

**9pm**

# **Compilation**

**October, (First Week)**

## General Studies - 2

---

1. India quest for a road to Central Asia
2. Making parties constitutional
3. The proposal to link Aadhaar with Voter ID is unconstitutional
4. NS2 A win-win proposition: About Nord Stream 2
5. A Quad alliance for emerging technology
6. Reimagining food systems with lessons from India
7. Let us revitalize multilateralism: The future of the world is at stake
8. Peace at the heart of education
9. Digital health mission in a click? Not yet
10. Explained: Why do the Pandora Papers matter?
11. An inclusive plan for healthcare systems to be built back better
12. Hello Taiwan: New Delhi should boost ties with Taipei not just because of Chinese threat.  
There are other benefits
13. An alphabet soup New Delhi need to sift through
14. Why India's ancient republics need to be recognised for their place in world history
15. If Data Is Poor, Governance Will Be Poorer
16. India and the geopolitics of the moon
17. Lessons from the death of the ease of doing business index
18. The challenge of going back to school
19. NIRF ranking does not give full picture of higher education in India
20. On Digital Health ID, proceed with caution
21. Trade multilateralism at risk
22. The motherhood penalty employers must eliminate
23. Use the latest research to combat child under-nutrition
24. A strategy for India in a world that is adrift
25. The Indian women's movement can only grow by being inclusive
26. The pandemic is a reminder of education being a public good
27. Right to protest in and on Lakhimpur Kheri needs to be protected, the legal quibble can come later
28. Decentralised renewable energy solutions offer great promises for healthcare facilities
29. Stronger at the grassroots: On strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions
30. There's an urgent need to clean up the World Bank and IMF

## General Studies - 3

---

1. Water water everywhere and we must stop to think
2. Growing locally: On Significance of GI tags
3. Staggered pricing: On cane pricing
4. Why new rule allowing recycled plastic in food packaging raises concerns
5. Ordnance factories' moment in history
6. Revealing India's actual farmer population
7. Clash of economy and ecology in global politics
8. Staying the Green Course
9. COVID-19: How bio-medical waste poses challenges to urban solid waste management system
10. What the continued distress in informal labour market says

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of October, First week 2021

11. How loopholes in Aadhaar-enabled payments are putting poor people at risk of being swindled
12. Employment increases in rural India
13. The future of vertical farming is brighter than once thought
14. Recurring pain: On RBI's decision on auto-debit transactions
15. India should never fall into the trap of premature celebration
16. Cities are taking climate action
17. Taproots to help restore India's fading green cover
18. Economic lessons for India from the Evergrande crisis in China
19. Crackdown in China, hope in India
20. Tarballs on India's west coast: A tale of shifting responsibilities
21. The recent QES estimates are unreliable
22. WHO's stark message on air quality — and what India must do
23. World Is Entering A New Moon Age
24. Road accidents can be reduced
25. Will a bad bank fix India's broken banking system?
26. Our automobile sector needs a hearty dose of tax relief
27. A host of challenges greets India's new Air Chief
28. Seeding a data revolution in Indian agriculture
29. The farmers' movement is no longer about the three controversial farm laws
30. Simple, but brilliant: on Nobel Prize for Chemistry
31. Need Smart Govts For Checking Big Tech
32. Coal's problems are governance, not climate regulation
33. What the attacks against minorities in Kashmir reveal

# General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

---

### 1. India quest for a road to Central Asia

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**India quest for a road to Central Asia**” published in **LiveMint** on **1<sup>st</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Bilateral Relations with Central Asian countries.

**Relevance:** To study India-Central Asian relations and problems associated with it.

**Synopsis:** India can unlock a lot of economic and geostrategic potential if it can connect with Central Asian nations.

#### Introduction

Indian PM in a recently held SCO summit highlighted the importance of Central Asia. He also raised his concern over the connectivity issue with Central Asian countries because of the geographical disadvantage.

#### What are the challenges India is facing related to connectivity?

**India's trade** with Central Asian countries was **below \$2bn in 2018**. Most of the trade was routed through **Iran, Russia and UAE**. In contrast, according to the estimates, China's trade was \$5-bn-\$60bn during this period. China has a huge advantage in its geographical location. India is facing issues with connectivity such as:

**Pakistan:** Route through Pakistan is not possible because of the hostility between both of the countries.

**Iran:** India efforts went into vain with **USA sanction on Iran** over its suspected nuclear weapon programme.

**Afghanistan:** With the Taliban capturing Afghanistan, India faced a huge setback.

#### Importance of Central Asian nations to India

Central Asia includes **fuel-rich countries** that have the potential to fulfil the energy needs of India. Central Asia states are **mineral-rich states**. For example, **Kazakhstan**, a source of **Uranium** is beneficial for India's nuclear power plants.

There is huge scope for collaboration in other sectors like building (power) transmission lines, contract farming, dairy sector, IT and enabled services, pharmaceuticals etc. Indian Sharda and Amity Universities have already set up their universities in Central Asian countries.

These countries are also struggling with terrorism and radicalization. India and Central Asian countries can come together to fight against it.

**Must read:** [India and Central Asia](#)

#### How India is trying to connect with Central Asia?

In the 1990s, India tried to explore the route through **Iran's Bandar Abbas Port and Mashad** near the border with **Turkmenistan** to Central Asia but was unsuccessful.

In 2000, India along with Iran and Russia agreed on a new route which was later known as **International North south Transit Corridor (INSTC)**. The pact was again ratified in 2002. According to an ambassador of Azerbaijan to India, “**INSTC offers a safe and cost-effective route to EU (European Union)**. It also offers 50% time-saving. In June this year, the **first pilot project** of paper products was successfully delivered from **Finland** via the territory of Azerbaijan to **Nhava Sheva port of India**.”

In 2003, India with Iran announced the development of [Chabahar port](#) to find an alternate route to Central Asia.

The sanctions on Iran by the USA over suspected Nuclear power programmes slowed down the progress of INSTC and its impact was also visible on Chahbahar port. But, the INSTC will be the best option for India to strengthen relations with Central Asian countries, so India should diplomatically push other partners for the faster implementation of INSTC.

## 2. Making parties constitutional

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Making parties constitutional**” published in **The Hindu** on **1<sup>st</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

**Relevance:** To study the importance of providing constitutional status to political parties.

**Synopsis:** The majority of the countries do not provide constitutional status for Political parties. But it is time for making political parties constitutional.

### Introduction

Political parties maintain a continuous connection between the people and those who represent them, either in government or in the opposition. But despite that, they do not provide constitutional status.

### What are political parties?

It is an organized group of people or bodies who **share a common view on governance and act as a political unit**. They seek to capture political power through an election in order to run the affairs of a country.

**Read more:** [Difference between Political party and Pressure group](#)

### What is their constitutional status?

In spite of their important functioning, political parties do **not have constitutional status in most democracies**. Eg: In **the USA**, The American Constitution does not presume the existence of political parties. In **Britain**, too, political parties are still unknown to the law. **Ivor Jennings** on the British constitution said that “a realistic survey of the British Constitution today must begin and end with parties and discuss them at length in the middle”.

In **India** too, political parties are extra-constitutional, but they are the breathing air of the political system.

### How the political parties are working in developed nations?

They maintain high levels of internal democracy. For example, In **U.K.**, the Conservative Party has the **National Conservative Convention** as its top body. It has a Central Council and an Executive Committee. The Central Council elects its President, a Chairman and Vice-Chairmen at its annual meeting. It also elects an Executive Committee which meets once a month.

In the **U.S.**, both the Democratic and the Republican parties have the **National Committee** as their top decision-making body. The National Committee plays an important role in the presidential election and agenda-setting.

### How the political parties are working in India?

In spite of one of the longest constitutions in the world, the Indian Constitution does **not provide the right to form a political party**. Even the political parties in India are mostly

formed on a religious or caste-based. Their finances are also not done transparently. There are **no periodical in-party elections** in Indian parties except in a few like the CPI (M).

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

#### **What do we need to learn from the German model?**

The **Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany** (1949) gives **constitutional status to political parties**. **Article 21** of the Basic Law deals with their status, rights, duties and functions.

In India, **Section 29(5) of the RPA Act 1951**, is the only major statutory provision dealing with political parties in India. It orders political parties to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established.

#### **What should India do?**

With political parties being the agent of democracy and safety valves of politics, there is a need to bring reforms in their structure and functioning. It is high time to constitutionalize political parties to ensure in-party democracy, to impart transparency in their finances, and to de-communalize them.

### **3. The proposal to link Aadhaar with Voter ID is unconstitutional**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The proposal to link Aadhaar with Voter ID is unconstitutional**” published in the **Indian Express** on **1st October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Understand the Aadhaar linking of Voter ID cards.

**Synopsis:** Recently, ECI proposed de-duplication of Voter ID by linking it with Aadhaar. This needs careful consideration.

#### **Introduction**

This week marks 3 years of the [Puttaswamy judgement](#). In the Judgement, a constitutional bench of the Supreme Court (SC) had reduced the scope of the Aadhaar project to contain its risks to the privacy of citizens. The government, however, continues to violate the “red lines” that were drawn by the judgement.

#### **How has the Government violated the red lines of SC Judgement?**

Within a year of the verdict, the government amended the Aadhaar Act to permit the use of Aadhaar authentication for telecom and banking services. This was done by a **2019 amendment**, which is a pending challenge in the SC.

The amendment also permitted the government to expand the “purposes” that Aadhaar authentication can be used for. And in 2020, the government notified the **Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge) Rules, 2020 (Good Governance Rules)** to broaden the scope of Aadhaar authentication.

#### **What is the proposal to link Aadhaar with the voter database?**

Moreover, according to some reports, the law ministry has approached the UIDAI seeking Aadhaar authentication for voter verification. This was done on the basis of a proposal by the **Election Commission of India** (ECI) to the law ministry, which sought permission to use Aadhaar numbers to de-duplicate the voter database.

### How does the ECI's proposal stand against the proportionality test?

The proportionality test was laid down in the right to privacy case (**Puttaswamy case**). It lays strict parameters for state action that infringes on the right to privacy. It states such an action must be backed by law, and this law must be a suitable means in pursuance of a legitimate state aim.

But the government's previous attempts to link voter ID and Aadhaar offer evidence that this may disenfranchise people, and **deprive them of their voting rights**, which is their **constitutional right**.

For this reason in 2015, an SC order halted the **National Election Roll Purification and Authentication Programme, which sought to link Aadhaar with voter IDs**. Despite this order, the governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh went ahead and linked the two. As a result, in 2018, at least 55 lakh voters were arbitrarily deleted from the voter database.

Finally, a law can be considered proportional only if it doesn't have a disproportionate impact on the rights holder. Articles 325 and 326 of our Constitution promise **universal adult suffrage**. And we had seen in the case of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana where 55 Lakh people were disenfranchised. Thus, this law can have a significant impact on the rights of people.

### What should be done?

The ECI has not shown why traditional verification mechanisms don't work, or how they can be fixed through technology. So the ECI should first explore alternatives than proposing a restrictive law. Thus, this recent attempt of ECI to link Aadhaar and Voter ID needs greater scrutiny.

#### 4. NS2 A win-win proposition: About Nord Stream 2

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**NS2 A win-win proposition**" published in **The Hindu** on **4th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India.

**Relevance:** To understand the challenges associated with Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

**Synopsis:** A consensus on the Nord Stream 2 could benefit Germany, Russia and Ukraine, but many hurdles remain.

#### Introduction

A 1224 km, underwater **Nord Stream Pipeline 2 running from Germany to Russia across Baltic Sea** has been completed recently despite controversies. It provides the shortest, economical and environment friendly route to double Russia's gas export to Germany.

**Must read:** [Nord Stream 2 pipeline between Germany and Russia](#)

#### What is the utility of this pipeline?

According to Russian authorities, NS2 has the capacity to transport 55 billion cubic meters of gas each year. It can also cover the needs of about 26 million households, and restock storage inventories.

With the **increase in European gas prices** because of various reasons like **severe winter, post covid economy surge**, many industries and food supply chains are under stress. The pipeline is intended to provide Europe with a sustainable gas supply while providing Russia with more direct access to the European gas market.



### What are the fears raised by other countries?

**Ukraine:** The pipeline has irked Ukraine, as they believe that **Russia will use it as a geopolitical weapon** aimed at depriving Ukraine of political traction and crucial revenue. Once the pipeline is completed, Russia could bypass the existing land pipeline between Russia and Europe that runs through Ukraine and deprive the country of lucrative transit fees.

Here USA seems to have ensured Ukraine that the **USA will impose tougher sanctions on Russia** if it continues to disregard Ukraine's concerns

**Read more:** [Why has the US changed its mind on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline?](#)

**Poland and Ukraine:** They accused Germany of weakening the EU's political unity and strategic coherence by giving Russia greater leverage through NS2.

**Other European countries:** Some European politicians accuse Russia of pressure to speed up the start of NS2. But Russian NS2 needs European certification to become operational. This is turning out to be a lengthy process.

### What is the assistance provided to Ukraine?

To ease the tensions of Ukraine, Germany has promised assistance for the development of hydrogen energy. But Ukraine has doubts about this promise to be fulfilled.

Despite the uncertainty, Elections in Germany could make things easier if a coalition supporting green energy comes into power, then it could support cleaner gas alternatives compared to other fossil fuels.

## 5. A Quad alliance for emerging technology

**Source:** This post is based on the article "A Quad alliance for emerging technology" published in **Business Standard** on **4th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 Bilateral, Regional & Global Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests

**Relevance:** To understand the need for technological collaboration between Quad nations in today's time.

**Synopsis:** To counter China's influence, Quad announced their collaboration in the technology sector.

### Introduction

Recently Quad Summit was held. Under this summit, a separate statement on "**Quad Principles on Technology, Design, Development, Governance and Use**" has been issued which is independent of the main statement. This signifies the focus of Quad countries on technology.

### What were the commitments made under the Quad principles?

Quad countries committed themselves to develop critical and development technology to benefit the society while upholding the **freedom of expression, respect for universal human rights, shared democratic values and privacy**.

**Share Information:** Quad countries recognized the need to collaborate on areas that were earlier strictly regulated. They agreed to **share research and movement of highly skilled experts**. They also agreed on **reducing barriers to data and knowledge sharing for research projects and greater innovation**, while protecting research security,

**Private Sector Collaboration:** Quad pledged to support new opportunities for innovation and technology like 5G and commitment to private sector-driven international standards, and commend the initiative to foster STEM education across the countries.

**Read more:** [Quad Leaders' Summit – Explained, pointwise](#)

### **Why China is a threat, and what are the countries approaches to counter this threat?**

China has made rapid advancements in the technological sector. It has invested several billion dollars in emerging tech. It is an emerging nation in cyber hacking, robotics, artificial intelligence etc.

**USA:** The defence security and technology strategy of the US is now centred around countering China. According to the research of **Rand Cooperation**, the Aim of the **Third Offset Policy of the USA** was to draw on US advanced technologies to offset China's and Russia's technological advances.

These efforts were successful as in 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) embraced many of the fundamental tenets of technological advances and Organisational changes developed by the Third Offset.

**India:** India has also announced various collaborations in defence security systems driven by emerging tech. These include sectors like drone manufacturing and cyber security.

**Read more:** [Four geopolitical developments and a window of opportunity for India](#)

### **What should the Quad do?**

The fear of Chinese domination in advanced technologies has brought the governments together. But most countries have their own independent technological solutions to take on the challenge. There is a need to bring in greater synergy between the QUAD countries to form a combined front against China.

## **6. Reimagining food systems with lessons from India**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Reimagining food systems with lessons from India**” published in **The Hindu** on **4<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

**Relevance:** To understand global food insecurity

**Synopsis:** Given the worsening situation of global hunger, ensuring food security is the need of the hour.

### **Introduction**

The **first United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) 2021 was held in September 2021**. It was conceived in 2019 by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to find solutions to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and thinks about food and help address rising hunger.

The food system transformation is essential in achieving the Sustainable development agenda of 2030. This action agenda also covers 11 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) out of 17.

### **What is the need for this summit?**

**Global food systems** – The networks that are needed to produce and transform food, and ensure it reaches consumers, or the paths that food travels from production to plate – are in a state of crisis. The flaws in food systems are affecting nearly 811 million people in the world, who go to bed hungry each night.

The COVID crisis further exposed the vulnerabilities of the global food systems. An alarming escalation in global hunger was reported in the world hunger in 2020, much of it likely related to the fallout of COVID-19.

### How does the summit help?

The summit created a mechanism for **serious debates** involving UN member states, civil society, non-governmental organisations to evolve transformative ideas for reimagining food systems. The summit also provided a historic opportunity to **empower all people to leverage the power of food systems** to drive our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### How has India contributed to the summit?

India **constituted an inter-departmental group** with representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Rural Development, and other agencies namely the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), the [World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#), and the [International fund for Agricultural Development\(IFAD\)](#).

This group conducted national dialogues with various stakeholders of agri-food systems to explore national pathways towards creating sustainable and equitable food systems in India.

### How is India helping the developing world?

India's long journey from chronic food shortage to surplus food producer offers several interesting lessons for other developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They can learn lessons from the steps taken by India in the area of land reforms, public investments, institutional infrastructure, new regulatory systems, and intervention in Agri markets and prices and Agri research and extension.

Further, the period between 1991 and 2015, saw the diversification of agriculture towards horticulture, dairy, animal husbandry and fishery sectors.

India's greatest contribution to equity in food is its [National Food Security Act,2013](#) that spearheads the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the Mid-Day meals (MDM), and [Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\)](#).

**Food safety nets and inclusion are linked with public procurement and buffer stock policy.** This was visible during the global food crises 2008-2012 and during the COVID-19 pandemic fallout. The vulnerable and marginalized families in India continued to be saved from the food crises by its robust TPDS and buffer stock of food grains.

### What should be the way forward for ensuring equity and sustainability?

The world is on the cusp of a transformation to make the world free of hunger by 2030. This will require strong cooperation and partnership between governments, citizens, civil society organisations, and the private sector.

### 7. Let us revitalize multilateralism: The future of the world is at stake

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Let us revitalize multilateralism: The future of the world is at stake**" published in **LiveMint** on **4th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 Bilateral, Regional & Global Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests

**Relevance:** To understand the need required to bring reforms in multilateral institutions.

**Synopsis:** The great political task of our times is to bolster a rule based global order with a stronger and more inclusive UN at its core.

### Introduction

Last year, the United Nations conducted worldwide consultation. It was found that the views of most of the people are almost similar. All they want is better access to services like education, health, sanitation, relief for people who are hit by the pandemic etc. They are worried about

climate change, biodiversity crisis and want more global cooperation to deal with all the challenges.

Following this, UN released “**Our Common Agenda**”, which follows on **UN75 Political declaration** adopted by all UN members.

#### **Why there is a need for joint efforts to solve the crisis?**

With the recent pandemic, it is clear that people live in an interconnected and interdependent world. Thus, to solve any challenges, there is a need for joint efforts across various levels.

#### **Why there is a need to modernize multilateral Institutions?**

**To solve present-day challenges:** They are only built to solve inter-country challenges. They do not deal with the problems such as financial crisis, pandemic, terrorism, crime networks etc. So, there is a need to modernize multilateral institutions. For this, we can start with:

**Renew commitment:** There is a need to include all stakeholders like academia, civil society, young people etc so that all the different voices can be heard. There is also a need to enhance cooperation among the UN, regional organization, international finance institution at both policy and operational levels.

**Implement the agenda:** There is a need to act on the UN general agenda to revive and strengthen our capacity to fight against issues like poverty, equal participation, biodiversity loss, justice etc

**Strengthen International Cooperation:** Countries should use various opportunities to set up joint efforts to strengthen international cooperation.

**Read more:** [A crisis of multilateralism and Asia's rising stake in it](#)

### **8. Peace at the heart of education**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Peace at the heart of education**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Education can promote peace and create social equity.

**Synopsis:** Pandemic has increased the social divisions. To overcome social divisions and promote peace, India should promote education.

#### **Introduction**

On **October 2**, everyone gathers to celebrate the ideals of peace by marking the birthday of **Mahatma Gandhi**. The day presents an opportunity to **explore the causes of violence** and reassert a commitment to building a culture of dialogue through education.

#### **How the pandemic increased social divisions?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new forces of division globally. **Levels of hate speech and fear of the ‘other’ have grown**, as people have assigned blame for the virus.

Forms of structural violence – economic, racial and gendered forms- have been aggravated as marginalised groups have been disproportionately affected during the pandemic.

#### **What are the root causes of human animosity?**

In ‘**Pathways for peace**’, a flagship 2018 report by the **World Bank** and the **United Nations**, it was shown that many of the world’s **conflicts arise from exclusion and feelings of injustice**.

