.

#### Eastern corridor:

- The recent rise in diesel prices has naturally increased the costs of irrigation. Therefore, introducing SIPs in this region may **boost agricultural growth**.
- However, this region **receives lesser sunlight** than the West-south corridor, making it a less viable option.
- Despite these reservations, SIPs are being viewed as the answer to erratic power supplies, the DISCOMs crisis and a more sustainable source of irrigation by the government.

#### Drawbacks

- There is **risk of over-exploitation of groundwater** since on-demand cheap power will always be available after introduction of SIPs.
- However, the govt has introduced several solar irrigation schemes, such as **PM-KUSUM** and **SKY**.
- Another programme called **Solar Power as a Remunerative Crop [SPaRC]** was initiated in Gujarat by the International Water Management Institute.
- In these schemes, **preference is given to farmers who are already using water-saving micro-irrigation systems** or are open to doing so.
- The criteria for availing subsidies may **benefit only medium- and large-scale farmers**, as they are more likely to have a micro-irrigation system in place.
- **High initial capital investments**– Despite subsidies, the initial capital investment remains high, raising questions about the viability of SIPs.
- **High operational and maintenance cost**– The operation and maintenance of solar PV systems require trained professionals and machine components, which may be hard to find in rural areas. However, to overcome the obstacle, the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy aims to **upskill youth** for employment opportunities in the growing Solar Energy Power Project in India and abroad under its **the Suryamitra Skill Development Programme**.

#### About SPaRC programme:

- Under it, the International Water Management Institute had proposed **incentivising farmers to sell solar power as a remunerative crop** to curb the usage of diesel pumps in the west-south corridor.



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- Farmers can sell surplus solar power by feeding into the grid. This alternative will **incentivise farmers to conserve groundwater and energy**.
- It could also **increase farmer income** and enable more efficient irrigation by encouraging farmers to adopt crops with high returns to irrigation.
- The programme includes a balanced incentive, comprising a capital cost subsidy and feed-in tariff [FiT] paid to farmers for the energy they sell back through grid-connected solar pumps.

### Conclusion

While SIPs hold immense potential to mitigate groundwater depletion and power subsidy burden on DISCOM, steps are required to improve its adoption, viability and benefits.

### Terms to know:

- [PM-KUSUM](#)
- [Suryamitra Skill Development Programme](#)

### 16. The truth about asset monetisation

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The truth about asset monetisation**” published in Indian Express on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

**Relevance:** Resource mobilisation and Investment in Infrastructure.

**Synopsis:** Criticism of the government’s plans to lease out assets to private players, raise resources for public investment, is baseless

#### Criticism of NMP is baseless

Arguments have been offered against the criticism of asset monetisation.

- **On crony capitalism:** Assets under the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) project are going to be leased out to private partners through an open and transparent bidding process on terms which more than safeguard the public interest.
- **Ensures Public participation:** The Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvIT) and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT), are like mutual funds, pool investments, which then flow to infrastructure and real estate. This will allow the people of India and prominent financial investors to invest in our national assets. Some InvITs and REITs are already listed on stock markets.
- **On anti-competitive practices:** India has institutions that deal with issues related to uncompetitive practices. There are sector specific regulators. For instance, the Competition Commission of India, consumer courts. All of these have the authority, quite independent of the Government of India, to come down heavily on any anti-competitive practices.
- **On Monopoly:** The government is also committed to market competition and will design processes in a way that minimize the probability of any concentration of market power. In some areas, like Railway tracks, where there is a natural monopoly, there will be no asset monetisation.
- **Generates Positive multiplier effect:** In addition to an increase in jobs in the assets being monetised, an entire new set of jobs will be created when the government reinvests its revenue proceeds.

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- **On lack of public consultation:** The asset monetisation was announced several months ago in the Union Budget in February 2021. Several rounds of webinars and national-level consultations were also organised.

### 17. Social Stock Exchanges: A Chance to Invest into Our Future

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Social Stock Exchanges: A Chance to Invest into Our Future**” published in Livemint on 1st September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth

**Relevance:** Social Stock Exchange

**Synopsis:** The concept of a Social Stock Exchange is a worthy idea, but still needs deliberation and consultations with all stakeholders.

#### Context

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** constituted a 15-member **working group** on a social stock exchange (SSE) in September 2019.

#### Need for a Social Stock Exchange

1. To **enable Non-Profit Organizations to raise money** from the market by registering and listing on the SSE.
2. It would **enable the use of market instruments** for investing in social endeavors.
3. The SSE would boost both **corporate and individual investments in social and ecological projects**.

#### Proposals by working group

- **First**, the working group has proposed that **first-time retail investors be allowed to avail a 100% tax exemption** on a maximum investment of ₹1 lakh in an SSE mutual fund.
- **Second**, it has proposed **doing away with the 10% cap on income eligible for deduction** for donations to NPOs that benefit from the SSE.
- **Third**, the SSE is also meant to **aid for-profit social enterprises (FPEs)**. The working group has **not defined an FPE**, and it has left it to enterprises to choose whether they want to be categorised as a social enterprise and consequently commit to additional reporting on social impact.
- **Fourth**, the SSE technical group notes that an **FPE can list on the stock exchange** provided it is a company registered under the **Companies Act 1956/2013**.
- Lastly, to enhance transparency the working group’s proposals ask that NPOs furnish **more rigorous assessments of the social impact** and shift towards **outcomes-oriented measurement**. It also places emphasis on the role of **social auditors for the independent verification**.

#### Issues/concerns

1. First, since the working group has proposed a **five-year tax holiday** for FPEs listed on the SSE, it could be **potentially misused** and used as **tax-saving vehicle**.

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2. Second, the SSE seeks to give the NPO sector **transparency by mandating increased reporting**. However, it leaves out smaller NPOs from the SSE's ambit.
3. Third, it also **risks alienating organizations** whose or impact may not be amenable to adequate **data-capture**. For instance, NPOs involved in **environmental justice, digital rights** where the existing systems and processes are stacked against them.
4. Fourth, the SSE technical group **lays down protocols for social auditors**, but the worry is that **middlemen agencies might emerge**. They may gain unchecked influence over the SSE-NPO-donor ecosystem due to lack of checks and balances.

### Conclusion

Fund-raisers such as social stock exchanges that go beyond a narrow set of quickly measurable outcomes need a proper plan.

### 18. Policy harmonization will help our MSMEs create jobs

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Policy harmonization will help our MSMEs create jobs**" published in Business standard on 1st September 2021. **Syllabus:** GS3- Government's Fiscal policy and its impact

**Relevance:** e-commerce in India, Flaws in GST structure, challenges faced by MSMEs

**Synopsis:** India's **indirect taxation needs immediate harmonization** to put offline and online business transactions on par.

#### Context

Only 27% of online small and medium businesses were using e-commerce channels in 2015. After the pandemic, customer behaviour across the globe has shifted towards **purchases through e-commerce platforms**, irrespective of product category.

To make the most of this trend, India must reverse all policies that disincentivizes MSMEs.

### Problems posed by GST

GST is creating problems for adoption of e-commerce platforms by MSMEs.