### How one can promote peace?

**Promoting education:** UNESCO advocates education as a way to strengthen social equity. As it can impart the skills and values necessary to recognise and prevent potential conflicts and promote tolerance.

According to an educator, “Preventing war is the work of politicians, establishing peace is the work of educationists”

### How India is promoting peace through education?

The [National Education Policy \(NEP\)](#) of 2020 presents a unique opportunity to contribute to strengthening equity, justice and social cohesion. The policy has a broad focus on value-based and experiential education, including promoting critical thinking, cultural exchanges, teaching in regional languages, and a commitment to education for all.

As schools reopen, peace education can be even more integrated within national curricula and the broader learning environment to promote non-violence.

**Read more:** [One year of National Education Policy – Explained, pointwise](#)

### How can India promote peace through education?

**Providing necessary skills:** Teachers and educators need to be equipped with skills to promote peace through experiential and interactive methods.

**Adopting global best practices:** UNESCO’s work to **promote media and information literacy and sports** for peace **equips youth with skills** to eradicate harmful stereotypes and stand up against injustice. So, India can also provide skills to youth.

Further, India can **focus on inclusion**. UNESCO highlights the need to recognise and improve opportunities for disadvantaged groups, like women and girls and persons with disabilities.

Beyond discussions around innovation, technology and smart future schools, India needs to **understand the potential of education systems** and schools in **building peaceful societies**.

#### Terms to know:

- [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#)

### 9. Digital health mission in a click? Not yet

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Digital health mission in a click? Not yet**” and “**Digital health ID concerns**” published in **Business Standard** on **4th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Health infrastructure in India.

**Relevance:** Understanding various dimensions of Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDM)

**Synopsis:** Experts have stated that though ABDM is a step in the right direction, India needs a commensurate push towards establishing a robust infrastructure that’ll be required for its success.

### What are some issues with the pilot?

Public health experts are not very confident about the pilot that was run in six Union territories as the benchmark for a national roll-out. The pilot was launched in August 2020 in Chandigarh, Ladakh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.

– The piloting **may not necessarily reveal all the glitches** because they have been done in relatively sterile conditions where the central government has direct control over the

administration. When this gets rolled out in larger states, its not known how well the system will function or the quality of data that will emerge.

### How ABDM aims to achieve security and privacy?

According to sources, the scheme plans to achieve security and privacy 'by design' through three building blocks:

- **Consent manager:** The goal of the consent manager would be to ensure the patient is in complete control of the data.
- **Anonymizer:** The anonymizer takes the data from health datasets, removes all personally identifiable information to protect the privacy, and provides the anonymized data to the seeker.
- **Privacy operations centre**

### What is the way forward?

- Govt should test the technology** in four to five different sites and socioeconomic groups to get the spatial and demographic dimensions spread over a year. Health is not like a ration card or a bank credit card. There are seasonal, behavioural, cultural, and fiscal dimensions that go into health-seeking behaviour
- The data-entry interface has to be user-friendly** for doctors to be able to key in patient data. This will specially be required if the plan is to rope in accredited social health activist (or ASHA) workers and cover the rural health care system.
- It should be possible for users to opt out of the health ID** and ADBM and still receive health care. Also, user-consent for every granular access of the PHR and of the demographic data should ideally be built in.

### 10. Explained: Why do the Pandora Papers matter?

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Explained: Why do the Pandora Papers matter?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India’s interests

**Relevance:** the issue of pandora papers

**Synopsis:** There are at least 380 persons of Indian nationality in the Pandora Papers. The papers consist of as many as 12 million documents from 14 companies in offshore tax havens with details of ownership of 29,000 offshore companies and Trusts. A look at various dimensions of the issue.

### What are the Pandora Papers?

These are the leaked files from 14 global corporate services firms which set up about 29,000 **off-the-shelf companies** and **private trusts** in obscure tax jurisdictions and in countries such as Singapore, New Zealand, and the United States, for clients across the world. These documents relate to the ultimate ownership of assets ‘settled’ (or placed) in private offshore trusts and the investments including cash, shareholding, and real estate properties, held by the offshore entities.

The trusts are set up in known **tax havens** such Samoa, Belize, Panama, and the British Virgin Islands, or in Singapore or New Zealand which offer relative tax advantages, or even South Dakota in the US, the biggest economy.

### What do the Pandora Papers reveal?

The Pandora Papers reveal how the rich, the famous and the notorious, **set up complex multi-layered trust structures** for estate planning, in jurisdictions which are loosely regulated for tax purposes, but characterized by air-tight secrecy laws.

The purpose for which trusts are set up are many is two-fold:

- i) to hide their real identities and distance themselves from the offshore entities so that it becomes near impossible for the tax authorities to reach them and
- ii) to safeguard investments — cash, shareholdings, real estate, art, aircraft, and yachts — from creditors and law enforcers.

### What is a trust?

A trust can be described as a fiduciary arrangement where a third party, referred to as the trustee, holds assets on behalf of individuals or organizations that are to benefit from it.

It is generally used for estate planning purposes and succession planning. It helps large business families to consolidate their assets — financial investments, shareholding, and real estate property.

**A trust comprises three key parties:** ‘Settlor’ — one who sets up, creates, or authors a trust; ‘trustee’ — one who holds the assets for the benefit of a set of people named by the ‘settlor’; and ‘beneficiaries’ — to whom the benefits of the assets are bequeathed.

A trust is **not a separate legal entity**, but its legal nature comes from the ‘trustee’. At times, the ‘settlor’ appoints a ‘protector’, who has the powers to supervise the trustee, and even remove the trustee and appoint a new one.

### Is setting up a trust in India, or one offshore/ outside the country, illegal?

No.

**The Indian Trusts Act, 1882**, gives legal basis to the concept of trusts.

While Indian laws do not see trusts as a legal person/ entity, they do recognise the trust as an **obligation of the trustee** to manage and use the assets settled in the trust for the benefit of ‘beneficiaries’.

India also recognises offshore trusts i.e., trusts set up in other tax jurisdictions.

### Why are trusts set up?

**i). Maintain a degree of separation:** Businesspersons set up private offshore trusts to project a degree of separation from their personal assets. This way, he insulates these assets from creditors.

**ii). Hunt for enhanced secrecy:** Offshore trusts offer enhanced secrecy to businesspersons, given their complex structures. The Income-Tax Department in India can get to the ultimate beneficial owners only by requesting information with the financial investigation agency or international tax authority in offshore jurisdictions. The exchange of information can take months.

**iii). Avoid tax in the guise of planning:** Businesspersons avoid their NRI children being taxed on income from their assets by transferring all the assets to a trust. The ownership of the assets rests with the trust, and the son/ daughter being only a ‘beneficiary’ is not liable to any tax on income from the trust.

## 11. [An inclusive plan for healthcare systems to be built back better](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**An inclusive plan for healthcare systems to be built back better**” published in **Livemint** on **4<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

**Relevance:** Emergency preparedness and response

**Synopsis:** Need to strengthen and transform our health systems by making them more equitable, resilient and sustainable for all.

### **Introduction**

Countries in the **World Health Organization’s South-East Asia Region**, continue to respond to the pandemic aggressively, battling new and more transmissible variants.

In addition to covid-19, the region faces a range of pressing threats, from emerging and re-emerging diseases to natural disasters and climate-related weather events. For instance, in 2021 alone, India, Indonesia and Timor-Leste have had to respond to **floods**. Indonesia and Nepal responded to **earthquakes**.

In all countries of the region, the need of the hour is to strengthen capacities to prevent, prepare for, respond and recover from covid and other health emergencies, and to accelerate progress in all areas of health.

### **Why resilient health systems are important?**

Resilient health systems are the bedrock of emergency preparedness and response, and ensure that when acute events occur, essential health services can be maintained.

Strong health systems that are primary health care (PHC)-oriented, and which leave no one behind, resulting in populations that are healthier, more productive and financially secure.

### **What are the action plans agreed by the south Asian member countries?**

Action plans agreed by South Asian member countries at the 74th Session of the WHO Regional Committee to build back better essential health services:

**First**, full recognition of the need for a health-in-all-policies approach that addresses social, economic and environmental determinants of health, and which empowers communities. Governance of the health sector in particular will be strengthened, including through greater oversight and engagement with the private sector and civil-society organizations.

**Second, increased public investments** in health that are allocated towards strengthened PHC services, enhanced human resources for health, and increased access to essential medical products. Investment in PHC could also accelerate progress on other SDG targets, like zero poverty, decent employment and gender equality. Since 2019, the WHO has advocated that all countries globally increase spending on PHC by at least 1% of gross domestic product.

**Third, better integration of health emergency and disaster risk management strategies**, as well as public health emergency preparedness and response capacities, with PHC services. This will help in reducing response times, empowering local networks, and responding to on-the-ground needs as and when they arise.

**Fourth**, taking advantage of the potential of **traditional systems of medicine**, as well as key innovations in digital and disruptive health technology.

**Fifth, strengthening partnerships.** Covid has shown that robust and reliable bilateral, multilateral and public-private partnerships are critical to emergency responses and to maintain essential health services. Such partnerships will also aid in supporting India’s overall vision that is cohesive, and which is aligned with our long-term targets and goals.



## 12. Hello Taiwan: New Delhi should boost ties with Taipei not just because of Chinese threat. There are other benefits

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Hello Taiwan: New Delhi should boost ties with Taipei not just because of Chinese threat. There are other benefits” published in Times of India on 4th October 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS-2 Bilateral, Regional & Global Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests

**Relevance:** To understand the need for engaging with Taiwan.

**Synopsis:** India should review its acceptance of the One China Policy and engage more with Taiwan for mutual benefits.

### Introduction

China sent more than 100 warplanes into Taiwan's air defence identification zone over the weekend. The latest round of provocative manoeuvres began when China celebrating its 73rd national day. This is a clear threat to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific

### Why there is more provocation in recent times?

China sees Taiwan as a renegade Chinese province ever since 1949 when Taiwan – officially Republic of China – was formed. But Taiwan, so far, has maintained a separate identity and evolved into a successful multiparty democracy.

Democratic Progressive Party came to power in Taiwan in 2016. They **refused to accept China's 'One China' policy**. This is the recent trigger for the sustained Chinese military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan.

**Read more:** [Taiwan reunification with China 'inevitable', says Chinese President Xi Jinping](#)

### Why India and Taiwan should work together?

Both Taiwan and India are **frontline Asian democratic states**, facing Chinese aggression, targeted by Beijing's **grey-zone tactics**. These tactics aim to provoke and intimidate, instead of all-out conflict. This should actually bring India and Taiwan closer.

Taiwan's **New Southbound Policy** seeks to boost ties with **South and Southeast Asian nations**, including **India**. But the progress has been relatively slow, with the Indian side still cautious about boosting ties with Taiwan given Chinese sensitivities.

**Must Read:** [Taiwan-China conflict and India's stand on it](#)

### Why India should review its acceptance of the One China Policy?

India should review its acceptance of the One China policy for the following reasons,

**Increased Chinese intrusions:** After the Galwan valley clashes last year, repeated Chinese intrusions across the LAC are taking place.

**Benefits from Taiwan:** Boosting ties with Taiwan also has standalone benefits. It is a semiconductor powerhouse and reportedly bilateral talks are underway to bring chip manufacturing – a key strategic sector – to India.

**Read more:** [Need of Indigenous Semiconductor Manufacturing Facilities in India – Explained Pointwise](#)

Further, cooperation can also be achieved in green technology, IT, digital healthcare, and telecom with Taiwanese companies as they are looking to relocate their operations from China.

So, embracing Taiwan for the strategic and economic interests of India will elevate ties between both.

**Read more:** [It is time for New Delhi to review its old 'one China' policy stance](#)

**Terms to know:**

- [One China Policy](#)

### 13. [An alphabet soup New Delhi need to sift through](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “[An alphabet soup New Delhi need to sift through](#)” published in **The Hindu** on **5<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India.

**Relevance:** To understand the relevance of various bilateral, multilateral, regional groupings.

**Synopsis:** India needs to reconsider the plethora of alliances it is in and rationalize them after a reality check.

#### **Introduction**

There are a lot of international, bilateral, multilateral groupings which either became dormant or lose their relevance in today's scenario.

#### **Why these multiple organizations are a cause of concern?**

At present, there are more than 100 groupings from the EU to ASEAN.

There is a **lack of ideological homogeneity** and **questionable outcomes** with many of these organizations.

Further, the amount of **expenditure and energy spent on bureaucracy** and organizing these functions is also high.

Another important **difficulty is to find the agenda** for these organizations. Even they were found, their rationale is unclear.

#### **Few organizations and their associated challenges**

**BRICS:** During its formation, it was feared that it was an anti-America group. China quickly assumed the leadership of BRICS. It tried to seek changes in the international economic system by establishing a bank, with the possibility of credit for its members.

The result of this development was **undermining** the relevance of another, less ambitious, group of [India-Brazil-South Africa \(IBSA\)](#), which had several common interests.

In the recent summit also, countries, although able to reach conclusion on the issue of Afghanistan, but with different conditions. Russia and China were more sympathetic towards Afghanistan than the other BRICS nations.

**Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):** It started as a friendly group of China, but with the inclusion of India, Pakistan, and Iran it becomes the diverse one and struggled to reach a consensus. Even, with the meetings between India and China, it failed to reach any solution to the Ladakh standoff.

**South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC):** India joined SAARC with various conditions like the exclusion of bilateral issues, decision-making by voting, and holding of meetings without all members being present etc.

Despite the imperative for cooperation in vital fields, SAARC became an arena for India – Pakistan dispute. Today, SAARC became a liability as it was clear that the region was not mature enough to have a regional instrumentality.

**Also read:** [Importance of Reviving SAARC](#)

**Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation**

**(BIMSTEC):** This group also remained dormant for many years till it was revived a few years ago as an alternative to SAARC. Though it has an ambitious agenda for sectoral cooperation, it has not gained much momentum.

**Indian Ocean Rim Association(IORA):** The organization was first established as the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative in Mauritius in March 1995 and formally launched in 1997 (then known as the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation). It also drags on without any significant progress.

**Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and AUKUS:** India's reluctance to strengthen QUAD has led to the USA joining hands with Australia and creating an AUKUS alliance.

Even though India was not interested in **Wassenaar Arrangement** and the **Australia Group**, it received membership in them. On the other hand, the other active groups like **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)** and **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)** did not admit India as a member, despite its various efforts.

**14. Why India's ancient republics need to be recognised for their place in world history**

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"Why India's ancient republics need to be recognised for their place in world history"** published in **Indian Express** on **5<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Democracy.

**Relevance:** To understand the origin of Democracy

**Synopsis:** In the current political thought, Democracy is considered a western idea. But given the evidence from India, this thought needs to be reconsidered.

**Introduction**

Indian Prime Minister while addressing the UN General Assembly in New York made an important historical point: **India is not just the world's largest democracy, but also the "mother of democracy"**. This thought would certainly challenge the present notion of western thoughts being the progenitor of democracy.

**Why is such reorientation important?**

In recent years, there has been a move to recognise contributions in science made in the past by non-Western societies. For example, the Pythagorean Theorem was well known in ancient India. Further, it would be **historically accurate** to refer to the **Fibonacci numbers**, perhaps, **as Pingala's numbers or Hemachandra's numbers**.

Riding on the same idea, we should also explore the non-western roots of ideas like democracy.

**What is the historical evidence of Democracy from the Indian past?**

**Firstly**, The evidence for republics in ancient India is abundant. In **Mahabharata's Shanti Parva**, republics (**ganas**) **are mentioned as essential features of administration**. The Vedas describe at least two forms of republican governance.

- i) The first is that of **elected kings**. This early form of democracy was later practised in Europe.
- ii) The second form described in the Vedas is **ruled without a monarch**, with power vested in a council or Sabha. The membership of such Sabhas often comprised people who had distinguished themselves by their actions. There is a hint of the modern bicameral system of legislatures, with the Sabha sharing power with the Samiti, which was made up of common people.

Both **women and men took part** in these Sabhas, This is a far cry from the **Greeks** who **did not admit women** (or slaves) as full citizens of their “democracies”.

**Secondly, Other sources: Ashtadhyayi of Panini, the Arthashastra of Kautilya**, as well as a variety of ancient Buddhist and Jain writings mentioned democracies.

For example, **Buddhist and Jain texts** list 16 powerful states or **Mahajanapadas** of the time. After Alexander’s invasion in 327 BCE, **Greek historians also record** Indian states that did not have kings. E.g. The **Lichchavi state of Vaishali**.

Further, **Kautilya provided the theory of state** where the power is not concentrated. The first three elements of this Saptanga theory are swami or the king, Amatya or the ministers (administration) and Janpadas or the people. The king must function on the advice of the Amatya for the good of the people. The ministers are appointed from amongst the people (the Arthashastra also **mentions entrance tests**).

Thus, this system divided power and made the King receptive and accountable to the people. As per the Arthashastra, in the happiness and benefit of his people lies the happiness and benefit of the King.

### **What are the criticisms to recognize democracy in India?**

First, that the **primitive system was too simple**. But it would be unreasonable to expect republics in ancient India to have full-fledged democratic institutions as we have them today. But as with scientific advancement, democracy remains and will always be a work in progress. Another criticism would be that there is **no surviving connection or continuity** between the ancient ganas and the modern republic of India. However, the same applies to ancient Greek city-states. Thus, what survives is the way of thinking.

With its rich history of democracy, India cannot just lead, but also define the future of democratic principles and global governance.

### **15. If Data Is Poor, Governance Will Be Poorer**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**If Data Is Poor, Governance Will Be Poorer**” published in **Indian Express** on **5<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 issue with governance.

**Relevance:** To understand the importance of quality data.

**Synopsis:** Efficient data led to good policymaking and yield better results

#### **Introduction**

Today data emerges as a golden asset that is required to frame various strategies, government policies, and other things.

#### **How did the adequate data capture help people?**

Adequate data capture can help people in many ways. This is evident from various examples:

**India: Odisha** is able to manage cyclones much more effectively with almost zero loss of lives. This is possible because of precise monitoring of the cyclone path by IMD. It provides information of accurate forecasts of the place and time of landfall, wind speed and other parameters, which helps to understand the situation better.

But accuracy of production depends on the accuracy of data that is fed to the systems. Artificial intelligence and machine learning systems can give faulty predictions if data sets are not accurate.

**World:** Policy responses to the pandemic have relied on data sets such as the number of tests, daily death toll, etc to understand the spread of the virus and its nature. Through statistical

computation methods, forecasting models have been generated. It helps policymakers to predict the waves of Covid-19, its peak, and the fatality rate.

#### **What are the issues associated with data in India?**

India still **uses the age-old bureaucratic ways** that led to compromise the quality of data. For example, during the 1st wave of the Covid pandemic, India struggles to have data on migrants. Post pandemic also, there are instances of **delay in reporting of Covid-19 deaths** along with **delays in the audit of data about deaths**.

Apart from these problems, there are various **systematic issues** that failed to capture accurate data of covid deaths in villages and panchayats.

#### **What should government do to improve the quality of data?**

**National Guidelines for Data Quality** recommended that an **essential checklist and advanced monitoring** to improve the quality of data. There are other steps that government should need to focus on:

**Systematic strategy:** Provision should be made to capture accurate data at the village, panchayat, district, state and national levels. There is need to use the latest technological tools for capturing this data, where chances of contamination are high. Data should be collected directly from its primary location, where it is in its most sacrosanct form.

**Standardized model:** The second step is to create a task force that will create standardized models. These models will then be implemented across entire India and all the states. This supplements the need for data-driven evidence-based policymaking.

Thus, one can say that better situation awareness through better availability of data can help in better crisis management and disaster preparedness.

### **16. India and the geopolitics of the moon**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**India and the geopolitics of the moon**” published in **The Indian Express** on **5th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India’s interests.

**Relevance:** Geopolitics around the moon, increasing lunar activity and India’s way forward

**Synopsis:** Delhi should take a hard look at the emerging challenges to the current space order and its interests on the moon, and develop strategies to pursue them through a national lunar mission.

#### **Introduction**

Space-faring powers are seeking routine access to the moon. Moreover, their attention has now turned to what is called the cis-lunar space, or the volume between the orbits around the earth and moon. As technological capabilities grow, nations are looking beyond the near-earth space to inter-planetary probes and deep space research.

The growing commercialisation and militarisation of outer space has also triggered the interest of the Quad leaders.

#### **What are the trends indicating a renewed global lunar activity?**

**Signing of Artemis Accords:** A year ago, eight countries led by the United States signed the **Artemis Accords**. The accords are an agreement to abide by a broad set of principles to guide the expanding human activity on the moon – ranging from mining resources to setting up

lunar colonies. The eight signatories were from Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States. Since then, many others have joined like, Brazil, South Korea, New Zealand, and Ukraine.

**US invites India to join the accords:** The US has invited India to join the accords and some preliminary official discussion on the issue took place between the two sides when Indian PM met US President at the White House for the bilateral summit last month (Sept 2021).

**Quad working group on outer space:** Separately, at the summit of the Quadrilateral Forum that followed the bilateral discussion, Modi and Biden, along with the Australian and Japanese premiers, agreed to set up a new Quad working group on outer space.

**Must Read:** [China's lunar activity in the recent years](#)

### **How are China and Russia partnering on space-cooperation?**

#### **Collaboration with Russia:**

Russia has also joined hands with China on the ILRS. It is reviving its Luna series of probes to the moon to complement the Chinese efforts.

– **Luna 25, 26 and 27** will work in tandem with Chang'e 6,7 and 8 to undertake expansive reconnaissance and develop techniques for ultra-precise landings on the moon.

As geopolitical considerations drive Russia towards China, space cooperation has become a part of their strategic partnership against America.

### **How is USA planning to jumpstart its lunar activity again?**

Shaken by Beijing and Moscow's space cooperation, USA has announced plans to put astronauts back on the moon by 2024. The new project is named **Artemis**, after the Greek goddess and twin sister of Apollo.

Artemis involves the construction of a permanent space station orbiting the moon, called **Lunar Gateway**, and a surface presence at the South Pole of the moon that is supposed to have ice and could sustain future human activity.

Like China, the US too has decided that it cannot go alone and is looking for partners for its Artemis programme.

### **What are the consequences of the growing lunar activity?**

One of the consequences of the growing lunar activity is the **pressure on the current international legal regime** — centred around the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. The OST says outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, "is not subject to "national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means".

Many **provisions of the OST are increasingly subject to competing interpretations and vulnerable to new facts** on the moon created by the first movers. The breakdown of the post-Cold War harmony among the major powers has added fuel to the fire on the moon and set the stage for a prolonged geopolitical contest for the moon.

### **What is the way forward for India?**

The Artemis Accords would hopefully push Delhi to develop strategies to pursue them through a stronger national lunar mission and deeper partnerships with like-minded countries.

Delhi must also legislate a **strong regulatory framework** to promote India's space activity and protect its international interests.

### 17. [Lessons from the death of the ease of doing business index](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Lessons from the death of the ease of doing business index**” published in **The Indian Express** on 5th Oct 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

**Relevance:** The end of Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) report

**Synopsis:** This article explains issues and problems associated with the Ease of Doing Business report, why it gained so much importance, and should we reform the index or bring a new one in its place?

#### **Introduction**

The Ease of Doing Business Index (EoDB) is dead. The flagship product created by the World Bank came under attack on grounds that its data was modified in response to pressure from countries like China and Saudi Arabia. As a result of an independent audit, the index has now been abandoned by the Bank.

**Must Read:** [The end of doing business report – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **Why the EoDB index report was developed?**

World Bank researchers developed the EoDB ranking system under the assumption that better laws and regulatory frameworks would increase the ease of doing business and improve economic performance.

#### **What were some issues with the EoDB report?**

– EoDB was a crude measure that poorly captured the business climates of complex and informal economies like India. **Most of the questions focused on hypothetical cases** about limited liability companies. However, the World Bank’s own enterprise survey shows that 63% of Indian enterprises are sole proprietorships and **only 14% are limited partnerships**. Once we include unregistered enterprises, this number is likely to be even smaller. Thus, focusing on protecting minority owners’ rights in this tiny segment of Indian industries and using it to rank the business climate in India does not seem particularly useful.

– A bigger problem is that it had **acquired such power that countries competed to improve their rankings**. Why does the index matter so much that countries stoop to pressure the World Bank to improve their rankings? For example, India ranks 139th out of 149 on the World Happiness Index, yet we pay little attention to it while climbing the ranks on the EoDB ladder has been made an explicit policy goal.

– The presumed economic consequences, as well as political benefits associated with improving the rankings, encouraged many countries to try and **“game” the system**. They made superficial improvements on indicators that were being measured and, when that failed, by putting explicit pressure on the World Bank research team as the current debacle shows.

#### **Why countries competed to rank better on EoDB index?**

The answer lies in the potential consequences of ranking. Countries assumed that their EoDB ranking **will attract foreign investors**.

Since foreign investors often have no real way of assessing the underlying business climate in any country they may use the rankings as a signal in making their investment choices. **Empirical evidence about this presumed impact is questionable.**

There is indeed some evidence that the **score on EoDB is associated with FDI, but this association exists mainly for more affluent countries.** Studies show that this association is **weak for poorer countries.**

For instance, in 2020, China was the largest recipient of FDI despite ranking 85th on the EoDB.

**Should we try to reform the index or give up on it?**

The decision rests on the answer to two questions.

**First**, are there universally acceptable standards of sound economic practices that are applicable and measurable across diverse economies?

**Second**, if the indices are so powerful, should their construction be left to institutions like the World Bank that bring not just knowledge but also wield the heft of global economic power?

**18. [The challenge of going back to school](#)**

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“The challenge of going back to school”** published in **The Hindu** on **6<sup>th</sup> October 2021.**

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

**Relevance:** To understand the issues in the current learning system.

**Synopsis:** Guidelines on re-opening schools focus more on health measures than on addressing learning difficulties.

**Introduction**

Covid pandemic has impacted severely the education of children. With the reopening of schools, governing students is more concerned with providing sanitation and safety measures. There is less focus on bridging the study gap.

**What are the issues surrounding the school education system?**

**State policies:** Despite the shock to the education system, a review of the **State governments’ Standard Operating Procedures/guidelines on school re-opening** shows that government emphasis is more on health and sanitation measures. There is very little discussion on the practical approaches required to ensure that every child returns to school and to address the learning difficulties that children will face.

**Additional funding:** A recent study by the **World Bank and UNESCO** shows that, in countries across the world, the average annual education budgets not only increased post-COVID-19 but increased at a higher rate than before COVID-19. But, in the case of **India, it reduced its spending by over 9%**. This came when there was already a 2% decline in education spending in India in the previous year. The share of spending on education in the overall budget also declined to 2.6%, while most countries either maintained or increased this share.

**No proper planning:** States only introduced bridge courses of approx 45 days, to quickly resume the textbook syllabus of current grade. Even the examination timetable has not been altered. This will further degrade the quality of student learning, as mentioned in the **[SCHOOL Survey](#)**.

**Language Learning:** Students are already struggling to learn in their native language. It was found that students learning in English medium schools are facing difficulties to learn in the English language. It is also because of the **teacher’s less proficiency in English and no home exposure to that language.**



Research from the U.S. during the early stages of the pandemic showed that the proportion of 'English language learners' obtaining 'failing grades' increased dramatically within just a few months of school closures and despite the provision of structured online learning

**Mathematical Skills:** Studies from other countries show that learning losses over the summer break of about two months are more severe in mathematics compared to reading (in the native language). This loss involved forgetting mathematics procedures rather than general concepts.

#### **What approach should teachers adopt?**

Teachers should adopt a **coaching model instead of a mass teacher training programme**. They should include additional learning materials, formative assessment tools and techniques to improve the quality of education. The focus should be more on language learning, core Mathematical skills and socio-emotional learning. If required, the government should mobilize retired teachers and volunteers also.

#### **19. NIRF ranking does not give full picture of higher education in India**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**NIRF ranking does not give full picture of higher education in India**" published in **Indian Express** on **6<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** To understand the structure of NIRF ranking.

**Synopsis:** Recently released NIRF ranking showcased its limitation in comparison to other global rankings.

#### **Introduction**

**Ministry of Education** has released **National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2021**. Various lacunas are visible in the structuring of this ranking, which makes the ranking impactless.

**Read more:** [Fund and Faculty count in higher education rankings](#)

#### **What are the different ranking institutes worldwide?**

There are at least 20 global ranking agencies that measure quality on various parameters.

**The Centre for Science and Technology Studies at Leiden University:** It maintains European and worldwide rankings of the top 500 universities based on the number and impact of Web of Science-indexed publications per year.

**QS World University Ranking:** It is published annually since 2004. In 2009, QS even launched the QS Asian University Rankings in partnership with the Chosun Ilbo newspaper in South Korea.

**Ranking of Rankings:** It is launched in 2017. It aggregates the results of five global rankings, combining them to form a single rank. It uses THE World University Ranking (22.5%), QS World University Ranking (22.5%), US News Best Global University (22.5%), Academic Ranking of World Universities (22.5%), and Reuters World Top 100 Innovative Universities (10%).

#### **What are the issues associated with NIRF rankings?**

**Parameters:** Present NIRF ranking missed the important parameters which need to be included in the list. For example, the ranking **doesn't include the financial health and size** of the institution as a criterion. It also **doesn't include financial benefits** accrued to the stakeholders, especially the students.

**One size fits all approach:** There is huge diversity in our education system. Universities are ranging in various levels like research-based, language-based, innovation-based technology social science institutes, etc. The boundary conditions in which they operate are also very different. But, the NIRF is making the same mistake that the global ranking system was once accused of i.e to rank all the universities on the same level.

**Disengagement:** Disconnect is clearly visible between the ranking and accreditation. Several universities have earned a **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) A Grade** but figure poorly in the ranking system. NIRF should take into consideration both things.

Our Accreditation and ranking approach is not up to the mark. India can adopt the model of the USA i.e **accreditation and Quality Assurance (QA)**. In it, stakeholders are allowed to sue the universities if they are not able to deliver what they claim. A Bill to introduce such accountability was introduced in 2011, but it never saw the light of day.

**Read more:** [Higher education in India & QS World University Rankings- Explained, pointwise](#)

### What is the way forward?

There are two main factors that differentiate us from the global ranking systems are our **lack of international faculty and students and the inadequacy of our research to connect with the industry**. International students/faculty will come to India if they will see some quality in our institutions. Similarly, Industry connect will happen only when the research translates into improved or new processes and products

For this to happen, NIRF should bring top experts not only from India but from outside also in its core committees.

### 20. [On Digital Health ID, proceed with caution](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**On Digital Health ID, proceed with caution**” published in **The Indian Express** on **6th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Health infrastructure in India

**Relevance:** Understanding various issues related to Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDM)

**Synopsis:** Government must weigh all pros and cons, learn from experiences of other countries to ensure that a good policy does not die due to poor implementation.

### What are some potential benefits of ABDM?

– Well-organized data repositories that enable **easy access to records** can stimulate much-needed **research on medical devices and drugs**. This storehouse of patient data can be invaluable for clinical and operational research.

– **Digital Health ID under ABDM can have a transformative impact in promoting ecosystems that function as paperless facilities**. Direct electronic linkages between the patient registration process, doctor, laboratory and pharmacy will help in reducing delays and enhancing efficiencies.

### What are the issues with ABDM implementation?

**Investments required:** While technology helps enhance patient experience, there is a **cost attached**. Investments have to be made upfront. In the immediate short run, DHID

will **increase administrative costs by about 20%**, due to the capital investment in hardware and software development, technical personnel and data entry servers.

Studies of such reform undertaken in the US in 2009 showed that small and medium hospitals were generally reluctant to adopt EMRs, partly because of the upfront investments that they were required to make. This resulted in the federal government providing subsidies of about \$30 billion as an incentive. Hence, any scaling up of this reform would require **extensive fiscal subsidies** and more importantly providing **techno-logistical support** to both government and private hospitals.

**Lack of infrastructure:** A large majority of facilities do not have the required physical infrastructure — electricity, accommodation, trained personnel. Cards getting corrupted, servers being down, computers crashing or hanging, and power outages are common in India. The inability to synchronise biometric data with ID cards has resulted in large-scale exclusions of the poor from welfare projects. Such a scenario in the case of health, will cause immense hardship to the most marginalised sections of our population.

**Must Read:** [Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission – Explained, pointwise](#)

## 21. [Trade multilateralism at risk](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Trade multilateralism at risk**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2- Important International Institutions, agencies and fora – their Structure, Mandate.

**Relevance:** crisis with WTO’s appellate body.

**Synopsis:** About WTO’s crisis, various challenges faced by WTO and the way forward.

### **Introduction**

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the global trade body. Currently, it is facing a serious existential crisis. The upcoming WTO ministerial meeting which will be held in Geneva, provides an opportunity to save this institution.

### **What crisis WTO is facing today?**

The crisis is related to the vacancies in the Appellate Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

**The Appellate Body (AB)**, the highest instance of the WTO dispute settlement, is part of the WTO’s dispute settlement mechanism. Since December 2019, the AB has stopped functioning due to rising vacancies. It has led to an increase in number of pending appeals.

Over the years, the U.S. has consistently blocked the appointment of AB members resulting in the present crisis.

The U.S. even rejected the proposal to find a solution to this and also denied the proposal of the European Union to establish an alternative interim appellate arbitration mechanism. With this, countries now have an option not to comply with the WTO panel decisions.

As the Appellate Body is unable to hear new appeals, no disputes can now be resolved at the highest instance, causing widespread concern in the context of escalating global trade protectionism.

### **What are the challenges that WTO currently faces?**

**On public stock holding:** WTO failed to find a solution of public stockholding for food security purposes as decided in 2015 Nairobi meeting. This is a concern for countries like India that use Minimum Support Price (MSP)-backed mechanisms to procure food grains. The WTO rules

allow countries to procure, stock and distribute food. However, if such procurement is done at MSP that is higher than the external reference price, then the budgetary support provided shall be considered trade-distorting and is subject to an overall cap. With rising prices and the need to do higher procurement to support farmers and provide food to the poor at subsidised prices, India might breach the cap. Countries have agreed that legal suits will not be brought if countries breach the cap.

**Waiving TRIPS agreement for COVID medical products:** The WTO member countries continue to disagree on the need of waiving the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement for COVID-19 related medical products. **This waiver would increase the accessibility of COVID-19 medical products, including vaccines.**

**Regulation of irrational fishing subsidies:** WTO is close to signing a deal on regulating irrational subsidies provided for fishing. These subsidies have led to the overexploitation of marine resources by countries like China. This deal should provide a balance between conserving ocean resources and the livelihood concerns of millions of marginal fishermen.

**Plurilateral agreements:** The deadlock at the WTO has led to the emergence of mega plurilateral trade agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement. These plurilateral agreements not only hamper the global governance on international trade but also push the multilateral order to the danger.

#### **What is the way forward?**

**On public stock holding:** In long term, we need to find a permanent solution such as not counting MSP as trade-distorting.

**On TRIPS waiver:** The WTO needs to adopt a waiver in the upcoming ministerial meeting.

**On regulation of fishing subsidies:** India and other developing countries should insist on an effective special and differential treatment provision that requisite policy space.

**On plurilateral agreements:** We need rule based global order. Institutional multilateralism is the remedy to unilateralism and economic nationalism.

Despite many flaws, WTO is the only forum where developing countries like India can push for evolving an inclusive global trading order.

## **22. The motherhood penalty employers must eliminate**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The motherhood penalty employers must eliminate**” published in **LiveMint** on **7<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Social Issues and Social Justice.

**Relevance:** To understand the status of working women in India.

**Synopsis:** Government intervention is needed to bring women equal to men.

### **Introduction**

Women in India often faced a lot of discrimination owing to the patriarchy. It does not only impact her social life but takes a toll on her professional one also.

### **What is the status of women in India?**

The gender gap in India has widened by 62.5%. **Low gender parity** can be seen in different spheres like political, economic etc.

The difference is also visible in the pay rate in spite of the same jobs with equivalent qualifications. There is a gap of 34% in **gender pay**.

India, as of 2020 has the **lowest female labour force participation rate** among South Asian nations with many of them neither working nor looking for jobs.

India has also **slipped 28 places** in [Global Gender Gap, 2021](#) since 2020, and is currently ranked at 140/156 nations.

The recent pandemic has further worsened the gender divide among women, especially mothers. The mothers are facing more discrimination than non-mothers. The main reason behind that is to do the household chores, elderly and child care especially with the closing of the school.

According to [National Sample Survey Organisation](#), it was found that women spent nearly 4.5 hours on child care and other responsibilities, while men only 0.88 hrs.

### **What is the motherhood penalty?**

It is the situation where working mothers faced discrimination compared to other employees. It is because of the misconception that they are less professional and incompetent. Also, they faced discrimination on various grounds like less pay rate, rare promotions, less hiring etc.

For this notion to be removed, there is a need to reorient workplace norms to make them more gender-equal.

### **What does the government do?**

The government made the amendment to [Maternity Benefit Act](#) in 2017. It increased the maternity paid leave from 12 to 26 weeks. In spite of the good efforts, this amendment further strengthens the notion that caregiving is the primary onus of women. So, it raises the risk of women being subjected to the motherhood penalty. Still, there is no similar law for paternity benefits.

### **What should India do?**

India should adopt the policies of other International governments:

**Iceland's policy:** Iceland makes the mandatory provisions for firms with more than 25 employees to prove every three years that they provide equal pay. Firms get certified according to that. If not certified, they have to pay the daily fine.

**Ireland:** It asks companies with more than 250 employees to publish data on disparities between average and median hourly wages and bonuses for both genders.

### **23. [Use the latest research to combat child under-nutrition](#)**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "[Use the latest research to combat child under-nutrition](#)" published in **LiveMint** on **7<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions & Bodies Constituted for Protection & Betterment of These Vulnerable Sections

**Relevance:** To understand the status of child health.

**Synopsis:** Better child health policies are required to improve the malnutrition status of children.

#### **Introduction**

Children are future assets for any nation. Thus, it is important to take care of their development. In India, where several children are malnourished, it is important to study the research carefully and then frame the policies according to that.

**How has the definition of nutrition changed over the years?**

**Since the 1940s:** Micronutrient deficiency was considered the primary cause of childhood undernutrition.

**Till the mid-1950s:** Caloric deficiency was considered as a primary cause of child under-nutrition.

**During the 1970s:** Research until the 1950s concentrated on various vitamin deficiencies. In the mid-1970s, the research also **included protein deficiency**. From the **late 1970s**, it was discovered that child malnutrition is more than caloric and micronutrient deficiency, so it **adopted multi-sectoral nutritional planning**.

**In 1984: Freedom from Hunger and malnutrition** was recognized as **basic human rights**. This recognition led to the ratification of a set of goals for UN countries.

**1992:** UN developed a **conceptual framework for child malnutrition**. This was to understand the multi-sectoral factors that affect child health beyond calorific and micronutrient deficiencies.

This framework acknowledged that **inadequate dietary intake and diseases are the immediate causes** of child malnutrition. There are another set of causes referred to as **Basic Causes**. It includes basic socioeconomic characteristics like wealth, religious practices and resources available to children.

**2010:** A paediatrics journal highlights the importance of 1<sup>st</sup> 1000 days of child health. It showed that the phenomenon of **growth faltering** (Child grow slower than prescribed WHO standard) is more in starting first two years of child life. This led to irreversible cognitive and physical damages and also passed on to the next generations also.

Also, [National Family Health survey 4](#) found that nearly 40% of Indian children were stunted in 2015-16, the highest in the world. This led to the start of **India's Poshan Abhiyan**, launched in 2018, with an aim of eradicating malnutrition by 2022.

**What are Poshan Abhiyan and the problems associated with it?**

Read here: [Poshan Abhiyan and challenges associated](#)

**What needs to be done?**

A **study in Lancet** predicted that a decline of 10-20% in coverage of essential and maternal child health interventions and a 10% increase in wasting of children over 6 months would lead to an additional 250,000 child and 12k maternal deaths. So, it is time that India should update its health policies with up-to-date research.

**24. [A strategy for India in a world that is adrift](#)**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**A strategy for India in a world that is adrift**" published in **The Hindu** on **7th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Foreign policy of India.

**Relevance:** Understanding India China relations in NAM 2.0.

**Synopsis:** As the global order shifts with the rising of China and the relative decline of the USA, India must act resolutely to secure its place in the global order.

**Introduction**

During the 90s, tectonic shifts in global politics prompted the dialogue on **Non Aligned Movement** 2.0. Today, again, India stands on a global politics which is in transition. But the principles of NAM still hold relevance today.

### **The multipolar world**

Today's world is not bipolar like in the Cold War days. It is neither unipolar like in the 90s. Today's world can be called a world in transition. This is evident in the failed collective response of the world towards the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also seen in the failure of the world to come together on tackling climate change.

This has also created many challenges like rising of China, reverse globalization, formation of regional trade blocks, stalling of initiatives on climate change And an uncertain global order.

### **What are the challenges & opportunities for India?**

Close cooperation in security with the other countries could lead to the strengthening of relations in the field of economy, energy, trade and investment. This could also help in cooperation at the global level in the fields of climate change and emerging technologies.