- **First**, we have no regulatory clarity on recognizing part-time workers, and this hinders quick expansion.
- **Second**, a **reduced GST of 1% on turnover applies to offline sellers** that are selling their wares within a city or state, but no such provision is available for MSMEs using e-com platforms.
- **Third**, there is a new 1% tax-deducted-at-source levy on e-com transactions, over and above GST's 1% tax-collected-at-source, that businesses using e-com platforms are subject to. Thus, a straight **2% upfront tax deduction on sales disincentivizes use of online avenues** to expand market reach.
- **Tax refunds** can take up to two years, which affects their cash flows for operations.

### Other issues

1. Heavy compliance burden and contradictory provisions in **Income Tax Act and labour laws, foreign direct investment (FDI) norms**, Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940.
2. There are also concerns over **India's draft foreign trade policy**, which is inadequately geared for an online export thrust that would offer MSMEs a significant opportunity.

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3. **FDI 2018 rules stopped online platforms** from offering products made by entities in which they had a significant direct stake. This stalled investments that would have ensured the standardization of quality and packaging, apart from other such market enablers.

### Suggestions/Measures

1. Need a **proper understanding of term wages** for extended work hours.
2. Allow for **collective discussions with managements** in case of any violation of these rights.
3. Address the need of part time workers in labour codes.
4. The industrial relations code also needs to be harmonized to **ease the adaptation of MSMEs to automation-rich business realities.**

### Conclusion:

To sustain and encourage growth, the entire ecosystem needs to be changed so that MSMEs achieve their potential. It will help shape a new Indian growth story in terms of both GDP and jobs.

### 19. Does the economy need more people?

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Does the economy need more people?” published in Business Standard on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. **Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

**Relevance:** Technological advancement and its impact on Demography

**Synopsis:** In the age of technological disruptions and climate change, the case for a young and fast-growing population driving India’s economy is growing weaker

### Is Demographic dividend needed for economic growth?

Not always. Growth no longer requires large labour resources. Higher youth populations are not always needed to drive growth. This has happened for two main reasons.

1. One is the **increasing contribution of capital and technology** to growth. Now, we can grow and generate wealth and income without that many people. Technology can even substitute for a young population, as a society grows greyer.
2. **Rapid “dematerialization”** of most things produced. The term dematerialization means that most physical products made today use less and less materials and energy than they did before. Dematerialization, along with decreasing population trend in the richer parts of the world, means that even **demand for raw materials will not remain that strong** in the future.
  - For instance, Cars use less steel and aluminium than they did a few decades ago.

### Global examples

Countries with a falling population are coping without the so-called demographic dividend aiding them.

- Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and some parts of Northern Europe are facing population declines in the future since their total fertility rates (TFRs) are well below replacement levels.



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- But even with a rapidly ageing population, most countries are able to get what they want done without excess immigration or higher birth rates.

### Impact of tech advancement on employment generation

As the world has become more and more dependent on sophisticated technologies, the market for skills has polarized.

- **Demand for middle functions is decreasing:** There is a **huge need for highly skilled people** and also for low-skilled people. But demand for middle-skilled, middle-class, middle-income professions is shrinking. Technology weakens the middle functions earlier done by humans. **For example**, today banking has become easy by using a mobile phone with no need for the people manning bank branches. The current situation implies that you can hold on to your middle-income job only if you upskill, which may not be an easy thing to do for mid-career slower learners.
- **Problems for India:** The real problem is for countries like India, where too TFRs are reaching replacement levels but the **working population numbers are so huge** as to make it near impossible to find them jobs.
- **Continuous learning challenge:** Further, in a world of skill polarization, staying on top is a continuous learning challenge, and only those who have resources can achieve this. In this context, having a huge youth demography is hardly an advantage, especially when the skills you can learn are always the next ones to be automated.

### Way forward

There is a significant threat if populations continue to bulge in the most vulnerable parts of the world. Dealing with the existential crises (Climate change and a deteriorating environment) needs us to moderate consumption, and that means a slower growth in population. Young people need more resources than older people, and the planet cannot afford a rapidly rising rate of consumption in its poorest countries.

## 20. India must commit to net zero emissions

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“India must commit to net zero emissions”** posted in **The Hindu** on **2nd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Relevance:** Need for India to commit to net zero emissions.

**Synopsis:** While all the major economies and big corporates are shifting towards net zero emissions, India is yet to commit to the same. It offers India an opportunity to scale up its efforts for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

### Introduction

With over 50% of the global economy already committed to net zero emissions by 2050 — and China committing to be so before 2060, India is at the risk of being cast globally as an outlier on climate action. The pace and scale of climate action is only set to increase, with the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report calling for urgent and stronger responses.

A transition towards net zero emissions offers various opportunities for India, as highlighted below.

### What are the opportunities for India?

**Large scale investment**– Last year, investors injected over \$500 billion into climate transition.

**Being part of the global community**– Over 100 countries have already committed to net zero emissions by 2050, with more expected at COP26.

**Must Read:** [Net Zero Emissions target for India – Explained](#)

### Why India must commit to net zero emissions?

**Vulnerability to climate change**– India is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change and, therefore, should be among the more active against the threats. It faces harmful impacts related to sea level rise, heat stress, drought, water stress and flooding, biodiversity and natural disasters.

**Responsibility as rising power**– As a rising power, India naturally seeks stronger influence globally. India is already the third-largest emitter in the world, which calls for more commitment.

**Affect India's international diplomacy**– India's lack of commitment to net zero emissions will cast a negative shadow on its international diplomacy. This applies not just to key relationships like with the U.S., but also with much of the Group of 77 (G77) states.

**Boosting economic growth**– There is no longer a trade-off between reducing emissions and economic growth. The U.K. has reduced emissions over 40% and grown its economy over 70% since 1990.

**Increasing agricultural productivity**– Agricultural policy needs to consider adaptive approaches to maximize productivity in light of increased flooding and drought due to climate change.

**Gaining advantage in the technologies**– The transition of the global economy to net zero emissions is the biggest commercial opportunity in history. Investing heavily thus helps to gain an advantage in the technologies of the new economy, like renewable energy & storage, electric and hydrogen transport, low emissions industry, green cities or sustainable agriculture. However, India is doing exceptionally well to adapt to climate change, which is evident as below.

### India's efforts to adapt to climate change

**Firstly**, India is set to significantly exceed its Paris Agreement commitment of reducing the emission intensity of its GDP by 33-35% below 2005 levels by 2030.

**Secondly**, India is leading with the roll-out of renewable energy and an expanded target for 450GW by 2030.

**Thirdly**, It is taking leadership on the International Solar Alliance and recent national hydrogen strategy.

**Fourthly**, Indian corporates are also stepping up, with the Tata Group winning awards on sustainability, Mahindra committing to net zero by 2040 and Reliance by 2035.

### Terms to know:

- [IPCC](#)
- [International Solar Alliance](#)

## 21. How Israel's expertise in climate innovation can help India

**Source:** This post is based on article “How Israel's expertise in climate innovation can help India” posted in **The Indian Express** on **2nd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

**Relevance:** Lessons from Israel could be used to drive India's climate actions.

**Synopsis:** In the backdrop of emerging threats from climate change such as floods, forest fires, torrential rains, giant hailstones etc. our efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change seems slow. However, Israel's actions could help us move faster to achieve net zero emission.