Today, in the maritime domain, India has great strength in the Indian Ocean. This could enable India to project itself as a strong, reliable partner in this region. India can strengthen this further by the creation of a maritime initiative like the Bay of Bengal commission.

### **How reviving SAARC will be beneficial for India?**

Given India's central position, India can act as a hub of regional integration and consolidation by reviving SAARC. SAARC suffers from over securitisation of national security, which has led to neglect of trade and connectivity.

Strengthening trade relations with SAARC can reduce the dependence of India with China and also ensure that our neighbouring countries do not fall prey to Chinese predatory economics.

### **What is the way forward?**

It is based on the core strategic principles in Non-Alignment 2.0 which is still relevant: independent judgement, developing our capacities and creating an equitable and enabling international order for India's transformation.

However, self-reliance is the key to India's continued growth and prosperity. India should focus on developing its economy and critical technologies to lead the world and secured its place in the global order.

## **25. The Indian women's movement can only grow by being inclusive**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**The Indian women's movement can only grow by being inclusive**" published in **Indian Express** on **7<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 social Justice and social issues.

**Relevance:** Understanding the change in the feminist movement.

**Synopsis:** While learning from previous generations, feminists today must continue to make room for the concerns of persons from different backgrounds and social groups.

### **Introduction**

Recently, Kamala Bhasin, an Indian developmental feminist activist, has passed away. One of her renowned quotes is the "**definition of gender means the socio-cultural definition of a girl and boy, man and woman, it doesn't mean caste, it doesn't mean race.**" This has opened the various debate on how to perceive these words.

**What is the difference between the Feminist movement of past and present?**

**Movement in the 1970s and 1980s:** Priority was to make women the focus of politics and demands for justice in various contexts. Their important goal was to show that women had certain common experiences due to patriarchal social structures.

**Today:** Women of different social backgrounds experience the world differently. So, they connect with others according to their views. Among the many ways, most popular today is **intersectionality**.

In the words of **critical race scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw**, it is how black women's experiences were shaped by them being Black and women and were different from the experiences of both Black men and non-Black women

In India also, the same structure has been followed. Therefore, to understand this feminist ideology, India has to understand how it is shaped by other social structures.

**What are the different shifts seen in the feminist movement of India?**

During the last few decades, it was seen that feminists are organizing around particular issues and identities rather than simply as "women". For example, Dalit and Muslim women have formed their own organizations and networks. It could be because they understand their issues well.

Over the time, it has been realized that people of all backgrounds and social groups need and deserve equal attention from the feminist movement. It is contradictory to Bhasin's comment that feminism is about getting rid of patriarchy and that transgender and ecological issues are separate from it.

**26. The pandemic is a reminder of education being a public good**

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

- **"Teacher, you learn too: Filling school vacancies is essential. So is doing this professionally rather than politically"** published in **Times of India** on **6<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.
- **"The pandemic is a reminder of education being a public good"** published in **Livemint** on **7<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.
- **"Learning disabilities"** published in **Business Standard** on **7<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** To understand the issues in the current learning system.

**Synopsis:** Indian school education system faces various challenges like large vacancies of teachers, vulnerable private schools, etc. The government must act to improve the public school education system.

**Introduction**

The recent UNESCO report State of the Education Report (SOER) for India: "No Teachers, No Class", highlighted various challenges associated with school education in India.

[Click here to know more about the State of the Education Report \(SOER\) for India: "No Teachers, No Class"](#)

**What are the challenges associated with Teachers and their performance?**

**Vacancies skewed towards states:** The UNESCO report highlighted that India's school system is facing an acute shortage of teachers. According to the UNESCO report, the bulk of the vacancies are in rural schools. But these shortages are skewed towards states with relatively



fast-growing populations. For example, Uttar Pradesh, with a shortage of 3,30,000 teachers, Bihar 2,20,000 and West Bengal 1,10,000.

This implies that a **large cohort of India's future workforce** will be **insufficiently educated** at a time when technological transitions in both services and manufacturing demand a high minimum standard of education.

**Teachers and their non-teaching activities:** Teachers are involved in several non-teaching activities too such as coordinating midday meals, registering children for Aadhaar, election duty and vaccination drives.

**Interstate differences in recruitment and transfer of teachers:** **Uttar Pradesh** and **Jharkhand** see rules of recruitment being changed year to year, suggesting political influences, while **Karnataka** and **Tamil Nadu** have “a systematic, technology-based, transparent system of recruitment, employment and transfer”.

Further, the spread of teacher eligibility tests is helping to improve standards, but these tests only do subject testing, not teaching practice of individuals.

### **What are the lessons learned from the pandemic on school education?**

The pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of private schools. Not all private schools are bad. Many are of good quality and are truly bothered about the education and welfare of their students. But an overwhelmingly **large proportion of private schools** are run **only for commercial purposes**.

For example, running a private school is a business in India. During the past 18 months, they have done nothing to engage children. But they have always demanded fees.

On the other hand, many government schoolteachers have often reached homes and communities to teach students. So, these schools have lost all trust and a few have even collapsed. This has boosted enrolment in the government (public) school system.

**Read more:** [Long term Impacts of School Closure – Explained, pointwise](#)

### **What needs to be done to improve school education?**

There is no substitute for an equitable, strong and vibrant public education system. So, the energy in the public-school system with this rising enrolment must be effectively harnessed.

India now needs to **incentivise smart young people to take up the teaching** profession and train them well. Apart from that, India also needs to **upskill the existing teachers**.

### **27. [Right to protest in and on Lakhimpur Kheri needs to be protected, the legal quibble can come later](#)**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Right to protest in and on Lakhimpur Kheri needs to be protected, the legal quibble can come later**” published in **Indian Express** on **7<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 Indian Constitution— features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

**Relevance:** To understand the issues surrounding right to protest.

**Synopsis:** The court can question the legal validity of the Acts, but that does not mean that the Right to protest can be halted from implementation.

#### **Introduction**

Earlier, the Supreme Court questions the farmers' protests against the Centre's farm laws on grounds that the matter is sub judice (under judicial consideration and therefore prohibited). The court has also asked whether the right to protest is an absolute right.

**Must read:** [Law is clear, road blockades can't go on endlessly, says Supreme Court](#)

Recently, In Lakhimpur Kheri a minister's convoy ran over protesting farmers, killing four of them, and setting off retaliatory violence that killed four more.

These two events again highlighted the issues surrounding the Right to protest.

### About Right to protest in India

The right to protest is **not a separate right** in the Indian Constitution. It is **implicit** in **Article 19(1)(a)**, which guarantees the freedom of speech and expression, and in **Article 19(1)(b)**, the right to assemble peacefully.

It is integral to the right to protection of life and personal liberty enshrined in **Article 21**.

All rights are subject to reasonable restrictions. The right to protest is not just necessary in and of itself — it is also inalienable from the articulation and assertion of other rights and freedoms.

**Read more:** [Right to Protest in India](#)

### Why the Supreme Court's decision to question right to protest is ill-judged?

**Infringes with Article 32:** Questioning the Right to protest will come in conflict with **Article 32**, the right to constitutional remedy. Protest, dialogue and debate, challenge before courts — these are not at odds or mutually exclusive. Taken together, they help to secure the citizen against an arbitrary or transgressing state.

**Against its own judgment:** In **Ram Lila Maidan Incident vs Home Secretary, Union of India and Others, 2012**, the court had said: "The people... have a right to raise their voice against the decisions and actions of the government or even to express their resentment over the actions of the government... The government has to respect and in fact encourage exercise of such rights."

**Cannot be held as sub judice:** The court held that farm laws are under judicial consideration and therefore protests are prohibited. But this is not the right interpretation. Many cases like the **constitutionality of electoral bonds** to the **abrogation of Article 370** are pending before the court. But this does not mean that the people across the country should give up their constitutional right to speak out on these issues.

So, the right to protest needs to be protected, the legal questions on the laws can come later.

#### Terms to know:

- [Article 21](#)

### 28. [Decentralised renewable energy solutions offer great promises for healthcare facilities](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Decentralized renewable energy solutions offer great promises for healthcare facilities**" published in **Down to Earth** on **7th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Health

**Relevance:** How decentralized renewable energy solutions can help India's health infrastructure

**Synopsis:** In facilitating access to affordable RTPV electricity in public healthcare facilities, India can achieve the twin objective of greening the economy and transforming the healthcare infrastructure so that it can provide affordable health services.

#### Introduction

It has been a big challenge for our health infrastructure to deal with the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Apprehension about a third wave of COVID-19 has many health institutions setting up their own oxygen plants within their premises.

But, the **electricity cost of running these oxygen plants** is around 70-80% of the running cost.

Many health institutions have attempted setting up oxygen plants within their premises under the PPP mode (design-build-finance-operate-transfer). But electricity costs make these projects unviable and unable to compete with the far larger liquid medical oxygen plants. This has driven away private investors.

In the post-pandemic world, energy access interventions involving **rooftop photovoltaics (RTPV)** can help health facilities and enable them to become 'atmanirbhar' (self-reliant).

### **Why RTPV systems should be implemented?**

The rationale behind adoption of RTPV systems is driven by the following factors:

**i). Electricity cost savings:** The RTPV system can produce significant savings for daytime electricity consumption. The state of Madhya Pradesh in mid-2018 discovered the electricity tariff for medical colleges under the RESCO model, a renewable energy service company to be around **Re 1.74 / unit** with 3% annual escalation (*with subsidy support from the state and central governments*) and **Rs 2.18 / unit** (*without subsidy*). These rates are a fraction of what medical colleges pay for grid-supplied electricity.

Electricity savings can be **used to purchase medicines and for other necessary expenditures**, as well as to strengthen the health infrastructure.

A 234-kW RTPV project has been commissioned at the Government Medical College, Shivpuri as part of the project. This has led to **saving of more than Rs 15 lakh in the first year** and expected cumulative savings over project life of around **Rs 7 crore**. This is with **zero investment** by the medical college.

**ii). Environmental benefits:** RTPV systems would also result in environmental benefits. For instance: The project, mentioned above, results in approximately 7,187 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions being reduced over the project life. This environmental gain would have been achieved by planting 12,345 trees.

**iii). Generation of jobs:** In a preliminary assessment published by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the potential for RTPV in all district hospitals and medical colleges of our public healthcare system is estimated to be approximately 450 MW, entailing an investment of about Rs 1,575 crores and generating over 13,000 jobs locally.

### **What are some disadvantages of RTPV electricity systems?**

The high initial cost of RTPV intervention is one of the reasons state governments overlook such investments, given the budgetary constraints of making significant capital expenditures.

### **What steps are being taken to offset high initial cost of RTPV systems?**

NITI Aayog's and the World Bank's **SuBaH initiative** aims to bridge these gaps by demonstrating the OPEX / RESCO model to provide affordable RTPV electricity services to health facilities.

The health institutions or governments would therefore not have to make any investment whatsoever and would make savings from day one. The investment would be made by **solar developers**, who would recover their investment through the sale of power to the health institutions over the 25 years.

Efforts in **demand aggregation** planned under the initiative will **optimise upfront costs** and **reduce the overall cost** of energy services through economies of scale.

### What is the way forward?

Cooperation between the private sector, the public sector and non-governmental organisations has proven crucial to the success of healthcare electrification, such as using the pay-as-you-go model in Rwanda, micro-grids anchored around the facilities and connected to staff housing in Madagascar and Lesotho. Such partnerships should be encouraged.

## 29. **Stronger at the grassroots: On strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Stronger at the grassroots**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein, GS 3- Disaster and Disaster Management.

**Relevance:** Role played by Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in tackling the menace of COVID-19.

**Synopsis:** About PRIs, role played by them in COVID-19 crisis, need to build their capacity further so that they can deal with these kinds of situations in stronger way.

### Introduction

The Panchayati Raj was first adopted by Nagaur in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959. It has expanded vastly. There are now 2,60,512 Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) represented by about 31 lakh elected members across India.

### What are PRIs?

This is a system of local self-governance, where people in the villages participate in the decision-making process. It is the backbone of democracy. They also provide a platform to build consensus and making resolutions in the community's interest.

**The People's Plan Campaign and Vibrant Gram Sabha Dashboard**, rolled out this year, aspire to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system by making gram sabhas more vibrant.

### How PRI played a key role in tackling COVID-19 crisis?

Unlike other disasters like earthquakes, COVID-19 is an unusual crisis as it is long-drawn and affects people everywhere.

When the traditional top-down disaster response system was compromised during the bad months of the pandemic, it was PRIs that played a remarkable role.

**Helped reduce risks**– responded swiftly and thus helped people recover quickly. They provided essential leadership at the local level.

**Performed both regulatory and welfare functions**– For instance, during the nationwide lockdown, PRIs set up containment zones, arranged transport, identified buildings for quarantining people and provisioned food for the incoming migrants.

**Effective implementation of welfare schemes like MGNREGA and the National Rural Livelihood Mission** – This quickened the pace of recovery while ensuring support to the vulnerable population.

**Bridged the trust gap between the community and the officials**– They did it with regular engagement with frontline workers like ASHA workers and Anganwadi workers through committee.

**Organised community-based surveillance systems** – It involved village elders, the youth and self-help groups (SHGs). The purpose was to keep a strict vigil in quarantine centres and monitor symptoms in households.

**Mobilised citizens** for COVID-19 vaccination.

#### **How we can further build the capacity of PRIs?**

The Yokohama strategy pointed out that it is important to focus on **disaster prevention, mitigation** and **preparedness** rather than disaster response alone, to reduce vulnerability. In this light, certain initiatives can be taken to build the capacity of PRIs:

- **Include disaster management chapters in Panchayat Raj Acts** and make disaster planning and spending part of Panchayati Raj development plans and local-level committees. This will ensure citizen-centric mapping and planning of resources. Various insurance products customised to local needs will build financial resilience of the community.
- **Conducting regular location specific training programmes** for the community and organising platforms for sharing best practices. This will strengthen individual and institutional capacities.
- **Assigning roles to individual members** and providing them with the necessary skills. It can make such programmes more meaningful.
- **Community-based disaster management plans** are needed as the community is usually the first responder in case of a disaster. We also need to take the traditional wisdom of local communities which will complement modern practices. Moreover, financial contributions from the community should be encouraged through the establishment of community disaster funds in all gram panchayats.

It is the high time to make disaster resilience an inherent part of the community culture.

### **30. There's an urgent need to clean up the World Bank and IMF**

Source: This post is based on the article “ **There's an urgent need to clean up the World Bank and IMF** ” published in **The Indian Express** on **9th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Important International Institutions, agencies and fora – their Structure, Mandate.

**Relevance:** Integrity of two big institutions of the world, WB and IMF are at stake

**Synopsis:** Wrongdoings of WB and IMF, unsuitability of heads of these institutions, various steps that these institutions need to take to maintain their credibility and legitimacy

#### **Introduction**

Head of the World Bank and IMF are selected under the dual monopoly selection procedure wherein only an American can head the World Bank and only a European can head the IMF. This has been the result of a long-standing arrangement among the western powers. It needs to change.

#### **Why the dual monopoly system needs to change?**

The system requires change because of the selection of such heads whose personal integrity has often been called into question.

**For instance:** Manipulation of data by the WB wherein the bank manipulated the data of at least two major countries (**China and Saudi Arabia**) to make them look better than they would otherwise have been. This shows that its integrity is at stake and not the ideology.

**Why qualities of honesty and decency are a must for heads of world institutions?**

The heads of these institutions often go around the developing world, preaching the virtues of good governance, from arguing against the corruption to improving data integrity. There are even World Bank indices to rank countries on those metrics.

If they do not have the qualities of honesty, morality and decency, then it is for sure that they will not pass good message to others.

How credible can such policy messages be if their carriers are themselves compromised? It is not just the charge of hypocrisy, but also the effect on the morale and motivation of the staff of these institutions. Many of them chose to work here because of a commitment to public service. How must they feel if their boss is a sexual predator or complicit in data manipulation?

**What have been the policies of developed countries in making appointments to International Organizations?**

Countries place their nationals to head International institutions, both for prestige and to pursue their national interests. Moreover, there is now a deliberate contest between the West (and especially the US) and China to shape the global order by placing their nationals as head of global international organizations.

– China is following the same strategy. It is evident from the fact that China attempts to place its own nationals in existing IOs as well as creating new ones. Its own nationals now head four of the 15 UN specialised agencies. China’s efforts, its success, and more broadly its influence in IOs should certainly raise deep concerns, most notably the suppression of the inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus.

– Equally, Western countries have been anything but an exemplar in their commitment to international organisations (the US neutering of the World Trade Organisation’s Appellate Body under both Trump and Biden administrations is another recent example).

**What is the way forward?**

Global political leaders must act with urgency and conviction to stem the rot.

They must open the selection of the heads of these institutions to the best candidate, regardless of nationality.

# General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

---

1. Water water everywhere and we must stop to think

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Water water everywhere and we must stop to think” published in **Livemint** on **30th Sep 21**.

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

**Relevance:** Rising cases of recurring floods in India.

**Synopsis:** Floods have begun to affect an increasing area of India with rising intensity and frequency. Urban infrastructure is under severe pressure, and it’s unclear if we are prepared for worse.

**Introduction**

Incidents of floods in urban areas have been increasing year after year in India.

Rainy season flooding in metro cities like **Mumbai** and now even Chennai has begun to host recurring floods.

This year, 11 September saw **Delhi’s international airport** waterlogged after its heaviest rainfall in 46 years, barely three weeks after a similar episode.

**Kolkata** logged a 13-year peak in precipitation, with canals for roads and even areas that had always stayed relatively dry getting soaked.

**Bengaluru** reported arterial roads and junctions flooded on 25 July.

The **floods in Hyderabad** after a torrential downpour on 2 September had a lethal quality: gushing waters swept away vehicles and hand-carts.

Several other state capitals have been submerged in recent years, **Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Patna, Bhopal** and **Ahmedabad** among them.

**What are the causes of floods?**

Repeated floods in the cities are being caused primarily by **cloudbursts** in urban zones and **overflowing rivers** in the hinterland.

Among the contributors to recurrent floods in many cities, we have **sewage systems choked with the debris** of construction material.

**Climate change** is also responsible for such recurring floods in our cities.

**What is the impact of the floods?**

Floods destroy lives and property, impede routine engagements and undermine the finances of governments, businesses and financial institutions.

**What are the associated issues?**

This raises two important issues that go to the heart of India’s urban design.

**Poor state of our urban infrastructure, with city planning and design lagging population and income growth.** In most cities, that bedrock of support is out of sync with the demands of the user population and therefore under severe stress.

Given the rapid pace of urbanization in India the strain will only worsen in the years ahead unless apt investments are made in urban physical and social infrastructure.

**Lack of planning for future contingencies:** The second big issue is that ongoing public projects to plug gaps may not be building adequate space for future contingencies. We need to test the resilience of current infra projects against likely future scenarios of climate change. **For example**, if mean sea levels rise, as expected, are Mumbai or Chennai prepared for the consequences?

A related worry is our **lack of emphasis on institutionalizing green investments and systems**, whether it is buildings or roads.



2. [Growing locally: On Significance of GI tags](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Growing Locally**” published in **Indian Express** on **1st Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus**– GS3: Inclusive Growth and issues arising from it.

**Relevance:** significance of Geographical Indications and reforms needed

**Synopsis:** Geographical Indications tag is an opportunity for India to redefine the future of work using automation, technology and artificial intelligence while simultaneously enhancing and adorning the country’s talented local work force.

**Introduction**

India’s global brand recall and attributes of multi-cultural ethos, authenticity, and ethnic diversity are reason for increasing the country’s potential. One channel through which these attributes are brought out are Geographical Indications or GI tags.

**Why GI tag is significant?**

**Revenue generators:** With the emphasis on climate change and sustainability, GI products can be ready revenue generators. The patents and copyright protection of products under GIs result in higher economic gains, fostering quality production and better distribution of profits.

**Global reach:** Amazon’s local to global programme has taken Indian producers and their products such as Delta Leather Corporation’s leather and SVA Organics’s organic products to 18 global markets in over 200 countries.

In the two years ending March 2021, Amazon exported such Made in India goods worth \$2 billion.

**How Geographical Indications can benefit India?**

**Passion economy and entrepreneurship:** it will convert talent into entrepreneurship with gig workers, and create a “passion” economy. It is a new way for individuals to monetise their skills and scale their businesses exponentially. It removes the hurdles associated with freelance work to earn a regular income from a source other than an employer. It encompasses the concept of trusteeship, as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi and more recently, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN. It is truly Made in India.

**Employment creation:** the labour-intensive nature of GI offers the best solution to boosting the employment-to-population ratio in India.

**Women empowerment:** Monetising artisanal work done at home will increase India’s low female labour force participation rate, which at 21 per cent in 2019 was half the 47 per cent global average.

**Reverse urban migration:** it will conserve India’s ancient crafts, culture and food. A rejuvenation of MSMEs, which account for 31 per cent of India’s GDP and 45 per cent of exports, will follow.

**Positive benefits for local communities:** it encourages the preservation of biodiversity, local know-how and natural resources.

**Soft power:** A strong GI ecosystem can be a wellspring of economic and soft power. It will automatically resolve the three fraught India issues of poor pay for talent, low female participation in the labour force, and urban migration.

**What are some existing challenges?**

**GI businesses are micro:** it is necessary to address the challenges of capacity-building, formal or easy access to credit, forming marketing linkages, research and development, product innovation and competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

**Issue of middlemen:** With the shift to digital platforms, the distribution margins of middlemen will be competitive. Hence, government need to ensure that they do not act as countervailing agents by getting into similar businesses or product lines which will erode GI producer incomes.

**What is the way forward?**

**First,** a required skill for GI producers is digital literacy. This should be a priority agenda item for NGOs and stakeholders like the DPIIT.

The groundwork for MSME access to formal credit has already been done with the new Account Aggregator data-sharing framework.

**Second,** the Indian GI economy can be a platform for India to showcase to the world a model for ethical capitalism, social entrepreneurship, de-urbanisation, and bringing women to the workforce, on the back of a robust digital system.

**Third,** Guardrails like regular audits and consultations with the GI producers must be mandated.

**3. Staggered pricing: On cane pricing**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Staggered pricing**” published in **Business Standard** on **1st October** 2021.

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

**Relevance:** Issues faced by Sugar-cane farmers and factories.

**Synopsis:** The Government should avoid populist measures in cane pricing.

**Introduction**

Recently, Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) suggested to pay sugarcane prices to farmers in tranches and stop reserving cane areas for sugar mills.

It has pros and cons that need to be weighed carefully.

**What are the other key suggestions given by CACP?**

The CACP’s other suggestion is the **abolition of the system of reserving sugarcane catchment area** for each factory and doing away with the mandatory minimum distance (mostly 25 km) between the two factories is equally contentious.

It binds the mills to buy all the canes on offer from that area and the farmers to sell to the designated mills only.

It leaves no room for the mills or the farmers to take their own business decisions. Even C Rangarajan committee have disfavoured this system.

**Why is CACP favouring a staggered payment mechanism?**

**Burden on sugar factories:** The main drawback in the existing system of payment within 14 days of delivery of the cane is that the cash-starved sugar factories are unable to adhere to the deadline.

**Burden on the government:** This results in accumulating unpaid arrears, forcing the government to come up with bailout packages.

**Issue with the abolition of the system of reserving sugarcane:** the argument in favour of this provision is that sugarcane has to be disposed of at the nearest factory because it starts losing its sucrose content soon after harvest.

**How the proposed measures affect the interests of both the cane growers and the sugar industry?**

**Unnecessary interference:** The proposed measures affect both but in a mutually conflicting manner. Their implementation at this stage would amount to needless meddling in a sector that is showing signs of becoming financially self-reliant and globally price-competitive.

**No consensus:** The concept of staggering the payment was floated in the past by various committees and expert panels, including the one set up by the NITI Aayog. The sugar industry welcomed this suggestion because it would ease its economic burden. However, most other stakeholders, including the cane growers, opposed it.

Gujarat, where cooperative sugar mills are predominant is the only state that has adopted this practice as a matter of state policy. In other states, the cane growers favour lump sum and prompt payment as ordained under the Sugarcane Control Order, 1966.

**What is the way forward?**

The government should address underlying issues rather than going for populist measures such as the UP government has announced a hike in sugarcane prices.

#### 4. Why new rule allowing recycled plastic in food packaging raises concerns

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Why new rule allowing recycled plastic in food packaging raises concerns**” and “**Recycled plastic for food packaging: Why the new rules are shocking**” published in DTE on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2021.

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

**Relevance:** Plastic waste management

**Synopsis:** The new directive by Union environment ministry overrides 2016 rules that did not permit carry bags made of recycled plastic for food items.

**Introduction**

Recently, the Union government notified the **Plastic Waste Management (Second Amendment) Rules, 2021**. The latest notification is a U-turn by the Centre and its stand of five years.

The use of recycled plastic was prohibited for food contact applications in the **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016** whereas, the latest amendment allows carry bags made of recycled plastic or products made of recycled plastic for storing, carrying, dispensing or packaging ready to eat or drink foodstuff.

Note, it was only in 2018 that the FSSAI banned the use of recycled plastic or newspaper for packaging of food items.

**What the concern w.r.t the Plastic Waste Management (Second Amendment) Rules, 2021?**

**Firstly**, the new packaging regulations would compromise the food safety in India.

**Secondly, wide public consultation was not done.** For instance, following two major rules have been added to the Plastic Waste Management Rules without them being part of the Draft rules 2021.

- the rules provided a moratorium of 10 years to big companies.
- use of recycled plastics for food products introduced in the latest amendment.

### **Why using recycled Plastics in Food packaging is a problem?**

**Firstly**, the unscientific methods used by the informal workforce to produce plastic pellets (used to make recycled goods) raise concerns, especially around the contamination and purity of the recycled plastic.

**Secondly**, Plastic is used in a variety of sectors ranging from medicines, electronic equipment to chemical fertilizers, which also raises the concern of the source of the recycled plastic that will be used in food contact applications.

**Thirdly**, standards for recycling of plastic have not been specified in the country, making it all the more difficult to understand the chemical conformity of the recycled plastic.

**Fourthly**, research has proven that as plastics are recycled, its molecular integrity gets compromised. This may further the possibility of 'legacy chemical' migration from plastics to food. So, the possibility of presence of poisonous substance in recycled plastic bags can never be completely ruled out.

**Fifthly**, it is practically impossible to tell the amount of recycled plastic that has been added to the final product. This may give the big players a way out to keep using virgin polymers and endless use of recycled Plastic.

**Must Read:** [How recycled plastic is regulated globally?](#)

### **What is the way forward?**

Before the FSSAI takes a call to include recycled plastic for food contact applications, we have to ensure the following things:

**Our plastic has to be recycled in authorised recycling facilities.** The country's data around the number and capacity of plastic recycling plants is very weak. We need a yardstick to understand our capacity to recycle correctly and utilise the material for other applications.

**The use of recycled plastic should have been mandated for non-food applications initially.** This will help us to understand the issues faced by the industries in terms of production and social acceptability.

**An inventory needs to be created of the types of processes that we have in the country to recycle our plastics.** Then, we need to identify the plastic recycling processes that are safe enough to produce recycled plastic that can be used for food contact applications.

**Guidelines are required for the use of recycled plastic for packaging of ready-to-eat food materials.** This should include the source of the post-consumer plastic waste, type of polymer that can be used, the nature of the food material that they can be used for packaging, etc.,

**Finally, a working mechanism needs to be developed with all the stakeholders** such as MoEFCC, FSSAI, the Central Pollution Control Board, Urban Local Bodies etc.

## 5. Ordnance factories' moment in history

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Ordnance factories' moment in history**” published in **Business Standard** on **1<sup>st</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Defence reforms in India.

**Relevance:** To understand the lacunae's in the working of Ordnance Factories.

**Synopsis:** Corporatization of OFB is the first step towards reforming it. India need to do much more.

### **Introduction**

Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) which started during the British era has ceased to exist starting today.

**Read here:** [“OFB Corporatisation” Approved by Cabinet](#)

### **How was the OFB corporatized?**

The corporatization of OFB has been recommended by the various committees. It has been taken into action by **recommendations of EGoM** (Empowered Group of Ministers).

**Read more:** [Explained: Dismantling the Ordnance Factory Board](#)

### **What is the OFB corporatization plan?**

According to the EGoM recommendation for the corporatization of OFB contains the following things.

12 major Ordnance Factories (OFs) that produce ammunition and explosives will be grouped into a single DPSU called **Munitions India Limited**.

Five more OFs that manufacture vehicles will be grouped into a DPSU called **Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited**.

Another five that manufacture weapons and equipment will combine to form **Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited**.

Eight more OFs that manufacture metals and steels will combine to form **Yantra India Limited**.

The remaining 11 OFs will **form India Optel Limited, Gliders India Limited and Troop Comforts Limited**.

### **What are the issues with OFB?**

**How OFB prices its product:** It is currently done on a **cost-plus basis**. Under it, OFB adds up the cost of production (management, labour, materials, etc.) and bills the military after adding on a healthy profit margin, usually 15%. The **military does not have any option of sourcing the product, even if it's available cheaper**. There is no mechanism to tighten up procedures and production processes in order to lower the costs.

These inbuilt inefficiencies are unlikely to be tackled by merely changing over from the OFB's current functional model.

### **What can be done?**

There is a need to ramp up production to the level that is needed in a war. Surge capacity requires to be built, and a cost is involved in maintaining this capacity. It is still now unclear that how this will be verified in the new manufacturing structures. The government should provide a proper layout for that.

With India going for corporatization, it would be wise if India learns from the experience of various countries that have corporatized their defence industries in the past, like the UK.

## 6. Revealing India's actual farmer population

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Revealing India's actual farmer population**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Agriculture

**Relevance:** To estimate the actual number of agricultural households

**Synopsis:** Various surveys put the total number of agricultural households at a different number. The actual number of farmers deriving a significant share of their income from agriculture only is far less and this has policy implications.

### **Introduction**

The last **Agriculture Census for 2015-16** placed the total “operational holdings” in India at **146.45 million**.

The **Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan)** scheme has **110.94 million** beneficiaries who got their Rs 2,000 income support installment for April-July 2021.

And now, we have the **National Statistical Office's Situation Assessment of Agricultural Households (SAAH) report** for 2018-19. It pegs the country's “agricultural households” at **93.09 million**.

In short, India officially has anywhere from 90 million-plus to almost 150 million farmers.

### **Why this wide variation in the number of farmers?**

This wide variation has largely to do with methodology.

**The Agriculture Census** looks at any land used even partly for agricultural production and operated/managed by one person alone or with others. The land does not have to be owned by that person (“cultivator”), who needn't also belong to an “agricultural household”.

**The SAAH report**, on the other hand, considers only the operational holdings of agricultural households. Members of a household may farm different lands.

**While the Census** treats each of them as separate holdings, the SAAH takes all these lands as a single production unit. It does not count multiple holdings if operated by individuals living together and sharing a common kitchen.

Accounting for only “agricultural households”, while not distinguishing multiple operating holdings within them, brings down India's official farmer numbers to **just over 93 million**.

The authors of this article, using their methodology, estimate that India's “serious” farmer population adds up to 36.1 million, which is hardly 39% of the SAAH estimate.

If the actual number of farmers deriving a significant share of their income from agriculture per se is only 40 million — as against the official, also popular, consensus range of 100-150 million — a range of policy implications follow.

### **What are the policy implications of a lesser number of farmers?**

**Firstly**, one must recognise that **farming is a specialised profession** like any other. Not everyone can or needs to be a farmer. “Agriculture policy” should, then, target those who can and genuinely depend on farming as a means of livelihood.

Minimum support prices, government procurement, agricultural market reforms, etc will matter mainly to “full-time/regular” farmers. Even PM-Kisan would be more effective if directed at these farmers, whose quantum of income support can be enhanced to encourage them to remain in or expand their agriculture business.

**Secondly, land size matters.** The SAAH report reveals that the 50% farm income dependence threshold is crossed at an all-India level only when the holding size exceeds one hectare or 2.5

acres. This is clearly the minimum land required for farming to be viable, which about 70% of agricultural households in the country do not possess.

**Thirdly**, What should be done for this 70%, who are effectively labourers and not farmers? Their problems cannot be addressed through “agriculture policy”. A more sustainable solution lies in **reimagining agriculture beyond the farm**. Crops may be produced in fields, but not everyone needs to engage in cultivation.

The scope for value-addition and employment can be more outside than on the farm like, grading, packaging, transporting, processing, warehousing and retailing of produce or supply of inputs and services to farmers. All these activities legitimately fall within the realm of agriculture, even if outside the farm. Agriculture policy should aim not only at increasing farm incomes but also adding value to produce outside and closer to the farms.

### 7. **Clash of economy and ecology in global politics**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Clash of economy and ecology in global politics**” published in **Business Standard** on **4th Oct 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Geopolitics and its impact on Climate change

**Synopsis:** We cannot ensure sustainable growth unless it is affordable and inclusive

#### **Introduction**

Thirty years ago, India ushered in economic reforms. As the growth intensified, the use of natural resources too increased, and it added to the pollution of our waterbodies and air.

In the next two decades, India witnessed much more toxification of our land, water, air, and food, and realised how it impacts our health.

It is for this reason there have been repeated conflicts over the need to balance development with the environment. However, the resolution is often flawed because public institutions that are required to make decisions have been progressively weakened and disabled.

#### **How India needs to reinvent its growth story?**

It has to be based on the needs of all and not just a few. It has to protect the environment because that is the survival base on which life thrives.

For instance, Investment in natural capital, trees and water, will help build the resilience we need in the climate-risked world.

#### **How U.S. – China rivalry will hamper the agenda of reducing greenhouse gas emission?**

Since the extraordinary rise of China, it has overtaken just about all countries in global trade. It relied on cheap labour, cheap credit, and no restrictions on account of environmental or social safeguards. Today, the western economies are **adapting the Chinese Growth strategy model** to compete with China.

For instance, the proponents of free trade and globalisation are turning towards **protectionism**.

This struggle for global domination, which pits China against the US, will have ramifications for environmental security and climate change in India and the rest of the world.

Today, the countries that aspire to become new world leaders aim to increase its economic standing in the world through manufacturing, trade, and global commerce. This means there will be **more pollution and more greenhouse gas emissions**.

## 8. Staying the Green Course

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Staying the Green Course**” published in **Indian Express** on **4th Oct 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Green Transition

**Synopsis:** In CoP 26, world leaders need to discuss how best governments can help each other stay on the “green” course and also manage shorter-term political compulsions.

### **What is the current scenario?**

**Rise in price of natural gas:** The price of natural gas in Europe has shot up by approximately 600 per cent over the past 12 months. A year back, it was trading at just under \$4/mmbtu (*Metric Million British Thermal Unit*), and today it is hovering around \$25/mmbtu.

**Reversal of the conventional feedback loop:** Conventionally the price of oil would lead to a change in the price of gas, this time it is the price of gas that has pushed up the prices of oil and coal. This is because as the former became increasingly unaffordable, consumers turned to the latter.

### **What is the dilemma in front of governments?**

The price hike of natural gas would **incentivize an increase in the production of fossil fuels** and that would run counter to not just public sentiment but also the efforts to shift to a clean non-fossil fuel energy system.

The dilemma is to find a way to navigate the long-term imperatives of decarbonization and also manage the political and social backlash from consumers impacted by high electricity and fuel costs.

### **What are the reasons for the price surge of natural gas?**

**On the demand side:** the strongest driver has been the global economic recovery. Added to that are the micro factors of the drop in hydropower in Brazil and China because of drought, the reduction in wind power because of unfavourable wind conditions in the North Sea and the underperformance of nuclear reactors in Europe. The severe summer heat in the US, Europe and China has also been a factor.

**On the supply side:** The economic blockers were the cold wave in Texas this year, which froze gas wells and throttled the export of US LNG, the start-up of the maintenance work suspended since 2020 on account of Covid-19 and the declining production profile of the giant Groningen field in the Netherlands.

**This field is slated to close down in two years.** Matters have been compounded by the diversion of US LNG cargoes destined for Europe to Asia and low inventories.

**The geopolitical factor:** Russia has provided approximately 40 per cent of Europe’s gas requirements but it always had the capacity to supply more and could have come to Europe’s rescue this time. But it decided not to. The reason is Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany.

The US has been an opponent of this pipeline on the grounds it strengthens Russia’s leverage over Europe. In consequence, the EU has not yet approved its operationalisation.

**Integration of markets:** the gas market today is different. It is global, integrated and liquid. That is why, what happens in one region quickly spill over into other geographies. For instance, the CIF price of spot LNG landed in Hazira, Gujarat averaged around \$6/bbl a year back.



**What is the way forward?**

**First**, World leaders will assemble in Glasgow next month for COP 26 and since they are aligned on the nature of the climate crisis and the steps that must be taken to address it.

**Second**, leaders will have to work together to smoothen the green transition to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

**Third**, the sustainable response is to leverage this price shock to improve energy efficiency, intensify demand conservation, intervene to prevent the switch to coal and increase investments in battery and storage technology and transmission infrastructure to scale up solar and wind energy supplies.

**9. COVID-19: How bio-medical waste poses challenges to urban solid waste management system**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**COVID-19: How bio-medical waste poses challenges to urban solid waste management system**” published in **The Down to Earth** on **1st Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environmental Pollution and Degradation,

**Relevance:** To discuss the threat posed by COVID-19 virus in waste sector.

**Synopsis:** COVID-19 virus has increased the urban solid waste which is very infectious and risky. Some suggestions to deal with the situation.

**Introduction**

The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic tremendously affected the waste sector, with medical waste subjected to uncontrolled dumping and open burning. It is leading to public health risks.

**Why it is important to prioritise a separate collection of waste?**

With the potential onset of the third wave, it is important to prioritise a separate collection of the infectious and highly infectious waste in the urban solid waste management system (USWM).

It is also crucial to equip the system with essential resources and skills to break the infection chain at the generation stage.

**What steps have been taken to improve the urban solid waste management system (USWM)?**

**First**, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) notified the Solid Waste Management Rules and Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules in 2016 to effectively manage waste.

**Second**, the local governments adopted several policies for waste management. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) issued specific guidelines for Indian states to store, collect, transport, recycle, process and dispose of COVID-19 infectious waste to reduce the risk of infection spread.

**How COVID-19 has affected the waste sector?**

**First**, the COVID-19 outbreak increased the quantity of urban solid waste (USW) generated and changed its composition. These changes have been accelerated by the widespread implementation of syndromic management of COVID-19 throughout India.

**Second**, there is addition to traditional residential USW. It includes infectious and highly infectious bio-medical waste generated during diagnosis, treatment and quarantine. These

include sanitary waste, masks, gloves and personal protective equipment (PPE) kits that have the potential to spread infection.

**Third**, the quantity of USW from households increased during the lockdown. The increase can be attributed to the disease's effects on lifestyles such as in-home cooking, online shopping, use of packaged foods, etc.

Thus, bio-medical waste management has become a part of the current urban solid waste management system and poses serious challenges to it. Second wave of COVID-19 in India further increased the risk, with the increased number of infected patients and changes in isolation, quarantine and hospitalisation protocols.

#### **What steps are needed to deal with urban waste management?**

**First**, the USW system has to upgrade its facilities to accommodate the changes.

**Second**, the infrastructure resilience of the waste management system needs to be examined.

**Third**, management of bio-medical waste generated in hospitals needs to follow standard protocols for segregation of infectious and highly infectious waste and their treatment at the source.

**Fourth**, the virus can survive a maximum of three days (up to 72 hours). We can segregate and store the waste in a yellow bag to reduce the chances of spreading the infection. Storage space and availability of manpower can pose challenges in implementation.

**Fifth**, separate collection of infectious and highly infectious waste needs to be streamlined through appropriate authorities collecting the waste regularly from households to avoid unauthorised dumping of waste.

**Sixth**, the infectious waste should not be mixed with the daily USW during storage, collection and transportation.

**Seventh**, reducing the use of PPE kits in non-COVID-19 areas and the use of reusable masks and gloves is a potential short-term solution to reduce waste generation.

#### **10. What the continued distress in informal labour market says**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**What the continued distress in informal labour market says**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th Oct 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** To discuss the distress faced by the informal labour market

**Synopsis:** Status of informal sector in India, distress faced by them mainly during the Covid-19 pandemic and various impacts of the sustained divergence between the formal and the informal labour force.

#### **Introduction**

Recently released economic data suggests that the Indian economy has emerged from the second wave of the pandemic better than expected. Two broad points emerge.

**First**, the second wave was far more severe. Still, the impact of the localized restrictions imposed during this period on economic activity was less damaging than observed last year.

**Second**, in the weeks and months thereafter, large parts of the economy are almost back to pre-Covid levels. But distress is lasting in large parts of the informal economy.

#### **What is the status of the informal sector in India?**

The informal/unorganised sector in India accounts for roughly half of the total value added in the economy (52.4 per cent in 2017-18). It employs around 90 per cent of the labour force.

The distress faced by this sector can be estimated from the state of the informal labour force.

**What does the various data represent?**

**First**, In the first quarter of the ongoing financial year, the number of households demanding work under MGNREGA was lower than last year. But it was higher than pre-covid levels. There could be two possible explanations for this.

- The extent of distress in the labour market last year was of a much higher magnitude.
- The spread of the pandemic in rural areas this year curtailed the registration of households demanding work under MGNREGA.