### Introduction

The average global temperature rise in 2021 is projected to be about 1.2 degrees Celsius above that of the pre-industrial period. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2021 analysis shows that the window of opportunity to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid the worst impacts of climate change is closing. The report is a warning for us.

We need a lifestyle and economy that supports, not disrupts the planet's climate, nature and environment.

### What are potential threats to India?

**Melting of glaciers**– The Himalayan glaciers, the source of major rivers and aquifers supplying water to hundreds of millions of Indians, are disappearing at an alarming rate.

**Risk to low lying areas**– Climate change will increase the risks in low-lying coastal zones due to cyclones and coastal and inland flooding, storm surges and sea-level rise.

**Impact on Indian agriculture and water resources**– The increased frequency of extreme events such as floods and droughts will have a severe impact on India's agriculture and water resources, food security and the prosperity of rural communities.

India has made enormous investments in renewable energy sources, to increase the use of solar, wind, biomass, waste, and hydropower energies. But there are still enormous challenges in meeting Indian demands for energy, food, and water sustainably. Israel offers lessons for us.

### What can we learn from Israel?

**In agriculture**– Israel has learned to establish agriculture in the desert and arid areas.

**In water use**– It recycles 90% of its wastewater, and use desalinate drinking water.

**In energy**– Israel has developed solutions for energy storage, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. It also promotes energy generation from sea waves, the use of advanced computing tools for energy management.

**Animal protein substitutes**– it has cultivated a groundbreaking industry of animal protein substitutes. Products such as poultry, milk, eggs and more are being produced in laboratories using methods that emit **almost no greenhouse gases**. This allows huge swathes of agricultural land currently being used for livestock purposes to be freed up for ecological restoration and reforestation.

### Way forward

We need to harness all of humanity's abilities in order to steer the planet towards a safe position. The only way to do this is by working together, sharing information and experience, and providing mutual support. **Israel and India** can lead the way to establish state-of-the-art solutions for the developing world in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

## 22. Let's talk land sinks: Are they enough to beat global warming

**Source:** This post is based on article “Let's talk land sinks: Are they enough to beat global warming” published in **Down to Earth** on **2nd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Relevance:** Protecting land is important in the fight against global warming.

**Synopsis:** The world is not on track to reduce GHG emissions at the scale needed to avert a temperature rise of 1.5 °C over pre-industrial levels. The solution, then, is to find ways in which emissions can be removed from the atmosphere and growing trees becomes part of this package.

### Introduction

About 56% of the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emitted by humans is absorbed by the oceans and land out of which 30% is removed by land alone. Forests, grasslands and wetlands act as sinks and remove a part of the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted through human activities like burning fossil fuels.

On the other hand, land is also a source of emissions —burning of forests and other disturbances add CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere.

### How does land help in reducing GHG emissions?

According to the **Special Report on Climate Change and Land 2019** (SRCCL) by the IPCC, land use accounted for 13% of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during 2007-2016. But it also provided a net sink of around 11.2 gigatons of carbon dioxide per year, equivalent to 29% of the total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the same period. This means 29-30% human-driven CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have been soaked up by the **world's land sinks** during the past three decades.

Thus, adding to forests and restoring land can **benefit local communities** as environmental degradation impacts their livelihoods and impoverishes communities. It highlights the importance of land to mitigate the ill effects of GHG emission.

### What are the challenges to the existing forest cover?

**Increased heat levels:** Increased heat adds to the moisture stress in forests and leading to widespread burning.

**Large scale cutting of forests:** Forests are being cut for different economic activities, reducing their role as sinks for the CO<sub>2</sub> released from fossil fuel burning.

All these concerns and challenges calls for greater international collaboration which is evident from the following.

### What are the global efforts to mitigate the challenges?

**UNFCCC:** The role of land (forests and agricultural land) as a mitigation pathway to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was recognized by the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** in 1992.

**The Kyoto Protocol:** In 1997, Kyoto protocol, called on government to enhance the land carbon sink capacities of their territories and to reduce emissions from fossil fuel consumption.

**Bonn Challenge:** In 2011, the IUCN launched the Bonn Challenge to restore 150 million hectares of the world's degraded and deforested lands by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030.



**UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration:** In March 2019, the UN General Assembly declared 2021-2030 as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide.

**One trillion tree initiative:** In January 2020, the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, launched 'one trillion tree' initiative to plant a trillion trees by 2030 and "accelerate nature-based solutions in support of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)".

**LEAF Coalition:** In April 2021, the LEAF (Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance) Coalition was announced as a public-private effort led by the US, the UK and Norway. The initiative aims to mobilize at least \$1 billion for financing countries committed to protecting their tropical forests. It is supported by corporations like Unilever plc, [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), Nestle and Airbnb.

In May 2021, **the G7 countries** pledged to conserve or protect "at least 30% of the global land and at least 30% of the global oceans by 2030 to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and address climate change."

**Terms to know:**

- [World Economic Forum](#)
- [IUCN](#)
- [G7](#)

**23. Integrity of insolvency processes: A tough ask**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Integrity of insolvency processes: A tough ask**" published in **Live Mint** on **2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment

**Relevance:** Role of Insolvency bankruptcy code in maintaining the health of financial institutions

**Synopsis:** Issues hampering the effective implementation of IBC and suggested reforms

**Background**

There is wide apprehension that the IBC might become a failed attempt to comprehensively tackle corporate sickness or resolve the NPA's in banking sector

**What are the issues hampering the effective implementation of IBC?**

Huge delays in special courts

Lack of court capacity

Dubious decisions by resolution professionals

Asymmetrical information on the state of assets shared with different parties

Defaulters trying to control the system for favourable resolutions and steep haircuts

**What reforms are needed?**

**PSBs need to improve their credit appraisal and asset valuation skills:** The entire IBC process seems designed primarily to help banks, mainly state-owned, recover their dues. This is well intended design because loan recovery lets banks extend fresh credit that gives economic growth an impetus. Yet, designing a large part of the IBC process for this alone has created structural flaws. Because many public sector banks (PSBs) have carried over

their **flawed credit appraisal practices** to the Committee of Creditors (CoCs) that take charge of insolvent firms for resolution, which tends to impair outcomes.

**The issue of frequent legislative amendments and rule changes needs to be addressed:** The role of unstable government is another issue impacting resolution process. For instance, sectors such as power, road, telecom and mining projects took on debt on the basis of government policy. But when the state went back on a commitment or changed a policy overnight or failed to pay up on project completion, these sectors were rendered incompetent.

**Diversion of Funds needs to be regulated:** Many Indian industrial houses have over-borrowed relative to project costs and diverted those proceeds to either finance their own equity contribution or fund something else. With economic slowdown, many of these projects were unable to generate adequate cash flows to service these irrational debts.

### Way forward

While reducing concentrations of authority, as the IBBI proposes, could help in several ways, there's a lot more that ails our system. As a regulator, the IBBI may need to intensify its coordination with other regulators to strengthen its processes. are unlikely to solve some of these deep-seated problems.

### 24. Fleeting cheer (On impact of COVID on GDP and the future scenario)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Fleeting cheer**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating

**Relevance:** Impact of pandemic on growth

**Synopsis:** The latest GDP estimates show that **national output rebounded in Quarter 1**. However, the numbers show a different picture when compared with the pre-pandemic first quarter of fiscal 2019-20.

#### Introduction

**National Statistical Office** data shows GDP expanded 20.1% from a year earlier. All the eight industries spanning the broad agriculture, manufacturing and services categories posted positive growth. Also, the gross value added grew by 18.8%.

#### How second wave has impacted the economy?

**First**, GDP at constant prices was estimated at ₹32.38-lakh crore, a 16.9% contraction from January-March's ₹38.96-lakh crore and more than 9% of the ₹35.66-lakh crore in April-June 2019.

**Second**, with the exceptions of electricity and other utility services and the non-contact intensive services grouping of financial, real estate and professional services, all other six industries posted double-digit quarter-on-quarter contractions.

**Third**, private consumption spending showed year-on-year growth of 19.3% but still shrinking by 17.4% from the preceding three months.

**Fourth**, government consumption expenditure which has helped shore up the economy in past, contracted 4.8% from a year earlier and 7.6% from the previous quarter.

#### What opportunities lie ahead for the economy?

Most States have gradually eased their localized second wave restrictions.

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**Exports** have been one of the bright spots as the U.S. and other western economies have posted economic recoveries.

**Manufacturing** has surged almost 50% year-on-year. As per Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index, the manufacturing sector experienced a second straight month of increase in production.

### What are some future challenges?

**Rising raw material costs:** as per PMI survey, **rising raw material costs** have been forcing manufacturers to either absorb the impact or raise prices. It is risking the prospect of an already weak demand.

**Freeze on hiring:** According to IHS Markit, **uncertainty has led companies to freeze hiring.** With monsoon rains in deficit, agricultural output and wider rural consumption also face a likely downturn.

### 25. Gauging household income key for microfinance clients

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Gauging household income key for microfinance clients**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3– Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development

**Relevance:** Credit growth, Micro-Finance

**Synopsis:** An accurate assessment of household-level incomes would avoid instances of over-indebtedness and ensure long-term stability of the ecosystem.

#### Introduction

Recently released, **Consultative Document on Regulation of Microfinance** in June 2021, shows that the microfinance movement in India is set to receive momentum.

Following the Malegam Committee Report, the current **Consultative Document on Regulation of Microfinance** looks to reassess the priorities of the microfinance sector.

#### What are some key recommendations?

**First**, some of the key regulatory changes proposed in the document takes **household income as a critical variable** for loan assessment.

**Second**, the **definition of microfinance itself is proposed to mean collateral-free** loans to households with annual household incomes of up to ₹1,25,000 and ₹2,00,000 for rural and urban areas respectively.

**Third**, it suggested all Regulated Entities to have a **board-approved policy** for household income assessment. It caps loan repayment for all outstanding loans of the household at 50% of household income.

#### Why measuring household income is complex?

**First**, with a **high degree of informality** in our economy, income tends to be **unpredictable** in time and volatile in volume.

**Second**, Low-Income Households (LIHs), who form the customer base for Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) have **seasonal and volatile income flows**. For instance, households with migrant workers who migrate to the city for certain months of the year see an income peak during those months.

**Third**, the **highs are also contrasted by lows during certain lean seasons** when remunerative work is unavailable, such as drought and during growing season. There have

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been attempts to **understand their inflows by measuring their expenditure**. But, due to rotational debts, expenditure also does not truly reflect the household's income.

**Fourth**, for most LIHs, their expenditure on income-related activity is not separate from their personal expenses. It is **difficult to separate the household's personal expenses** from their occupational pursuits.

### How household income can be measured?

**Structured survey-based approach:** It could be used by Financial Service Providers (FSPs) to assess a household's expenses, debt position and income from various sources of occupation. However, attention must be paid while designing such a questionnaire so that it captures seasonality and volatility in cash flows.

**Template-based approach:** It could be used wherein FSPs could create various templates for different categories of households (as per location, occupation type, family characteristics, etc.).

**Household templates could be defined based on publicly available data** sets that contain State/district-level information about household cash flows and occupation types. These templates could then be used to gauge the household income of a client matching a particular template.

**Centralised database:** FSPs could collect and maintain household income data through a centralised database. This would allow for uniformity in data collection across all FSPs.

**Technology Service providers** could play a crucial role in this exercise and create customised digital architecture for FSPs depending on their specific needs. Creating new technology to document and analyse cash flows of LIHs would facilitate innovation in the standard microcredit contracts through customised repayment schedule and risk-based pricing, depending on a household's cash flows.

### 26. [Our banks are mispricing capital and this is simply unsustainable](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article "[Our banks are mispricing capital and this is simply unsustainable](#)" published in **Live Mint** on **2nd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3-Issues related to Banking sector

**Relevance:** Monetary policy and Economic stability

**Synopsis:** Below-cost lending in India could have economic repercussions beyond the financial burden imposed on bank shareholders.

### Background

We have a situation in India today where the [policy repo rate](#) has been kept low, which is reflected in the cost of deposits and consequently lending rates.

Also, there is talk of loan melas, where credit must be given. The question that arises is whether we are pricing capital adequately.



### The mispricing math

We have very low lending rates right now that do not adequately reflect the actual costs borne by banks.

Cost head	Criteria	Value
Deposits	10% demand deposits @ 0 cost 30% savings deposits @ 3% 60% term deposits @ 5.2%	4.02%
Provisions	RBI base case of 9.8% NPA ratio Provisions made average 30% of this ratio	3%
Return on assets	Ideally should be 1%	1%
Carry cost of CRR	4% impounded at 0 return. Hence opportunity cost is x% of 4, where x is the final cost	$0.04x=0.36\%$
Carry cost of SLR	SLR at 18% where average return is 6%. Opportunity cost is (x-6)% of 18	$((x-6)/100)*18=0.52\%$
		<b>Final cost: X=8.9%</b>

Source: Author's calculation

#### What is the cost borne by the banks?

For instance, for every ₹100 of deposits that enter the banking system, there are accompanying costs for the system.

These are **deposit costs, provisioning for NPAs, return on assets (ROA or minimum profit), and the regulatory cost of cash reserve and statutory liquidity ratio balances (CRR and SLR).**

Adding these components, the basic cost works out to **8.9%**, which should be the rate at which incremental lending should take place.

Hence, by offering loans at a much lower rate of 7.23%, the **banking system is actually mispricing the capital.**

**Other issues:** As NPAs increase, ideally banks should load this cost onto their borrowers. But that rarely happens in India. Instead, it is taken on banks' books and gets reflected in their balance sheets.

#### How does mispricing capital impact the economy?

**Deposit costs have been driven down** as savers don't have a choice. Deposit-holders are subsidizing borrowers quite significantly.

**Loss to bank shareholders:** Banks have been placing funds costing them 8.9% with the central bank through its reverse repo window, which gives them just 3.35%. This loss is eventually borne by bank shareholders.