**Second**, In the second quarter, however, the number of households demanding work this year was not only around the same level as last year, but was also significantly higher than the pre-Covid level (2019-20). This signals two possibilities.

- sections of the informal labour force in rural areas and the migrant households who have not returned to urban areas, were unable to find non-farm employment. They had to rely on MGNREGA. This implies that large parts of the informal economy (manufacturing, construction, trade and transport) were operating well below their pre-Covid levels in the second quarter as well.
- A section of the informal labour force simply opted for whatever work was available at depressed wage rates wherever employment opportunity was available. They supplemented its income by seeking work under MGNREGA.

**What does the level of sustained distress in the informal labour market represent?**

This level of sustained distress in the informal labour market points towards a **continuing gap in the fortunes of the formal and informal parts of the economy.**

Data also revealed that the bigger companies flourished, the smaller ones continued to be in distress.

**What are the outcomes of the sustained divergence between the formal and the informal labour force?**

**First**, worsening of the income distribution.

**Second**, loss in purchasing power of the lower half of the distribution chain would translate to the aggregate household consumption basket shifting towards that of the relatively wealthy households. This would raise demand for the less labour-intensive services and high-end/imported manufactured products and reinforce the current labour market trends.

**Third**, this distressed labour market has broader implications for aggregate consumption and investment, and indicates subdued medium-term growth prospects.

**11. How loopholes in Aadhaar-enabled payments are putting poor people at risk of being swindled**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**How loopholes in Aadhaar-enabled payments are putting poor people at risk of being swindled**” published in **Indian Express** on **5<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

**Relevance:** To understand the issues in the Aadhaar enabled Payment System (AePS) model.

**Synopsis:** Given the need for financial inclusion, resolving the issue in the AePS model is vital.

**Introduction**

The government of India launched **Aadhaar enabled Payment System** which is coupled with the Business correspondent model. It was supposed to revitalize financial inclusion in India. However, it faces many challenges.

**What is the Aadhaar enabled Payment System (AePS)?**

It is a bank-led model which allows online interoperable financial inclusion transactions at Point of Sale (Micro ATM) through the **Business correspondent (BC)** (informal bank agent) of any bank using the Aadhaar authentication.

For example, if a person wants to withdraw Rs500 from a bank account using BC, he/she needs to provide the bank name and undergo Aadhaar-based biometric authentication (ABBA). BC will then provide the requested amount, and BC's own account will be credited with the same amount. For this, the bank account should be linked with Aadhaar.

**Benefit:** Like other micro-ATM systems, it has helped in decongesting banks. It can be particularly useful for migrant workers who have no ATM facility.

**What are the issues associated with AePS?**

AePS comes with serious risks of being cheated, especially those who lack clarity of its working. These risks are increased when banks refuse to disburse small amounts to their customers and send them to BCs instead. Some of the risks are:

**Financial Fraud by BC:** There are chances that some corrupt BCs will enter the high amount in PoS and gave the beneficiary the lesser amount. However, this can be ignored if people demand a receipt. But it is visible in many cases that BCs often denies receipts to poor people. There are also many instances where Corrupt BCs duped customers by simply asking them to put their finger on the scanner. After which, BCs quietly withdrew the amount without telling the customer.

It is unfortunate that most of such frauds remain unresolved today. In some cases, the police are reluctant to file FIRs. Even if the BC can be traced, it is easy for him to claim that he did disburse cash as per records — it is his word against the victim.

**Read more:** [Failure Of Aadhar Based Payment System](#)

**How these issues can be eliminated from AePS?**

**Permanent Entry:** BCs could be required to make manual if not digital entries into printed customer passbooks. That would act as a permanent, verifiable receipt that cannot be denied to the customer so easily (a blank entry would be incriminating).

**Ban:** The government can ban roaming BCs in states with low literacy levels, so they cannot take advantage of poor and illiterate people.

**Services:** Better Grievance Redressal facilities should be made available to the victims of AePS fraud. Also, the SMS alert system should be there if the person's bank account is linked with a phone number

**12. [Employment increases in rural India](#)**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Employment increases in rural India**" published in **Business Standard** on **5th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Growth, Development and Employment.

**Relevance:** Employment generation

**Synopsis:** In all the major labour market metrics, it is rural India that shows big improvements. Labour conditions improved in urban India also but not as much as they did in rural India.

**Introduction**

Labour participation in Rural India increased 0.20 percentage points in last month as compared to a much smaller 0.02 percentage points increase in Urban.

Further, the employment rate rose by 0.85 percentage points in rural India in comparison, urban India saw a smaller increase of 0.47 percentage points in its employment rate in the same months. This translates to a big 8.5 million increase in employment during the month.

Consequently, the all-India unemployment rate fell by 1.46 percentage points. The fall was **larger in rural India** than in urban India.

#### **How rural India has impacted India's Employment scenario?**

Of the 8.5 million additional people employed in September, 6.5 million were in rural India. Rural India accounts for about 69 per cent of total employment. But 76.5 per cent of the additional employment created in September was in rural India.

This is an extraordinary increase in rural India in the month of September when the demand for labour from agriculture is usually low. It is estimated that around 6 million were absorbed in non-farm rural jobs.

The construction industry in rural India was the largest absorber of additional labour in September, taking in 7.55 million people.

#### **What are the reasons?**

**First**, investment in road building has been growing steadily. Road projects worth Rs 1 trillion were completed in 2020-21, and Rs 1.27 trillion worth of projects are expected to be completed in 2021-22.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had spent Rs 780 billion this year against Rs 374 billion in the last year or Rs 322 billion in the year before. This **accelerated spending** and the expectation of more road projects being completed in the year could have created the additional demand for labour in the construction industry.

**Second**, a somewhat less likely reason, is that it is possible there was some acceleration in employment under the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme** (MGNREGS).

**Third**, rural India also saw a substantial increase in employment in the manufacturing sector in September. Employment in rural manufacturing industries increased by 4.7 million during the month. Food industries, metal, and textile were the major contributors

However, the rural services sector unemployed a substantial 6.8 million jobs. Most major services industries shed jobs in September. These included retail trade, personal non-professional services, travel and tourism, and education.

This suggests that, people have moved from the services sectors to construction and manufacturing industries in rural India. Most of the new jobs created in rural India were of daily wage labourers.

#### **13. The future of vertical farming is brighter than once thought**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**The future of vertical farming is brighter than once thought**" published in **Livemint** on **5th October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Significance of vertical farming

**Synopsis:** The concept of vertical farming can fix several problems faced by conventional farms.

## Introduction

AeroFarms is going to be the first vertical-farming startup to be listed on the Nasdaq in the next month after it completes a merger with Spring Valley Acquisition Corp.

### What is Vertical farming?

It is a system for growing food without soil or sun that for decades has thrived mainly in sci-fi films and the International Space Station.

### How vertical farming can be beneficial in future?

**Vertical farms can play a key role in producing local and perishable specialty crops:** They can eliminate fuel-intensive long-distance trucking, along with food rot and waste. When located in and near cities, they have the added advantage of being protected from supply chain disruptions.

**Benefit drought prone areas:** the technology AeroFarms and other market leaders are pioneering will benefit regions that have increasingly limited water and arable land.

**Less water usage:** Aeroponic farms use up to 95% less water than in-field vegetable production and grow food 30% to 40% faster. They use as little as 0.3% of the land of a field farmers.

**High productivity:** The company has seen a 23% increase in its yield-per-square-foot of indoor growing space in the past year alone, and has sped the grow cycle for baby leafy greens from 20 to 14 days—compared to 4 to 6 weeks in the field.

**Organic produce:** The plants are grown without herbicides, fungicides or insecticides, gains for both the economics and human health.

**High-flavour and high-nutrient produce and high-profit ingredients for nutraceuticals:** The plant data gathered by cameras and sensors have driven rapid innovations. Variables including light, moisture, nutrients, oxygen, CO<sub>2</sub>, and temperature can be monitored so precisely within a vertical farm that the flavours, nutrients and phenotypes of plants, in turn, can be manipulated.

### What are some issues associated with vertical farming?

**Requires more energy and technology:** For example, AeroFarms has pioneered an ‘aeroponic’ system that grows plants in stacked metal trays, their roots dangling in mid-air as they’re fed a nutrient-rich mist. LED lights replace sunshine.

**High cost of input:** Cameras and sensors gather millions of data points tracking the needs of the plants as they grow.

**Skilled human resource:** This kind of hyper-controlled indoor agriculture requires an expensive labour force of engineers, plant scientists and computer programmers.

**Luxury good:** Vertical farming also relies on urban real estate more expensive than rural farmland. AeroFarms’ products, which include ‘baby watercress’ and ‘micro broccoli’, currently sell for \$2 an ounce.

**High-tech agriculture is still high-risk:** Because there is no soil or other barrier to protect the roots, even a small number of bacteria in the root chamber can harm the plants.

## 14. [Recurring pain: On RBI's decision on auto-debit transactions](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Recurring pain**” published in **Business Standard** on **5th October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Roles and responsibilities of RBI

**Synopsis:** RBI must re-examine its auto-debit restrictions

### Introduction

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) new rules controlling recurring payments on credit or debit cards came into force.

The new rules mandate advanced notification by banks to customers for executing recurring payments which are of value of ₹ 5,000 and above. It is meant for seeking the latter's approval for taking forward any such transaction.

Under this new system, for any transaction of more than ₹ 5,000, banks will send onetime passwords (OTPs) to customers. Currently, auto-debits are allowed under the new system without one-time passwords for payments under Rs 5,000.

The broad purpose of the new rules is to ensure that holders of credit or debit cards are not constantly hit by recurring charges without their consent.

While the RBI's motivation in attempting to protect consumers from unwanted payments on their cards is laudable, any regulation can only be judged by its outcomes.

### What are the issues and challenges associated with the RBI's move?

**Impact on small Enterprises:** Many auto-debits failed for customers and smaller enterprises that depend upon online payments sharply revised their revenue estimates downward.

**Rationality being Questioned:** The RBI has not given any reasoning for its decision to bring such low-impact transactions under the compliance rules.

**Lack of consultation with relevant Stake holders:** Smaller enterprises, start-ups, and end-users were not given a voice in the process.

### What are the other alternatives available?

There are multiple other mechanisms that might be considered. For example, banks could have been mandated to keep a record of recurring payments on a customer's net-banking portal, where they could access it and turn it on and off as desired.

Alternatively, the new protocols could be limited to recurring payments over a certain threshold.

### What is the way forward?

**First**, pre-authorisation of debits must be clear and transparent, users should be clear where their personal data is being held, and it should be easier to cancel subscriptions through payments operators.

**Second**, RBI as a consumer-facing regulator will have to work harder to expand its consultation process before introducing new rules.

**Third**, having observed the problems caused by the new rules, the RBI must swiftly respond, and work out how to make them more palatable for smaller enterprises and consumers.

### 15. India should never fall into the trap of premature celebration

**Source:** This post is based on the article "India should never fall into the trap of premature celebration" published in **Livemint** on **5th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning

**Relevance:** Need of sustainable development of Indian economy

**Synopsis:** India must focus on doing things right before getting too enthusiastic over the country's economic ascent.

### Introduction

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of October, First week 2021

There is talk of the BSE Sensex at 200,000. In 2019, a year that India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth fell, there was talk of achieving a \$10 trillion nominal GDP by 2030. Such talk has begun to resurface, though a recovery has barely begun. If we are to avoid another boom-bust cycle, such triumphalism is best avoided.

### **What are the things we need to get right?**

**Targets and rankings are only means to ends:** The elevation of 'Ease of Doing Business' (EoDB) ranking to a goal in itself led to unethical practices, and the survey has been abandoned by the World Bank. India's EoDB rank was based on data from two cities. That cannot be wholly representative. Moreover, operating conditions remain difficult for small businesses. Governments alone are not at fault. For example, banks require incorporated entities to submit directors' resolutions printed on company letterheads for the opening of bank accounts. Why? Who uses letterheads these days? Will the company's registration number not suffice? Also, even now, for proof of a bank account, many want a cancelled cheque, though payments are mostly electronic.

**Second, we remain a society of rights without responsibilities, authority without accountability, and entitlement without commitment.** In general, the operating principle of governance remains one of prohibition unless an act is given explicit permission. It should be the other way around. Until that happens, the overheating of our economy after a few years of growth is a given. On its part, the private sector must imbibe the spirit that Pawan Goenka of SCALE advocates: Spell out what you can deliver to the country before placing your demands. If these change, a troublesome trust deficit will disappear and so will our fiscal deficit.

**Third,** policymakers will serve India well if they focus on doing what it takes to improve India's ECI ranking. It would mean making our universities fountainheads of knowledge, research and application. The quality of higher education needs to rise. State governments are still keen on levelling students down instead of levelling them up. Tamil Nadu's protest against NEET is a neat example. Promoters of private universities are still figuring out the right balance between involvement and interference.

**Index of economic complexity (ECI):** Harvard University's index of economic complexity (ECI) provides an indirect assessment of whether a country would be able to progress from low middle-income status to middle-income and then upper-income status. India's index reading has improved marginally from 0.32 in 2000 to 0.46 in 2019. During the same period, China's ECI went up from 0.44 to 1.35. Mexico went from 0.90 to 1.31.

### **16. Cities are taking climate action**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Cities are taking climate action**" published in **The Hindu** on **5th October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Tackling climate change.

**Synopsis:** Efforts taken by states to deal with climate change, hurdles in transforming states in to a sustainable urban state and how we can find a solution to deal with the twin challenge of climate change and inclusive development.

#### **Introduction**

Recently, Maharashtra's Environment Minister announced that 43 cities across the State will join the **UN-backed 'Race to Zero' global campaign. This campaign aims to create jobs while meeting goals of climate change and sustainable development.**



Maharashtra is the state that experiences multiple risks (floods, drought, sea-level rise). It has made inadequate policy action on climate-resilient development. Hence, this step is praiseworthy.

### **Are cities doing enough?**

After assessing climate action in 53 Indian cities with a population of over one million, it was found that approximately half of these cities report climate plans. Of these, 18 cities have moved towards implementation.

It signals that recurrent experiences of floods, water scarcity, cyclones and storm surges are being assimilated into urban development policy. In terms of intervention, we have focused on particular, isolated risks. For example, most cities report targeted projects to deal with heat waves and water scarcity, followed by inland flooding, extreme rainfall, and growing disease incidence. Coastal flooding, sea-level rise, and cyclones are discussed less often. It is despite the fact that India has long coastline and highly vulnerable coastal cities and infrastructure. Hence, we have failed to realize how multiple risks converge and reinforce each other. For example, seasonal cycles of flooding and water scarcity in Chennai.

### **What are some steps taken by the states?**

Front-runner cities in terms of climate change action plans are Ahmedabad, Tamil Nadu etc. Ahmedabad had a Heat Action Plan (HAP) which helped to reduce heat mortality. The HAP involves many stakeholders. Combining **infrastructural interventions (for example, painting roofs white) and behavioral aspects (building public awareness on managing heat)**, the model has now been scaled up to 17 cities across the country.

Nature-based solutions such as **mangrove restoration in coastal Tamil Nadu and urban wetland management in Bengaluru** have demonstrated how restoring ecosystem health can sustain human systems as well. For example, urban parks provide cooling benefits and wetlands regulate urban floods.

### **What are the hurdles in developing sustainable Indian cities?**

**First**, inadequate finances and political will.

**Second**, inadequate institutional capacity in existing government departments to reorient ways of working.

Solving these would help in planning for multiple, intersecting risks. This would transform the ways our cities operate and expand. Undertaking long-term planning needs resilience planners in every line department as well as communication channels across departments to enable vertical and horizontal knowledge sharing.

### **What are some recommendations to transform cities to make it sustainable?**

We need to change our behavior and life style. One example of behavioral change is bottom-up sustainable practices such as urban farming where citizens are interpreting sustainability at a local and personal scale. This would lead to many advantages.

**One**, growing one's own food on terraces and simultaneously enhancing local biodiversity

**Two**, composting organic waste and reducing landfill pressure

**Three**, sharing farm produce with a neighbour, bringing communities closer and creating awareness about food growing.

To deal with the twin challenges of climate change and inclusive development, pledges like Maharashtra's are a welcome addition to ongoing climate plans. This is high time when we

need to focus on climate change solutions and equip our city planners and citizens to implement them.

### 17. Taproots to help restore India's fading green cover

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Taproots to help restore India's fading green cover” published in **The Hindu** on **5th October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** About forest restoration and its importance.

**Synopsis:** Forest restoration activities and why they are important. Various challenges associated with forest restoration and solutions to deal with it.

#### **Introduction**

Forest covers nearly 30% land surface of the earth. They provide a wide variety of ecosystem services and support countless and diverse species around the globe. They also stabilise the climate, sequester carbon and regulate the water regime.

#### **What is the reason that forest restoration activities have become increasingly popular?**

As per the State of the World's Forests report 2020, since 1990, around 420 million hectares of forest have been lost through deforestation, conversion and land degradation. India lost 4.69 MHA of its forests for various land uses between 1951 to 1995.

Despite various international conventions and national policies in place to improve green cover, there is a decline in global forest cover.

This is the prime reason for forest restoration activities including tree planting to become increasingly popular. We have declared **2021-2030 as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration** for improving environmental conditions and enhancing human communities.

#### **What is restoration?**

Restoration is bringing back the degraded or deforested landscape to its original state by various interventions. It enables them to deliver all the benefits. Building and maintaining activities help to improve ecological functions, productivity and create resilient forests with multifarious capabilities. India shelters 8% of the world's known flora and fauna.

#### **What are the key challenges associated with the forest restoration?**

**First**, local ecology with a research base: forest restoration and tree planting are leading strategies to fight global warming by way of carbon sequestration. However, planting without considering the local ecology, planting a forest in the wrong places such as savannah grasslands are more dangerous.

**Second**, as per recent research, naturally regenerated forests tend to have more secure carbon storage. Being less tech-sensitive, cost-effective and conserving more biodiversity, natural forest restoration is becoming more widely accepted. But we must consider the local ecology before implementing any restoration efforts to retain their biodiversity and ecosystem functions.

**Third**, restoration needs research support for its success. Active restoration includes planting and passive restoration focuses on halting environmental stressors or adopting an intermediate approach of aided natural regeneration. For both we need critical examination before putting restoration interventions into practice.

### **What is the situation in India?**

Nearly 5.03% of Indian forests are under protection area (PA) management. They need specific restoration strategies. The remaining areas witness a range of disturbances including grazing, encroachment, fire, and climate change impacts that need area specific considerations. Much of the research done on restoration is not fully compatible with India's diverse ecological habitats.

Hence, **local research duly considering ecological aspects, local disturbances and forest-dependent communities is vital to formulate guidelines for locally suitable interventions and to meet India's global commitment.**

### **What are the solutions for protection and development of forests?**

**First**, participation of local communities with finances for incentives and rewards is essential to redress this complex riddle. We can involve local people by forming joint forest management committees (JFMC). At the same time, review of their functionality and performance is essential to make them more dynamic and effective.

**Second**, negotiations with a wide range of stakeholders including these committees for resolving conflicts and fulfilling restoration objectives.

**Third**, adequate financing is needed for restoration.

**Fourth**, we need the active approach of restoration which includes tree planting and the involvement of communities seeks incentives and rewards and make the whole affair quite cost-intensive.

**Fifth**, the contribution of corporates in restoration efforts, land-based programmes of various departments.

**Sixth**, active engagement of stakeholders including non-governmental organisations, awareness and capacity building of stakeholders with enabling policy interventions and finance can help a lot to achieve the remaining 16 MHA restoration objectives for India.

### **18. Economic lessons for India from the Evergrande crisis in China**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Economic lessons for India from the Evergrande crisis in China" published in Live Mint on 6th October 2021.

**Syllabus:** GS -3 – Industrial policies of India

**Relevance:** This article highlights the issues facing India's real estate sector.

**Synopsis:** China's Evergrande issue has highlighted the importance of its real estate sector. India can take a few lessons out of this crisis.

#### **Background**

Evergrande, the world's most indebted real estate company in China, may collapse in the near future. It has worried the financial and economic world.

Read more – [China's 'Lehman moment'](#)

However, the big issue to highlight is China's dependence for growth on its real-estate sector. Real estate makes up for around 29% of the Chinese economy, as per estimates in Peak China Housing, Kenneth S. Rogoff and Yuanchen Yang.

It has resulted in the mounting of the huge debt of real-estate companies and debt of consumers who have taken housing loans.

As per Fitch Ratings, Chinese household debt as of the end of 2020 stood at 62% of China's gross domestic product (GDP). Any excessive debt-driven growth is not good for a country in the long run.

In the light of the events in China, we need to analyze the situation of the real estate sector in India and take lessons from this crisis in China.