**More lending to small businesses:** With rigid policies on corporate lending to avert possible NPAs, banks have preferred lending to the retail segment, which is less risky, and small businesses, backed by the Centre's credit guarantee.

## 27. Douse the farm fire – “Stubble burning Issue”

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Douse the farm fire” published in Business Standard on **3rd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution, and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Relevance:** Addressing the issue of stubble burning.

**Synopsis:** Despite various measures taken by both, state governments and central government, the issue of stubble burning continue to add to the air pollution in the North India and NCR region. It calls for a fresh relook at the issue.

### Introduction

The stubble burning incidents are expected to increase this time compared to last year, when the farm fires played havoc. Neither the threat of **punitive action** nor the incentives for safe management of the leftover crop biomass had deterred the farmers from torching their fields. Since **Punjab and Uttar Pradesh (UP)** are now heading for polls and the farmers’ agitation is continuing unabated, **stringent measures** to curb this recurring menace are **unlikely**. The Union government, too, has not come up with any concrete proposal or strategy to combat this practice.

### Why do farmers prefer stubble burning?

**Firstly**, it is essentially the result of **the need to clear the land quick** enough for the timely planting of the next wheat crop.

**Secondly**, despite government subsidies, **alternative methods** are costly, which makes farmers reluctant to adopt them.

**Thirdly**, the alternative method takes time to get rid of stubble, which delays the sowing season of wheat. The use of the stubble decomposer produced by the New Delhi-based Indian Agricultural Research Institute has also failed to attract farmers’ fancy, despite its usefulness, because of the time factor.

**Finally**, the **absence of a lucrative market** for wheat straw, compels farmers to go for stubble burning.

All this calls to relook at the issue and adopt a suitable way forward.

### Way forward

There is a need to **create a market for paddy biomass** by converting it into an economic good to generate additional income for the farmers. Some start-ups have also come up to procure biomass from the farmers for producing manure and biofuel. **The Haryana government** has announced **plans to offer Rs 1,000** an acre to farmers who, instead of burning the residue, give it to the industrial units for various uses. **The Punjab government** has suggested a premium of Rs 100 per quintal on the minimum support price of paddy for those farmers who do not torch their fields.

Despite all these, the best solution would be to wean the farmers of northern states away from paddy cultivation by incentivizing the growth of alternative shorter-duration crops that would vacate the land in time for wheat sowing.

## 28. Long-feared space junk has become an imminent threat

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Long-feared space junk has become an imminent threat**” published in Mint on **3rd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, and issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights.

**Relevance:** Solution to address the issue of space debris.

**Synopsis:** With the increasing cost-effectiveness in rocket and satellite technologies, more countries and companies are planning more missions to orbit than ever before. This will ultimately result in more space debris that could trigger a mass collision in the future. This calls for countries and corporates to collaborate on the issue.

### Introduction:

In March, a Chinese military satellite collapsed in the orbit. It left a trail of debris high above the Earth. **Yunhai 1-02**, as the satellite is known, collided with a piece of junk leftover from a Russian rocket launched in 1996. It was the first major collision in Earth orbit since 2009. However, it won't be the last.

### What is space junk?

The dead and unwanted craft (rockets or satellites) left behind in the finite space of Earth orbit is referred to as space junk. As this junk increases, so would collisions; each collision would in turn produce debris that would make further collisions more likely. The result could be a belt of space junk so dense that it would make certain low-Earth orbits unusable. More than 100 million pieces of space junk are now orbiting the Earth.

**Recent instances:** In 2007, **China** launched a ballistic missile at one of its old weather satellites, producing the **largest cloud of space debris** ever tracked. In 2009, a non-functional **Russian communications orbiter** collided with a functioning one operated by an Iridium Satellite, producing almost 2,000 pieces of debris measuring at least 4 inches in diameter.

### What are the initiatives taken to manage space junk?

**Firstly**, in 1995, **NASA** issued the world's first set of debris-mitigation guidelines. It proposed that satellites should be designed to re-enter Earth's atmosphere within 25 years of mission completion.

**Secondly**, other space-faring countries and the United Nations follow their own guidelines. But urgency and compliance were lacking, partly because the world had not yet experienced a destructive collision between spacecraft and debris.

### Way forward:

**Firstly**, updating the **1967 Outer Space Treaty** is the need of the hour. In particular, provisions that give countries permanent property rights to their objects in space may complicate efforts to clean up debris.

**Secondly**, there is a need for greater clarity on common issues is required to boost trust and cooperation.

**Thirdly**, NASA should fund research into debris-removal technologies—such as those recently demonstrated by Astroscale, a Japanese startup, which hold promise.

**Finally**, The US should also seek to expand **the Artemis Accords**, a framework for space cooperation that includes (so far) 11 other countries.

Terms to know: [Artemis accord](#)

### 29. Credit Where It's Due – “on credit growth”

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Credit Where It's Due” published in ToI on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3– Issues related to the Banking sector

**Relevance:** Linkage between credit growth and economic growth.

**Synopsis:** Lack of Credit growth has lagged economic recovery. Here's why that's about to change.

#### Introduction

April-June GDP estimates show that there is strong evidence of a sharp recovery in the economy after second-wave lockdowns. Although broad-based indicators of real economic activity like mobility, energy demand, and GST e-way bill generation are now substantially higher than pre-Covid levels, the credit to GDP ratio is still lagging behind. Lack of credit growth is a drag on economic growth.

#### Why India's Credit to GDP ratio is lower?

**Firstly**, an important reason is the inability of the financial system to profitably extend credit to smaller enterprises. The cost of loan evaluation could not be reduced below a certain level if processes were manual. For the loan to be profitable to the bank, the loan size had to be large. That meant borrowers who only needed smaller loans could not be serviced.

**Secondly**, the reasons for weak loan growth suggest that large businesses have been reducing their short-term loans. This has two main reasons:

- One, the fear of further restrictions due to a possible third wave has meant every business is trying to keep its inventories low.
- Two, in an economic contraction larger firms squeeze smaller suppliers and customers, reducing advances paid to suppliers and goods sold on credit to customers.

**Thirdly**, it has to be understood that credit growth is not weak because of the weak balance sheets of either borrowers or lenders. Corporate leverage levels are at decade lows. Among lenders, banks as well as non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), leverage is at all-time lows.

#### Why credit growth is going to increase in the future?

With the “**account aggregator**” model now underway. It will allow users to share digital data about their financial and economic transactions with potential lenders, penetration should rise further. That means an increase in the Credit to GDP ratio.

### 30. Is monetising public assets a good idea?

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Is monetising public assets a good idea?” published in The Hindu on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sep 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

**Relevance:** Regarding Asset Monetisation programme launched recently by the govt.

**Synopsis:** Two experts, viz. Montek Singh Ahluwalia (MS) and Professor Ajay Shah (AS), share their views over Asset Monetisation programme of the government.



**Background**

- Read here: [National Monetisation Pipeline \(NMP\) project – Explained](#)

**How can govt go about monetising operational assets?**

Both experts mention ways in which govt can pursue monetisation of assets:

MS	AS
<p>We need more infrastructure, but the <b>public sector simply doesn't have the resources</b> to build it. Also, we have huge value embedded in existing infrastructure. So, why not realize that value and let the public sector use the resources to build the infrastructure we need. There are two possible responses.</p> <p><b>Let pvt sector build:</b> One, for new infrastructure, one can think of bringing in the private sector, set up a contractual framework for what it has to do, and then let it bring its own resources.</p> <p><b>Govt builds the asset and then the asset is sold:</b> The second is to recognize that there are more risks in the construction stage, and it is perhaps better to let the public sector build the asset and then sell it off to private players or if not an outright sale, let the private sector manage it.</p>	<p>The government does not have the capacity to enter into contracts and deal with contract negotiations and difficulties. Similarly, many parts of the development process are difficult for private sector people to solve. Here's a way out:</p> <p><b>Early development by the govt and then asset is sold:</b> Government should do the early development of infrastructure, which is the high-risk phase, create an operating asset, and then sell the asset off to private people. So, the asset goes off the public balance sheet and into the private balance sheet.</p> <p>The money collected by the government can go back into developing new assets. There is merit in this thought process given the constraints of state capacity in India.</p>

**Why the govt chose asset monetisation over outright privatisation?**

MS	AS
<p>We should do <b>both monetisation and privatisation</b> because we don't know what's best. One reason that the government might not want to do outright privatisation is if it involves the transfer of a scarce resource like land. It's easier to justify a 30-year lease because at the end of that lease the land stays with the government. In another context, if the land is of no great value, you could simply hand it over.</p>	<p><b>Sale of an asset is much more practical</b> rather than a reduced state domination</p> <p><b>Ownership of an infra asset</b> means private sector will take <b>more care of it</b> and put efforts to make it a high-quality asset.</p> <p><b>Entering into a complex contract with a govt involves great risk</b> because the Indian state is not a great party to have a contract with. So, a clean asset sale puts an end to the complexity of government interference.</p>

**Can we ensure that there's no asset stripping by pvt investors?**

Asset stripping means selling assets at a profit without regard for the company's future. In this case, it means that after the contract period is over (let's say 30 years), then the incentive for a

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pvt sector player to put money into the asset, to ensure that it remains productive even after the contract period ((in 31st, 32nd and 33rd year) goes down. This doesn't happen when the asset is owned by the private sector player.

MS	AS
Preventing asset stripping can be done via: <b>Renewal of lease before it ends:</b> One option would be that you allow a renewal of the lease even before the lease ends. But then we need a competitive process there.	The question is how much <b>complexity</b> you want to build into a contract. Private sector is not comfortable entering into complex contracts with the Indian state. Now, that doesn't mean that outright sale is easy. With an outright sale, we will still have a government regulator, and we will face the problem of regulatory capacity. The trade-off is about the <b>cost of building regulatory capacity</b> versus the <b>cost of building contracting capacity</b> .

### 31. Our export efforts hold the key to growth in the quarters ahead

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Our export efforts hold the key to growth in the quarters ahead” published in **Livemint** on **3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** **GS3**– Indian Economy and issues related to Growth, Development and Employment

**Relevance:** Role of Exports in stimulating Economic growth.

**Synopsis:** India's growth hope in the immediate future is dependent heavily on exports.

#### What are the challenges that impact export promotion?

##### Issues in remission of duties and taxes on exported products (RODTEP) scheme structuring:

Under RODTEP, Steel, pharma, and chemicals get no rebate at all, although many products using these inputs do. This kind of cross-sectoral unevenness can get India into trouble with the World Trade Organization (WTO) once again.

The scheme looks like a subsidy to selected sectors disguised as duty rollback. The scheme is not available across all sectors without exception.

**Shortage of sea-borne containers:** A crippling shortage of sea-borne containers has affected the use of key large-volume products in the Indian export basket (tea, basmati rice, furniture, garments).

#### What are the suggestions?

**Firstly**, the excluded products under RODTEP need the rebate if they are to survive in a fiercely price-competitive global market in the months to come.

**Secondly**, two policy actions are immediately necessary. At a time when container rates have shot up, there is surely a case for a **sea-freight subsidy** for a limited period. Even more urgently, the estimated 25,000-30,000 containers locked up at different ports owing to customs disputes need to be unloaded into warehouses and these containers freed.

#### Why the recently announced NMP cannot be relied upon for growth prospects?

**Firstly**, in the current setting, the **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)** announced in the Union Budget, will not provide any immediate help in economic growth. Because there are several procedural stages for each monetized asset, that **makes revenue realisation** difficult. Also, it is intended to provide only a small part of the infrastructure expenditure budgeted for

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the year. Hence, it is the exports that will have to drive growth. Monetization is merely a funding source.

**Secondly**, there are other concerns with NM. The scheme offers a participation incentive to states with a 33% matching transfer from the Centre for revenues that states realize under the scheme. This matching transfer could result in, states under-achieving the potential value realizable.

**Thirdly**, it must be remembered that the most attractive schemes can sometimes fail to find appeal among all states. For instance, the NMP document refers to **the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure** announced in October 2020. It offered states an interest-free loan with repayment after 50 years to complete stalled capital projects, or settle the outstanding bills of contractors. The only constraint was that the funds had to be used by the end of March 2021. However, Tamil Nadu did not sign on for its share of ₹351 crore.

**Fourthly**, legal pitfalls could limit the potential of NM. Hence, the NMP demands clear and well-thought-through processes, with sufficient transparency and safeguards in the form of regulatory structures.

### 32. Digitalize all supply chains to unlock trade efficiencies

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Digitalize all supply chains to unlock trade efficiencies**” published in **Livemint** on **3rd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3: Awareness in the fields of IT

**Relevance:** Issues with the logistic sector in India, need for digitalization.

**Synopsis:** India has risen on the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index from 77 in 2018 to 63 in 2019 across 190 countries. Its 68th rank in “trading across borders” can be improved upon through **digitalization**.

#### **Introduction**

In the age of the fourth industrial revolution, India must **digitalize supply chains to reduce inefficiencies, improve transparency, reduce logistics costs**. It will enhance the overall global competitiveness of Indian industries, especially small and medium enterprises.

#### **What is the need for digitalization of the supply chain?**

**Higher logistic cost:** Logistics cost in India is estimated at around **13% of gross domestic product (GDP)**.

In 2018, India’s rank on the **World Bank’s Logistics Performance Index** was No. 44 among 160 countries, below such countries as China (26), Chile (34), and South Africa (33).

**No seamless connectivity:** The interaction between importers and customs is not seamless. Data has to be submitted via a customs broker or authorized courier in most cases.

**To ease governance:** Digitalization will enable direct tracking and traceability and enhance tertiary processes like audits, financial transparency, and risk management through data feeds, collection and abstraction.

#### **What are the steps taken by the government?**

**Digitalization measures:** Initiatives such as the Goods and Services Tax Network, GST, have been game-changer in improving the experience of importers, exporters, and logistics service providers.

Apart from ICES 1.5 and **ICE GATE**, new developments like the **Express Cargo Clearance System** for express delivery and **Single Window Interface for Trade** for electronic data

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interchange across multiple agencies involved in customs clearance have also eased business processes.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has launched its **eSanchit** mechanism for paperless processing and the uploading of supporting documents to facilitate trade.