### India's Real estate sector

**Low Share in the GDP:** As witnessed in China, the real-estate sector has huge multiplier effects. The real estate sector formed around 7% of the Indian economy in 2019-20. While in the Chinese case this figure was too high, in the Indian case, it is too low.

**Multiplies effect:** Real estate sector boosts other sectors, which provide inputs to this sector. For example – steel and concrete, from the manufacturing sector, labour input from the construction sector, capital input from the banking sector, etc.

**Demographic dividend:** Real estate sector creates more jobs, particularly at the semi-skilled and low-skilled levels. It will help in reducing disguised unemployment in the agriculture sector.

**High interest rate and home prices:** The Indian real-estate sector has been stagnant, primarily because of high-interest rates and high home prices. It is evident from the fact that priority-sector home loans given by banks as a proportion of overall housing loans have gone down from around 72.7% in September 2007 to an all-time low of 32% in August 2021.

**Priority sector home loans** are home loans of up to ₹35 lakh in metropolitan centres with populations of 1 million-plus. In non-metropolitan centres, they are home loans of up to ₹28 lakh. It is subject to the condition that the homes being bought should be priced up to ₹45 lakh and ₹30 lakh, respectively, in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas

The issue here is that the banks are largely financing homes worth at least ₹30 lakh in a country with an annual per capita disposable income of about ₹1.5 lakh.

### Lessons from China

Firstly, homes in a price range of ₹10-15 lakh are required for real estate to become a major sector, it has been in the Chinese case.

Secondly, Land prices on the edges of cities and within cities need to come down. Land-usage norms should be reformed.

Third, running a real estate company needs to be made simpler than it actually is at present. It will resolve the issue of concentration of real-estate companies in few cities.

### 19. Crackdown in China, hope in India

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Crackdown in China, hope in India” published in **The Hindu** on **6<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 Industrial policies of India.

**Relevance:** To understand the impact of Chinese policies in India.

**Synopsis:** China's sweeping overhaul of its tech sector could benefit India in the near future.

#### Introduction

Last year **China stopped Ant Group's Initial Public Offering (IPO)**, which is Alibaba's fintech arm. Recently, there is another high-profile crackdown on a Chinese tech company.

China has also imposed various regulations, antitrust and anti-monopoly lawsuits, cyber security probes, and algorithm controls on the entire tech segment, ranging from e-commerce websites, food delivery apps to e-learning portals. These restrictions are estimated to have wiped off over \$1.5 trillion of value from Chinese tech stocks.

### What is the China motive behind that?

China wants to ensure that **no private** company or competitive country **should gain enough data** that will impose challenges to Chinese Communist Party-led state dominance.

Also, China **restricted the rules only to the commercial tech** sector. **State-supported those sectors which perceived to be of higher value** like 5G/6G, semiconductor chips, artificial intelligence, biotechnologies, batteries, aviation and space tech. They want to maximize China's geopolitical and geo-economic gains.

### How these Chinese restrictions will benefit India?

The rate of digitization has accelerated during the pandemic in India. Start-ups in India raised a record \$10.46 billion in the first half of this year alone. India's tally of unicorns has crossed 60. This projected growth image will attract the companies fleeing from China because of their strict regulations.

**Read more:** [1,600 new tech start-ups and 12 unicorns in 2020: Nasscom's Indian Tech Start-up Ecosystem report](#)

### What should India do?

India, while enhancing its internal capacity should also **collaborate parallel with other friendly nations**. The ongoing talks with Taiwan to bring in a semiconductor chip manufacturing plant to India is a step toward this direction. If successful, this could drive next-generation industries, including 5G devices and electric vehicle.

**Read more:** [Hello Taiwan: New Delhi should boost ties with Taipei not just because of Chinese threat. There are other benefits](#)

India's first success in sectors like biotech and space shows that with concerted efforts in manufacturing. So, similar concerted efforts to develop indigenous manufacturing and hard technology are vital if India is to retain its strategic autonomy.

## 20. [Tarballs on India's west coast: A tale of shifting responsibilities](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Tarballs on India's west coast: A tale of shifting responsibilities**" published in **Down to Earth** on **4th Oct 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** environmental problems caused by tarballs

**Synopsis:** Tarballs, how they are formed, their impact on environment and judicial & legal provisions dealing with such issues.

### Introduction

Tarballs hit the news headlines recently when they started appearing on well-known beaches of Mumbai and Goa. These aquatic pollutants have flooded Anjuna, Morjim, Colva and Mandrem beaches in Goa as well as Juhu, Versova, Dadar and Cuff Parade shorelines in Mumbai.

### What are tarballs and how are they formed?

Tarballs are dark-coloured substances formed from weathering of crude oil floating on the ocean surface. These are dropped off to shores by waves and sea currents. They accumulate in several sizes ranging from small globules to those as big as a basketball.

Discharge from municipal waste, oil-well blowouts, deliberate and accidental release of bilge and ballast water from ships are among the main factors driving the formation of these pollutants.

**What are the challenges being posed by tarballs?**

**Bacterial threat:** Tarballs can be hazardous to human life due to the presence of **Vibrio vulnificus**, a bacteria whose entry through wounds could be fatal.

**Marine biodiversity:** These petroleum blobs also affect marine biodiversity in several ways, such as disturbing turtle habitats. This in turn, augments the impact on humans who consume marine fish.

**Difficult to clean:** The tarballs are difficult to wash off from the cleaning equipment thereby posing a challenge for authorities.

**Why tarballs are being seen on the western coast of India?**

The presence of tarballs can indicate oil spills.

**Oil spills and circulation patterns:** In addition to the big spills near Mumbai, the Arabian Sea experiences **oil spills** routinely as it is also a crowded oil transportation waterway, with western coast corporations like Bombay High, Panna-Mukta oil field, Tapti gas fields and Essar Oil.

All the oil spilled in the Arabian sea eventually gets deposited on the western coast in the form of tarballs during monsoon, when the wind speed and circulation patterns favour their transportation.

**How have authorities responded to the problem?**

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) and the Environment Ministry have not addressed the tarball crisis yet, maintaining that they do not have a legal mandate.

As per MPCB, it doesn't have jurisdiction over the cleaning of beaches or in the deep oceans, where the oil leaks usually occur. It is also not authorised to control or produce guidelines for vessels and ships.

**Who is liable for the tarball pollution?**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Apex Court, in several cases, have held the polluters liable for oil spills and other actions that have harshly impacted the marine environment.

- In the **Ramdas Janardan Koli vs The Secretary to Govt of India, Union Ministry of Environment & Forest and Ors case**, the NGT had given relief to 1,630 fisher families of Raigad district who were adversely affected by Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust's (JNPT) project. The tribunal held that the expansion of the port activities by JNPT was a threat to the environment. Also, the oil spill had added to the loss of ecology and environment and ordered compensation of the affected families.

- In the **Samir Mehta vs Union of India and Ors**, the NGT bench upheld the "precautionary principle" and the "polluter pays" principle, along with the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article 21. The landmark judgement ordered a Panama-based shipping company, along with its Qatar-based sister concerns, to pay damages caused by the sinking of their ship off Mumbai's coast in 2011.

**Must Read:** [What are some pre-existing legal provisions for environmental protection in India?](#)

### What is the way forward?

Lawmakers must take up environmental concerns as a priority, apart from the collective efforts of the vigilant citizens, activists and environmentalists.

Government regulations on licensing, oil filling at designated ports must be thoroughly followed and commissions must be set up for specifically dealing with coastal management.

### 21. [The recent QES estimates are unreliable](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The recent QES estimates are unreliable**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th October 2021**. **Syllabus:** GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

**Relevance:** Recent QES estimates and its shortfalls

**Synopsis:** New Quarterly Employment Survey, its key findings, various challenges associated with the survey and the way forward

#### Introduction

Recently, the Ministry of Labour and Employment released the results of a new Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) for April-June 2021 for the organized (formal) sector.

It represents establishments employing ten or more workers. The surveyed sectors were manufacturing, construction, trade, transport, education, health, accommodation and restaurant, Information Technology/Business Process Outsourcing (IT/BPO), and financial services.

#### What are the key findings of the survey?

**First**, it estimated a growth of 29% in the total employment in the nine selected sectors as compared to Sixth Economic Census (2013-14).

**Secondly**, employment fell post the lockdown on July 1, 2020. But 24 lakh jobs that was lost during the lockdown in 2020 came back by the first quarter of 2021.

#### What are the various issues/concerns associated with the survey?

The new QES will help generate timely employment estimates for the larger units. However, the analysis suffers from various issues and calls for caution in its interpretation.

**Limited coverage-** formal establishments account for a small proportion of all non-agricultural establishments (merely 1.66% as per the Economic Census (EC) of 2013-14). Also, a large share of workers (81.3% as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2018-19)) worked in the unorganized sector. With its limited coverage, the QES based on data for formal sector enterprises cannot provide a total picture of employment dynamics.

**Major deviation from the other reports-** Data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed that during April 2020, **12.1 crore workers lost their jobs** (mostly informal workers). **9.1 crore job losses** occurred amongst small traders and casual labourers. The unemployment rate by current weekly status in urban areas increased from **9.1%** (before the lockdown) to **20.8%** (Post lockdown).

**Methodological shortcomings-** The new QES data suffers from methodological shortcomings like outdated sample frame (QES used EC-2013 sample frame), non-comparability of employment numbers and differences in methods used for gathering the information. Hence, instead of rushing to produce new QES based on outdated sample frame, it was required to wait for the release of the newly updated frame in the EC-2020.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of October, First week 2021

– *Sample frame: The list of units (e.g., persons, households, businesses, etc.) in the survey population*

**Did not include latest units-** the new QES has a sample of approximately 11,000 establishments. But sample frame implies that QES does not include units set up after 2013.

**Primarily a telephonic survey-** which shows lack of verification of responses of establishments

**Sample collected with a short reference period-** The questionnaire of the QES asks establishments about employment details for a specific quarter. In contrast, the EC-2013 questionnaire asks establishments about the number of persons working on the last working day prior to the date of fieldwork in the establishment.

**Conceptual problem-** in comparing employment numbers of the Economic Census (EC) with the QES. Although the former asks questions about the number of persons working in an enterprise, it is not a good instrument for estimating the size of the workforce or for analysing employment trends as the principal objective of the EC is generating a frame, not estimating employment.

### What is the way forward?

We need to produce quarterly employment data for selected industries in the organised sector. Simultaneously, we cannot compromise on data quality and its reliability, in a rush to generate high-frequency estimates.

## 22. WHO's stark message on air quality — and what India must do

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**An Expert Explains: WHO's stark message on air quality — and what India must do**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Air pollution in India

**Synopsis:** Air pollution is worsening in India. We need to raise our air quality standards in line with recently released WHO guidelines and ensure strict compliance while transitioning to a cleaner energy model.

### Introduction

In its recent [air quality guidelines \(AQGs\)](#), the WHO said that the impact of poor air quality on public health is at least twice as bad as previously estimated.

Globally, it is estimated that exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> kills 3.3 million people every year, most of them in Asia.

India has 37 of the world's 50 most polluted cities. Still, India's air quality standards are not strict. For instance, its standards for PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> are 60 and 100 µg/m<sup>3</sup> respectively (over 24 hours), while the WHO's new standards are 15 and 45 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (over 24 hours).

### Why India should be concerned about air pollution?

**Worst mortality rates:** India's air pollution-influenced mortality rates are among the worst. The Global Burden of Disease estimates that India lost 1.67 million lives in 2019 directly as a result of breathing polluted air, or because of pre-existing conditions exacerbated by air pollution.

– Uttar Pradesh had the biggest share at 3.4 lakh, Maharashtra had 1.3 lakh, and Rajasthan 1.1 lakh.



**Lower life expectancy:** The average life expectancy in Delhi is 6.4 years lower than the national average of 69.4, and the number is starting to fall for even coastal cities like Mumbai and Chennai.

### **What are the harmful effects of the air-pollution?**

#### **On health**

-The health impacts of PM<sub>2.5</sub> exposure include lung cancer, cerebrovascular disease, ischaemic heart disease and acute lower respiratory illness, besides exacerbating ailments like depression.

-Exposure to ozone has been linked to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

-Prolonged exposure to air pollutants affects newborns and babies still in the womb. Mothers may have to deal with the trauma of premature deliveries and stillbirths. Foetuses face increased risk of being born with lungs that are not yet developed to function properly, and congenital defects that can impact the rest of their lives.

**On economy** – A 2019 study found that India's poor air quality erased **3% of its GDP** for the year and caused a loss of nearly Rs 7 lakh crore (~USD 95 billion). The reason being employees failing to show up at work, far fewer people stepping out to buy goods, and foreign tourists staying away after health warnings. Official figures indicate a **loss of 820,000 jobs** in the tourism industry and 64% of businesses squarely blame air pollution.

**On infrastructure-** Air pollution affected solar panels as ground-level smog and the particulate matter chokes their power output.

**On agriculture-** Several studies have noted a 25% drop in crop yield for wheat and rice after prolonged exposure to PM and ozone.

### **What is the way forward?**

– India needs to **revisit its National Ambient Air Quality Standards**, revise them down to WHO levels, and implement them without exception.

– We need to **conduct nationwide studies** and gather raw health data on air pollution to get a picture of how many Indians, regardless of age, gender and occupation, are suffering under bad air.

– **The China example-** China handled the issue by prioritising **zero-emissions transport, staggered use of internal combustion engine vehicles, and by enforcing prevention on point sources of pollution with few exceptions.**

**-Cleaner energy-** India's National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) can help to find solutions. States like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Telangana have introduced policies to speed up their market shares, and Electric Vehicles' year-on-year sales are increasing.

**-Better monitoring-** We need to expand the country's air quality monitoring network. We can use new low-cost monitors instead of CPCB monitors which are costly. The new monitors capture readings for not only PM<sub>2.5</sub> and 10 but also gases like NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, methane, and secondary volatile organic compounds. The Centre and state governments must boost the density of the **Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS)** network to fully inform the science behind the corrective measures.

### **23. World Is Entering A New Moon Age**

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"World Is Entering A New Moon Age"** published in **The Times of India** on **6th October 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Artemis programme and India's stance

**Synopsis:** About NASA's Artemis programme, various consequences of India joining the programme and how India needs to tackle all this.

### **Introduction**

On September 7, 2019, India's Chandrayaan-2 Moon Lander crashed in a cloud of lunar dust no human would witness. It had experienced a "hard landing" on a desolate patch of the lunar surface. It shows the difficulties of the operation and 'optimism and determination' that go into India's spacefaring aspirations.

### **Why there is attraction of Moon?**

**Firstly**, Moon is barren, lifeless and lethal to humans. However, **its proximity to Earth and its low gravity makes it a potential launching pad for future missions into interplanetary space,**

**Secondly**, it enables us to explore the inner solar system as well as the vast, largely uncharted expanses that lie beyond the Asteroid Belt.

**Third**, The Moon is also believed to **hold natural resources that could help fuel those future expeditions.** For instance, the water discovered on the lunar surface by India's previous Moon mission, Chandrayaan-1, could provide both hydrogen for fuel, and oxygen for breathing.

### **What is NASA's Artemis programme?**

NASA's Artemis programme is the most ambitious lunar exploration undertaking since the Apollo missions. **It plans to land the first woman and the next man on the Moon in the coming years.** It will also include a massive technological effort to build new launchers, spacecraft and ground-based facilities as well as putting a gateway module in orbit around the Moon, to act as a stepping stone for further space exploration.

### **What is India's dilemma regarding Artemis?**

Partnering with the Artemis programme would make it much easier for India to ramp up its own lunar projects.

However, as a precondition for joining the programme, **India would have to sign up to a set of NASA-defined rules** called the Artemis Accords, which 11 countries have signed including Australia, Japan, Brazil, South Korea and the UK. Most of these are not harmful and related with the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, to which India is also a party.

**The most problematic Artemis principle** is the one that allows for the extraction and use of resources in space. While the Outer Space Treaty prohibits claims of sovereignty in space, it says nothing about private ownership and leaves open the possibility of using lunar resources.

As US dominates the global commercial space industry, it will harvest the greatest benefits. For instance,

-In 2015, the US Congress passed a bill enabling private entities to use the mineral resources of other celestial bodies.

-In 2020, then President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing US diplomats to "develop joint statements, bilateral agreements and multilateral instruments" that would make the use of space resources an international norm.

Artemis Accords are a direct outcome of this effort.

**Russia-China problem:** India's choices are also complicated by the existence of the rival Russia-China International Lunar Research Station project. Further, Russians and Chinese are also slated to come up with their own version of Artemis Accords by the end of 2021. So, we have three options – join Artemis Accords, join ILRS, or go solo.

**What are the consequences of these three options and what should India do?**

India may lose out on major opportunities if it seeks to explore space by itself. ILRS attractions are spoiled by the presence of China. So, the least bad option for India would be to join the Artemis programme.

Instead of agreeing to all US demand, India must

- insist on **mechanisms for sharing technology and space infrastructure.**
- use informal fora, like the newly set up Quad working group on space to push for more detailed norms governing activities on celestial bodies.
- India must continue to pursue bilateral space cooperation with Russia, which may even allow it to benefit from some of the capabilities developed for the ILRS project. The time for active space diplomacy is now.

**24. Road accidents can be reduced**

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

- **“Recognising altruism: On rewarding Good Samaritans on road”** published in **The Hindu** on **7<sup>th</sup> October 2021.**
- **“Road accidents can be reduced”** published in **The Hindu** on **7<sup>th</sup> October 2021.**

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

**Relevance:** To understand the need for proper road safety mechanisms in India.

**Synopsis:** India road accident status highlights the importance of road safety in India.

**Introduction**

Recently, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways decided to award Good Samaritans who save the lives of road accident victims with the cash prize.

**Read more:** [Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Launches Rewarding Scheme for Grant of Award to the Good Samaritan who has saved life of a victim of a fatal accident involving a motor vehicle](#)

**What is the present status of road accidents in India?**

At present **India ranked third** among 20 nations that have the highest number of accidents. India **cases to fatalities ratio**, with 415 deaths each day, is much worse compared to the U.S. and Japan, which have more recorded crashes but fewer deaths.

The **Madras High Court** recently struck down the **2018 notification of the Union Government** wherein the **speed limit was hiked** to 120 and 100 km/hour on expressways and highways, respectively. This was done as 66.7% of accidents was attributed to overspeeding in 2017, 55.73% in 2018 and 64.4% in 2019.

**In 2019**, according to a study conducted by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**, More than 1.5 lakh persons were killed and more than 4.5 lakh were injured in road accidents across the country.

National Highways (NHs) and State Highways, which account for about 5% of the total road length, claimed 61% of the deaths related to accidents.

**During 2020**, even with severely disrupted mobility due to COVID-19, National Crime Records Bureau data show 1,33,715 lives were lost in 1,20,716 cases attributed to negligence relating to road accidents.

**Read more:** [“Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities” -World Bank report on road accidents in India](#)

#### **How government is ensuring adequate safety on the roads?**

**Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019:** The Act has a motive of bringing down the death rate due to road accidents by 50% by 2020. The Act has a dedicated chapter to sensitise police forces and hospitals regarding Good Samaritan.

**Note:** Recently, the government shifted the deadline under the Act to 2025.

**National Road Safety Board:** The board mandate include the formulation of standards on, among other things, safety and trauma management, building capacity among traffic police, and put the crash investigation on a scientific footing.

**United Nations Brasilia Declaration:** The declaration was adopted at the second global high-level conference on road safety held in Brazil in 2015. It lays down recommendations on strengthening existing legislations, adopting sustainable transport, strengthening the post-crash response, etc. **India** is a **signatory** to the Brasilia Declaration.

*Various initiatives of states*

**Tamil Nadu** recorded the highest number of accidents in 2017. Tamil Nadu government introduced a model to identify and removing Black spots in the road. At present, they have reduced road accidents by 38% and deaths by 54%.

The **Accident Research Cell of the Delhi Traffic Police** carried out an analysis of accidents and created a database that facilitates the formulation of policies to prevent accidents.

**Read more:** [The issue of Road Safety in India – Explained pointwise](#)

#### **What are the steps India needs to do to reduce accidents?**

Achieving a reduction in mortality on Indian roads need determined action on several factors. Such as

- i) **Scientific road design** and standards, and identification of black spots that are prone to accidents,
- ii) Deploying an adequate number of police personnel, particularly during peak hours,
- iii) Zero-tolerance enforcement of the Motor Vehicles Act,
- iv) **Highway patrols** with police personnel trained in first aid and ambulances every 10 km could also help save precious lives,
- v) **Educating citizens** about the impact of accidents on the kin of the victims through public discourse will help in reducing accidents.