**Steps taken by the private sector:** For example, **DHL Import Easy Tool** is a first-of-its-kind website-based platform. It globally offers a single interface where importers can view and manage all their transactions pertaining to the import process in real-time.

It is being piloted in India and is designed to be **a one-stop intuitive platform for importers**.

### What are the suggestions to improve digitization?

First, the Indian industry must **develop and integrate innovative tools** and India's government should facilitate their use and secure technology interfaces in partnership with the industry for their implementation.

Second, companies can be given **some incentives to adopt digitalization**. For example, subsidizing logistics costs.

### 33. From Legs to Minds – ” On Software industry in India”

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**From Legs to Minds**” published in **India Express** on **3rd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Growth, Development, and Employment

**Relevance:** Software industry in India.

**Synopsis:** Regulatory simplicity allowed Indian software services and start-up ecosystems to flourish. Hence, to grow, India needs to **cut regulatory cholesterol** and spend the next 25 years unleashing the entrepreneurial energies of 1.3 billion Indians.

#### Introduction

In 1893, during a sea journey to attend the **World Parliament of Religions** and a Technology Expo, **Swami Vivekananda** convinced Jamsetji Tata that technology can be imported, but scientific temper cannot be bought and must be built within a country.

#### Evolution of the Indian software industry:

**Role of Jamsetji:** Jamsetji set up the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. **Technology-encouraging culture** at the Tatas pioneered India's software industry in the 1960s.

**Software exports:** India now exports more software than Saudi Arabia does oil. Covid and recent Chinese events have increased India's attractiveness to global investors.

**Big reforms:** like GST, MPC, and IBC. The PM announced on Independence Day that 15,000 of our current 69,000+ employer compliance and 6000+ filings have been identified for removal. This abolition will **accelerate formal employment and reduce corruption**.

#### Why did the manufacturing and software industries develop differently?

**Regulatory cholesterol:** It is one of the reasons why it took 72 years for 1.3 billion Indians to cross the total GDP of 66 million Britishers.

**Role of SEZ and STPI:** STPI's genius was simplicity. It allowed rebadging existing assets, embraced trust over suspicion, and **adopted self-reporting** that was largely paperless, presence less, and cashless.

**SEZs** largely replicated the regulatory cholesterol and **distrust** that has made India an infertile habitat for employment-intensive industries.



**How has regulatory simplicity resulted in the development of the Indian service sector?**

India's software services and tech startups are built on openness, consistency, and fairness. China's magnificent 80 times rise in per-capita GDP over 40 years has also been built on these principles.

**Development economics outlier:** Few models predict a \$2,500 per-capita income country with five million people writing software, internet data costs per GB at 3 percent of US levels, 1.2 billion people empowered with paperless digital identity verification, and a \$3 trillion public market capitalization.

**High productivity:** 0.8 percent of India's workers generate 8 percent of GDP. The mandatory global **digital literacy program and digital investment super-cycle** sparked by Covid in education, medicine, shopping, office work, payments, restaurants, and entertainment will **double our software employment** in five years.

**Hub of start-ups:** India's software industry's talent, alumni, and startups have raised over \$90 billion since 2014 from 500+ institutional investors.

India's software services industry and tech startups each are estimated to be worth about \$400 billion today. By 2025, India's startup universe value will grow to \$1 trillion.

**Key suggestions:**

First, **build on the resources represented by our young** because, without their involvement, we cannot succeed.

Second, to increase our prosperity we need **massive formal, non-farm job creation**, regulatory trust, and simplicity that our technology industry enjoys in the rest of our economy.

**34. Chipped & vulnerable: GoI must make public investments to encourage private manufacturing in strategic semiconductor industry**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Chipped & vulnerable: GoI must make public investments to encourage private manufacturing in strategic semiconductor industry**" published in **The Times of India** on **2nd September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources.

**Relevance:** The article explains the recent shortage of semiconductors.

**Synopsis:** There is an urgent need for India to scale up the manufacturing of semiconductors.

**Introduction**

India's automobile industry is facing a major shortage of semiconductors. The supply situation isn't expected to ease any time soon. That's mainly because chip manufacturing is concentrated in a few countries.

**Why there is a shortage of semiconductors?**

The semiconductor shortage today is a **result of multiple factors**.

These include the rapid **growth of 5G Technology**, the **ever-growing need for greater computing power**, the Covid pandemic induced **demand for information communication technology and digital entertainment products**.

Private firms **cannot easily set up manufacturing plants** to produce semiconductors. Establishing foundries is **hugely capital intensive and has a gestation period of up to three years**.

### What has India already done?

India invited proposals from semiconductor companies to set up the industry in December 2020. The government also offered **more than \$1 billion in cash incentives** to each semiconductor company that sets up manufacturing units.

### What should India do to improve the availability of semiconductors?

India should **increase the base for semiconductor manufacturing** and also has to **formulate policies to promote domestic chip manufacturing**.

India should follow the US, China and South Korea's path. These countries invested huge public money on-chip manufacturing.

### 35. Govt-industry talks on proposed FTAs with EU-Australia at premature stage

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Govt-industry talks on proposed FTAs with EU-Australia at premature stage**" published in **Business Standard** on **4<sup>th</sup> September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Issues related to External sector

**Relevance:** Free trade agreement and Exports

**Synopsis:** FTAs are important for boosting exports and India should try to take a step in the right direction by signing mini trade deals.

#### Introduction

According to sources from Industries, discussions with the government regarding proposed trade deals with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United Kingdom (UK) have already kicked off.

India hopes to kick-start FTA negotiations with the UK by the end of December. Recently, a joint statement by **India and UK** said that they agree to be ambitious in the forthcoming FTA negotiations.

As far as the **UAE** is concerned, India is aiming to finalize a comprehensive trade deal by December.

**Must Read:** [Free Trade Agreements – Explained](#)

However, with respect to countries such as the **European Union (EU)**, **Australia**, the discussion with industry is at a premature state.

With regard to **U.S.**, it has indicated that it is not considering a new trade agreement with India.

### How FTAs with EU, the US, Australia, and the UK will benefit India?

**Make India's exports competitive:** Currently, Indian is losing out to other manufacturing competing nations like Bangladesh, who currently have a 10-12 per cent price advantage due to their **concession agreement** with countries such as the UK. Hence, FTAs with the EU, the US, Australia, and the UK would be a win-win situation.

### What is the way forward?

According to Industry Experts, signing mini trade deals can be a good strategy to begin with, before signing a full-fledged deal. Till now, India has signed an **early harvest deal** with **Thailand** and **Singapore**.

Early harvest agreement can be a good strategy because first it will help us to start the FTA in a limited way. Over a period of time, as industries give more negotiating room to the government, the list can be expanded.

### 36. [What ails India's coronavirus genome sequencing system](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “[What ails India's coronavirus genome sequencing system](#)” published in **Down to Earth** on **4th September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

**Relevance:** Applications of Biotechnology

**Synopsis:** Sequencing and analysis of the novel coronavirus, a crucial step in infection containment strategy, declined sharply in India, even as cases of the resultant disease continued to rise.