National Crime Records Bureau

#### **25. Will a bad bank fix India's broken banking system?**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Will a bad bank fix India's broken banking system?**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th Oct 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Regarding the recently established Bad bank

**Synopsis:** Last month, the Union government set up the National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) under the Companies Act. Two experts, Ajit Ranade and C.P. Chandrasekhar, discuss the bad bank proposal. We list out the key points.

**Must Read:** [NARCL: Need and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

### **What is the need to bail out banks?**

There are many reasons to bail out banks.

– One is the fact that **interests of the depositors is involved here**. If we allow banks to fail, depositors who operated under the presumption that the regulatory framework would protect their money would be undermined. Historically, we've found that central banks try to actually save banks, either by bailing them out or by amalgamating them with stronger banks, in order to be able to protect depositors.

– Two, there is a systemic problem. **If a bank fails, and there is a sort of contagion effect**, we could actually have systemic problems. Banks are the core of the settlements system and the credit structure and allowing them to go down would be a problem.

– And finally, there is also the option of getting banks to write off these bad assets and then the government can recapitalize them. But that would deal a **significant blow to the government's finances**.

### **Isn't there the risk of moral hazard linked with bailouts, which makes banks more complacent?**

We need to compare the risk of moral hazard of **bailing out banks** versus the impact that **bank failures** would have on depositors and the social and political implications of it.

### **Why has the government opted for a bad bank over directly infusing capital into banks?**

It's important that these bad loans be moved to a separate entity which is exclusively focused on recovery, so that the bank can then focus on its core business, which is business development, giving new loans, credit growth, etc.

Also, for their growth, banks will need to be infused with additional capital to achieve the credit growth needed to get to 7-8% GDP growth. So, the government will continue to pour more capital into banks, while bad loans will be moved to a separate entity.

### **Does the bad bank proposal actually address the root causes of the banking crisis or is this just a temporary band-aid?**

The fact is that over the last few years, the NPA ratio has been mounting, and we've tried many things. In that sense, the bad bank is taking a small chunk out of the overall NPAs to keep the problem within manageable proportions.

## **26. [Our automobile sector needs a hearty dose of tax relief](#)**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Our automobile sector needs a hearty dose of tax relief**" published in **Livemint** on **8th Oct 2021**.

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

**Relevance:** Problems ailing India's auto industry and likely solutions.

**Synopsis:** Due to a demand slump and reluctance shown by entrepreneurs to invest in the auto industry, it is going through a rough phase. This sector can be a key driver for the future economic growth of India.

### **Introduction**

Indian auto industry suffered yet another setback when the renowned automaker, Ford Motors, decided to exit India a few weeks ago.

Faced with **declining demand** for vehicles and often also rising inventory levels, most auto production facilities in the country have been running below their capacities. The covid pandemic and its associated lockdowns have only worsened the industry's problems.

As the outlook remains uncertain despite signs of recovery in the market for passenger vehicles, most players are **reluctant to make fresh investments**. Moreover, the private consumption demand has also not picked up.

**Falling consumption** and a **lack of investment** by entrepreneurs has been responsible for a steady decline in overall growth since 2016-17.

### **What is the present scenario of India's auto industry?**

The auto industry also reflects the above-mentioned trends, as it contributes 7.5% to GDP, but certain sectors within the industry show improvement:

- **Motor cars registrations** have smartly **recovered**, showing robust growth
- **Two-wheeler volumes remain down**

If motor car and two-wheeler sales are considered indicators for consumption by upper and lower-income households, respectively, their divergent trends suggest a [K-shaped recovery](#).

### **Why is auto industry significant for India?**

It accounts for **49%** of the manufacturing sector's output and employs around 35 million people directly and indirectly.

Globally, India is the **fifth-largest passenger-car manufacturer** with 2.9 million vehicles produced in 2020, according to the International Organization for Motor Vehicle Manufacturers.

It is also the **world's largest market for two-wheelers and the largest maker of tractors**.

The industry thus can be a critical driver of overall growth. It is a bright spot now that vehicle-manufacturing in most advanced countries has reached maturity.

### **What are some concerns for auto industry?**

Auto industry is driven by consumption demand and the outlook on demand is still worrisome.

- Urban consumers are postponing purchases as **new mobility solutions** emerge that are disrupting the global auto industry. Electric mobility, digitally connected and autonomously driven vehicles have the potential to drive consumers away from the traditional combustion-based vehicles.
- The **value of car ownership itself is being called into question**, with ride-hailing options provided by apps like Uber and Ola.

### **What is the way forward?**

As an engine of growth, the auto industry needs policy attention.

- **Lowering the cost of ownership** will help generate demand. For instance: We can lower the GST component of the purchase wherein even two-wheelers attract a Goods and Services Tax of 28%.
- **Electric mobility**: The government is pushing electric mobility and has announced a package to incentivize electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. But, if electric vehicles fail to turn affordable, they too will face the demand constraints faced by other carmakers. Perhaps

India could learn from the **example of Norway**, which facilitated electric mobility through truly **generous tax subsidies**.

## 27. **A host of challenges greets India's new Air Chief**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**A host of challenges greets India's new Air Chief**" published in **The Indian Express** on **8th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.

**Relevance:** Challenges confronting Chief of Air Staff

**Synopsis:** The IAF has played a stellar role in defending India. The squadron strength of the Air force is depleting. We need a quality and quantity check of its operational assets before pushing for the creation of theatre commands.

### **Introduction**

Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari assumed office as Chief of Air Staff on September 30. One of the main problems confronting Chief of Air Staff, is that of IAF's depleted assets.

### **What are the challenges confronting the new Air Chief?**

The new Air Chief has a wide spectrum of challenges to address, including

- Rewiring of India's military into new theatre commands and the reservations expressed by the IAF about its "support" role
- The **depletion in operational air assets** due to obsolescence and lack of new platforms. From a strength of 42 combat squadrons in 2002, the IAF now operates barely 30. Experts have cautioned that the combat strength of the IAF will decline to 27 squadrons in five years and will come down to 19 in 10 years.

All this at a time when the country is coping with the Covid pandemic, a complex geopolitical situation due to US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the setback in Galwan.

### **How the Air force intends to boost its squadron strength?**

In the next decade

- IAF hopes to induct the indigenous fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and the Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) — a new platform that would be built in India with a foreign entity, the "original equipment manufacturer" (OEM), and thereby move up to **35 squadrons**.

### **What are the issues with future plans to boost squadron strength?**

The AMCA is "under design" and India's track record in the design and manufacture of indigenous fighter aircraft is cost- and time-intensive.

As regards the MRFA, the request for information for 114 jets has just been issued. The Rafale experience and the long delays associated with it would suggest that speedy selection of an OEM will be difficult to find.

### **What is the way forward?**

Air power is becoming technologically more refined with unmanned platforms, cyber-space linkages and AI advances. The inherent trans-border nature of this military capability needs **astute professional and political handling**. China has demonstrated the degree of suasion and intimidation that airpower can bring to bear in relation to Taiwan.

Acquiring credible aerospace power with a meaningful degree of indigenization will need a greater degree of national resolve, professional integrity and resource allocation.

28. [Seeding a data revolution in Indian agriculture](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Seeding a data revolution in Indian agriculture**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th October 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Agriculture

**Relevance:** Using digital tech for boosting farmer’s income

**Synopsis:** Two consultation paper, one by the Ministry of Agriculture and the other by Bain were released recently. They both talk about leveraging digital technology for helping farmers and supporting their livelihoods.

### Introduction

The first consultation paper is on the **India Digital Ecosystem of Agriculture (IDEA)** from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare (MoA&FW). It talks about a digital revolution in the agriculture sector.

The second is on **Indian Agriculture: Ripe for Disruption** from a private organisation, Bain and Company. It predicts a revolutionary investment growth in agri-logistics, offtake, and agri-input delivery by 2025.

### What is Bain report?

**The Bain report** is a data-based prediction on agri-business scenarios related the agricultural set-up at present and predicting its future trajectories in another 20 years. It includes targeting the production of alternative proteins, and food cell-based food/ingredients and initiating ocean farming, etc.

The report has a ‘**today forward– future back approach**’ and predicts a drastic investment opportunity development by 2025. The agriculture sector (currently worth \$370 billion), is estimated to receive an additional \$35 billion investment.

The two enabling conditions for such investment opportunities are the –changes in the regulatory framework, especially recent changes in the Farm Acts and -digital disruption

**As per the report**, huge investments into the agri-ecosystem can help to achieve the target of doubling farmers’ income in near future.

### What is IDEA report?

The IDEA-consulting paper is based on the Task Force and Working Group report constituted by the MoA&FW to design the blueprint of “digital agriculture”.

IDEA concept is aimed at farmer and the improvement of farmers’ livelihood which can be achieved through **tight integration of agri-tech innovation and the agriculture industry ecosystem** to farming and food systems.

Value-added innovative services by agri-tech industries and startups are an integral part of the IDEA architecture. This will help Indian agriculture sector to become a single national market with a national platform with better connection between producer and consumers.

### What are some issues with these reports?

**First**, the IT industry has opposition to IDEA due to the ethics of creating a Unique Farmer ID based on one’s Aadhaar number and data misuse.

**Second**, the emission, energy, and other resource footprints and sustainability issues around these techniques must be carefully studied to confirm the projected trajectory (which is not a part of the report).



**Third**, both these reports heavily rely on digital disruption to improve farmers' livelihoods. But they fail to discuss how much farmers will be prepared to benefit from these newly emerging business environments. The reality is that majority of small and marginal farmers are not having practical knowledge of the technology. Most of them are under-educated for capacity building. Overall, report ignored the capacity-building required at a farmer's end.

**Fourth**, The Bain report relies on the general assumption that more investments into the agriculture sector will benefit farmers, **but it failed to answer how**. Also, the IDEA concept fails to clarify, how the technology fix will help resolve all the nine issues of Indian agriculture listed at the beginning of the report. T

### What is the way forward?

Though, data revolution is inevitable in the agriculture sector, but we can not only rely on technology fixes to deal with the issue.

We **need to improve the capacities of the farmers in India** – at least until the educated young farmers replace the existing under-educated small and medium farmers. This capacity building can be done through a mixed approach.

–building the capacities of individual farmers or

–coping with the new situation by establishing support systems, through FPOs and other farmers associations where technical support is available for farmers.

To fulfil this target, we **need a separate programme** across the country with considerable investment.

### 29. The farmers' movement is no longer about the three controversial farm laws

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**The farmers' movement is no longer about the three controversial farm laws**" published in **Livemint** on **8th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Issues related to Agriculture

**Relevance:** Farmers' protest against the farm laws passed by the Central govt.

**Synopsis:** Despite the Supreme Court issuing a stay on the controversial farm laws passed by the govt, the protests which started against them, have carried on. They are now less about the farm laws but more about the issues and problems being faced by our farmers since long. A brief look at some of these issues.

### Introduction

The death of farmers participating in the farmers' protest in Lakhimpur Khiri, Uttar Pradesh, is turning into a political contest. Attempts to prevent the politicization of the event led to a restriction on political parties.

All this has brought the farmers' protest back into focus.

### Why farmer protest is more than just being about the farm laws?

The 2020 farm laws led to country wide protest in India. What has surprised many is the longevity of it. More so because the 2020 farm laws they oppose are technically under a Supreme Court stay and there has been no push by the government to implement them, or even to have the stay vacated.

Clearly, the farmer protest today has less to do with a demand for the laws' withdrawal than broader concerns on issues related to the sustainability of farming and farm livelihoods.

**What is the background of the protest and situation in various parts of India?**

The current agitation started after the three farm laws were forced through Parliament without consultation with the sector's stakeholders. But in reality, farmer protests have been going on for the last five years in various parts of the country.

A mobilization in Maharashtra witnessed two long marches. Similar demonstrations were witnessed in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and several other states. In Madhya Pradesh, farmers in 2017 were fired upon, resulting in death of seven farmers.

The causes of these protests were different but had a common theme and reasons.

**Why India has been witnessing farmer protests since few years?**

**Declining profitability of farming**– driven by rising input costs, weak farm-gate prices and the withdrawal or dilution of protections available from the state.

**Decline in income**– not only incomes of farmers have declined between 2012-13 and 2018-19, but the majority of them have turned to wageworkers from farmers. This has resulted in an increased share of casual-wage income in the overall earnings by farmers

**Increase in number of workers in farm sector**- With jobs drying up in non-agricultural sectors, the number of workers in the farm sector has risen up, resulting in decline in per-worker income. With rural wages also falling in real terms over the past three years, farmers' hardship have worsened.

**Attempting to malign the farmers protest**– this has angered farmers. This was visible in the early months, when their movement was sought to be linked with foreign elements.

**Trust deficit**- The absence of consultation with farmers and criticism of farmer unions has led to a widening trust deficit between farmers and policymakers. Such a situation may not be conducive to allowing and facilitating greater market penetration and participation by private players. Instead, it is likely to contribute to farmer resistance to all reforms in the agricultural sector proposed by the government.

**No major efforts by the govt:** Govt Efforts to negotiate with farmers have been superficial and lacking any enthusiasm. Even the report of the Supreme Court-appointed committee has not been shared publicly, with no further attempts from the judiciary.

**What is the way forward?**

Since farmers along with other people dependent on agriculture still account for almost two-thirds of the country, a prolonged protest **could also turn into social and political unrest.**

More so given the large pool of unemployed youth in rural areas who only have a slim chance of getting absorbed meaningfully by an economy suffering from a slowdown and pandemic-induced economic distress.

In times of such a multi-dimensional crisis, a confrontational attitude taken by governments towards farm-protesters will only strengthen their movement.

Consensus for structural changes in the farm sector needs trust-building and onboarding of all stakeholders.

**30. Simple, but brilliant: on Nobel Prize for Chemistry**

Source: This post is based on the article **“Simple, but brilliant: on Nobel Prize for Chemistry”** published in **The Hindu** on **9th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS – 3 – Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

**Relevance:** The article discusses the significance of the discovery of asymmetric organocatalysis.

**Synopsis:** This year's Nobel Prize for Chemistry is awarded for the discovery of an efficient, "precise, cheap, fast and environmentally friendly" concept of catalysis asymmetric organocatalysis.

**Read – [What is asymmetric organocatalysis?](#)**

**Significance of discovery**

**Simpler:** This concept for making molecules is simpler than one could ever imagine.

**Accelerating research:** The multitudes of new organocatalysts developed have helped drive a variety of chemical reactions, in turn accelerating pharmaceutical drug research.

**Other expensive catalysts:** In 2001, the three scientists who first developed asymmetric catalysts won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. But such catalysts often use heavy metals, making them expensive and environmentally harmful.

**Easing the process of molecules:** Natural and synthesised molecules can exist in two forms — right-handed and left-handed. Their properties very often vary depending on their handedness. In the 1950-60s, **thalidomide** was widely used to treat nausea in pregnant women, but caused severe birth defects. It became clear that the right-handed molecule was highly toxic. But asymmetric organocatalysts allowed the production of molecules of the desired mirror-image form.

**Minimizes waste:** Other catalysts require the isolation and purification of each intermediate product. It leads to loss of substance at every stage. On the other hand, the use of asymmetric organocatalysts minimizes waste by allowing several steps in molecule production to continue without interruption.

### **31. [Need Smart Govts For Checking Big Tech](#)**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Need Smart Govts For Checking Big Tech" published in **Times of India** on **8th Oct 2021**. **Syllabus:** GS -3 Industries and industrial policies

**Synopsis:** This article is based on ideas from a book on how governments can check the power of big techs.

**Introduction**

The book **System Error: Where Big Tech Went Wrong and How We Can Reboot**, has been written by Stanford University professors Rob Reich, Mehran Sahami, and Jeremy M Weinstein. This book talks about the issues created by Big techs and ideas to check them.

Today, the world's five biggest companies by market cap are Microsoft, Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, and Facebook.

These companies just focus on profit and are not concerned about the problems they are creating. But when they face backlash, they spend enormous resources on lobbying, public relations, and influencing legislators.

Many tech CEOs see themselves as philosopher-kings or display a libertarian streak and a disdain for government intervention.

**How to check the powers of big Techs?**

Governments can limit the power of Big Tech in three ways.

**First**, address the power gulf between companies and consumers when it comes to personal data. Aggressive commitment to data protection and government agencies capable of enforcing that right would be the first check on corporate power.

**Second**, give greater voice within companies to those who are likely to be hurt by technological change – limit the powers of directors.

**Third**, a crackdown on monopolistic behavior and anti-competitive mergers and acquisitions. Recall how Facebook snapped up WhatsApp and Instagram to control 85% of the social networking market.

**Fourth**, To keep an effective check on these companies, lawmakers have to be more tech-literate too, so that they are not spun by lobbyists.

### 32. [Coal's problems are governance, not climate regulation](#)

**Source:** This post is based on the article “[Coal's problems are governance, not climate regulation](#)” published in **Business Standard** on **8th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Infrastructure: Energy **Relevance:** Understanding the power shortage crisis in India

**Synopsis:** The recent power shortage crisis in India is not about coal, and neither it is about climate action. It's about poor governance.

#### Introduction

It is the worst news possible for a world struggling to recover from a pandemic while also trying to increase its effort to combat climate change: Power shortages in China and India.

Various forecasters have cut their estimates of 2022 growth in China by about 0.5 percentage points.

India's coal shortages have not yet translated into widespread and significant reductions in expectations of growth in the current year. But that might change if there are major industrial power cuts when the festive season hits and expands consumer and household electricity demand.

The Union power minister has warned that supply constraints could last for six months.

**Must Read:** [Coal Crisis in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### What are the problems being faced by India?

They face similar problems in terms of coal supply:

**i). Costly imports:** Spot price for seaborne high-quality thermal coal has now crossed \$200 a tonne — a new record, surpassing one set just before the 2008 financial crash. This has limited options for coal imports.

**ii). Low production:** Domestic coal mining has stumbled. Stockpiles of coal in India have crashed from around 50 million metric tonnes when the pandemic hit in 2020 to under 10 million tonnes today. Coal-fired power plants in India entered October with about four days' worth of coal inventory; it's usually a couple of weeks' worth at least.

#### Is sharper global regulation on emissions responsible for the present shortage?

The fact is that although many supply restrictions have come into force in multiple economies, the basic problems for this electricity shortage are those of **market structure** and **governance**. Policymakers would be wrong to look at this power crisis and assume it means that more climate-friendly regulation is the problem. Power crises are being caused for the same reasons in 2021 that they were decades ago:

- Unreformed pricing
- Poor management of infrastructure
- **Poor governance:** Coal India claims it has returned to pre-pandemic levels of production, effectively blaming the problems on the Railways' negligent treatment of coal trains — although

moving coal provides almost half of the Railways' freight revenues, and more than half of its profits. Here too, there is a **governance issue** to be resolved.

Climate change-associated weather events have played a greater part than normal, with peculiar rainfall patterns and associated floods delaying shipments from the coalfields in India's east-central states.

### **33. What the attacks against minorities in Kashmir reveal**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**What the attacks against minorities in Kashmir reveal**” published in **The Indian Express** on **9th Oct 2021**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Role of External State and Non-state Actors in creating challenges to Internal Security. **Relevance:** terror attacks against minorities in Kashmir

**Synopsis:** Reasons behind recent terrorist attacks in Kashmir, challenges involved and the future course of action.

#### **Introduction**

The targeted terror attacks against minorities in Kashmir indicate a dangerous move. Sikhs and Hindus were identified and shot for being who they are. It also led to Muslim casualties. The purpose was to spread terror, threatening minorities and taking advantage of the communal tensions which are developing in India.

Such attacks indicate that counter-insurgency strategies have their place but not without any comprehensive political settlement that involves all parties.

#### **What is the motive behind these attacks?**

**Drawing a response from the state:** The purpose of these attacks is to draw a response from the state and to create a “whatever happens we will win” strategy.

**Deepening the communal divide:** Their purpose is deep communal divide in India. With this terrorism will get strength.

#### **What are some challenges in resolving the insurgency issue?**

– **Absence of a united front:** Indian republic is facing the tragedy of not have a common language of solidarity or a political language that can express a united front against violence of all kinds. In a state like Kashmir, we do not still have the political language to overcome this divide.

– **Absence of a political settlement:** Kashmir still does not have avenues of normal political articulation. Its statehood has not been restored and its constitutional humiliation continues. Kashmir was never allowed the normal processes of social mediation of a democracy. No new political class has emerged. In its absence, there is no chance of a counterinsurgency strategy succeeding.

#### **How should the govt respond?**

The first is a deepening and widening of combing for terrorists inside Kashmir.

The second response is external. In the Indian state's mind, there is no doubt that this is the work of groups supported by Pakistan. If that is the case, we have once again been reminded (as the US was in Afghanistan), that air strikes are not a solution to the problem of terrorism.