#### Introduction

India formed the **Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG)**, a consortium of 10 genome sequencing labs, in December 2020 to boost efforts for genome sequencing. The number of labs involved in coronavirus sequencing since then has gone up to 28.

Despite government efforts, the number of coronavirus samples sequenced and analysed in the country **went down by 76%** in July.

**Must Read:** [What is genomic sequencing?](#)

Whereas, the United Kingdom and the United States have sequenced and shared data for 866,000 and 755,000 samples already, according to GISAID, a global, open-access online repository of genomic data. India has sequenced only 82,000 samples, a meager **0.2%** of its cumulative cases.

More than 100 countries have sequenced a greater share of samples than India.

**Must read:** [How Genome sequencing works?](#)

#### How new guidelines hampered the process of sequencing and analysis of the novel coronavirus?

Initial guidelines from the central government aimed to analyse 5% of all positive samples from each state. This method is known as ‘**randomised surveillance**’.

However, four months later, the government decided to change the policy. Only 300 samples were decided to be sent from every state to genome sequencing labs every month. This is called ‘**sentinel site surveillance**’.

The government justified the move saying, as cases were rising exponentially at that time, a 5% sequencing would put a lot of load on the sequencing labs. Further, the revision was according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) standards for genome sequencing.

#### What is the WHO's recommendation in this regard?

WHO never discouraged **random surveillance** and even said it is the more sensitive method. WHO has suggested **Sentinel surveillance** to be adopted by countries that have ‘minimal lab capacity. Further, WHO had outrightly said that Sentinel surveillance might not be the best representation, contrary to what the government claimed.

#### What issues and challenges are faced by India's coronavirus genome sequencing system?

**Firstly**, only two states (Maharashtra and Kerala) have genome sequencing facilities of their own. The rest of the country has to send samples to INSACOG labs run by the Centre.

**Secondly**, it is difficult for a country as big as India to sequence a greater number of samples due to a high caseload.

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**Thirdly**, according to scientist working at an INSACOG lab, many labs, do not get an adequate number of quality samples either in time or with scientific parameters intact.

**Fourthly**, India has long turnaround time. The UK with 410,000 sequences had uploaded raw data within 16 days on an average. Whereas, India takes about 57 days

### **Why the sequencing data needs to be in public domain?**

The WHO has informed that the data of any sequencing done anywhere in the world should be submitted to open-access platforms like GISAID. This will allow a sequence done in one part of the world to be looked at by the global scientific community.

If sequences are not shared in the public domain timely, it may **defeat the purpose of sequencing** because by the time the sequence is uploaded, it would have undergone several mutations.

Also, a scientist outside the government setup will not be able to see the nature or location of mutations in the genome sequence of the virus unless raw data is posted.

### **37. From Four to 500: How citizens joined naturally to save nature in Kharghar**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**From Four to 500: How citizens joined naturally to save nature in Kharghar**” published in **The Times of India** on **4th September 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Conservation of Biodiversity and Environment

**Relevance:** Social initiatives to save nature.

**Synopsis:** A small group of dedicated volunteers has managed to save Kharghar wetlands.

### **Where is Kharghar wetland located?**

It lies within Navi Mumbai. It is home to multiple species with natural environments like hills, green mangroves and lush grasslands.

### **Why this wetland was in danger?**

Kharghar lakes were in danger of being encroached on and built over by brick kilns, shrimp farmers and slum extensions. The other reasons were human-made factors like man-made fires, air pollution from chemical units and brick kilns etc.

### **What conservation efforts helped in saving Kharghar?**

**Word of mouth communication & use of Social media:** This mode helped to encourage people to join the efforts. Conservators grew into a big group, with IIT researchers, photographers, animal activists, retired officials, birders, writers, lawyers etc.

**Help from officials:** The help of officials of the Forest department, Municipal Corporation and other state agencies were taken for guidance and administrative support.

**Judicial steps:** Bombay High Court-appointed mangroves and wetlands protection panels to ensure that local spots rich with biodiversity receive protection and care.

**Regular Checks:** This was done to pre-empt encroachment and avoid illegal activities like quarrying, lighting fires on the hills or dumping debris in the water bodies.

**Collaboration:** Events have been organised around Kharghar’s natural treasures and collaboration with similar citizens groups.



### What was the result of these conservation efforts?

Due to the above-mentioned activities, three Kharghar wetlands are included in the National Wetlands Atlas. Further, they also got listed in the Collector's protected list.

Kharghar wetlands and hills group has also documented over 200 bird species like smooth-coated otters, black-headed ibis, painted storks and several IUCN Vulnerable category birds.

### 38. Delhi government shouldn't congratulate itself on CCTV coverage

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Delhi government shouldn't congratulate itself on CCTV coverage" published in the **Indian Express** on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Challenges to internal security through communication networks

**Relevance:** This article explains the challenges associated with the installation of CCTVs.

#### Synopsis:

Rather than deterring crime, the surveillance projects compromise women's safety and the liberties of all citizens.

#### Introduction

Recently the Delhi government has reported that Delhi beat cities like Shanghai, New York and London with the most CCTV cameras per square mile across the world. The government has also mentioned that Delhi has 1,826 CCTVs per square mile, ranking it above 150 global cities. The first and foremost reason provided by the Delhi government for the mass installation of CCTVs is to **improve public safety**.

#### Does CCTVs reduce crime and improve public safety?

There is **no public data available on how CCTVs contribute to a reduction in violent crimes or make policing more efficient**. Similarly, there are **no feasibility reports or any evidence-based research** to support such a massive installation of CCTVs.

A Comparitech study mentions that "a higher number of cameras just barely correlate with a lower crime index." Another study from the Internet Democracy Project in Bengaluru reveals that **CCTV footage had not helped in even a single case of sexual harassment**.

#### What are the other challenges associated with the installation of CCTVs?

**The longevity of the CCTVs:** The CCTVs will require fixed one-time costs and will include replacement, repairs, maintenance, provision of internet and electricity. An audit by the CAG points out that, of the 3,870 CCTVs installed by the Delhi Police from 2008 to 2015, feeds are available only for 22-48 per cent.

**No legal framework:** There is no underlying legal framework for the use of CCTVs. In Delhi, all that exists is a **one-page standard operating procedure (SOP)**, issued by the Public Works Department of Delhi. The SOP also does **not contain any data protection principles or security practices**.

**The cost of the project:** Delhi government spent almost ₹1200 crores for the installation. Apart from Delhi, other Indian cities such as Chennai, Mumbai are also pursuing the surveillance race. They're also spending huge money on installing CCTVs. This money can be used for other better purposes.

**Efficient in curbing individual rights:** Internet Democracy Project study reveals that CCTV footages were **used to identify "troublemakers" to prevent workers from organising and**

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**demanding labour protections.** This is **against the concept of individual autonomy** as articulated by the Supreme Court in the **Puttaswamy judgment**.

China uses digital surveillance for behavioural modification and assigning a social credit score for individuals. India has to be cautious about promoting CCTV programmes, that undermine fiscal prudence and civil liberties.

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