

9pm
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General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

1. The enduring relevance of Nehru's legacy

Source: This post is based on the article “The enduring relevance of Nehru's legacy” published in **The Hindu** on **13th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS1 Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues.

Relevance: Understanding Nehru's legacy.

News: Indian national movement and its champions played a great role in shaping India. Nehru's legacy lies in instilling democratic values in the people of India.

About Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Ambedkar and their contributions

Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Ambedkar embodied the vision of India in the 1940s. Gandhi's morality, Nehru's political passion, Patel's firm hand in administration and Ambedkar's legal acumen translated the Indian national movement into the Indian nation. Some major contributions include,

Mahatma Gandhi: While the world was disintegrating under fascism, violence, he preached the virtues of truth and non-violence.

Ambedkar: While the nation was facing communal carnage, he drove the values of constitutionalism and rule of law.

Patel: While parochial values threaten national unity, he unified the nation.

Gandhi and Nehru, despite their tactical differences, proved to be a formidable combination. Gandhi guided Nehru politically, and Nehru turned out to be an inspirational campaigner for the Indian national congress.

What are the contributions of Nehru?

Nehru's strength was his vision, his nature of politics, his incorruptible nature and his ability to instil faith in the masses. Despite his popularity, he instilled values of democracy in Indian polity and society.

His legacy can be understood through – democratic institution building, pan India secularism, socialist economics at home, and a foreign policy of nonalignment.

Why is Nehru called a champion of democracy?

After the death of Gandhi, he had unbridled power, but he never misused it. He followed all protocols with all respect to the post of president and Vice President.

-He did not interfere in the functioning of the judiciary.

-He wrote letters to chief ministers seeking their opinions.

-He had firm faith in having a strong opposition in Parliament.

-He was always accessible to people, offered daily darshan at home, and never forgot that the power comes from the people.

So it was Nehru under whom 400 million people learned to govern themselves. This pluralist democracy is testimony to the deeds and words of a great visionary Pandit Nehru.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. [AUKUS could rock China's boat in the Indo-Pacific](#)

Source: This article has been developed based on “**AUKUS could rock China's boat in the Indo-Pacific**” article, published in “**The Hindu**” on **8th November 2021**.

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

News: Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States ([AUKUS security agreement](#)) is not a new development. Its root lies in the historical background of these countries.

What makes AUKUS alliance a traditional and natural alliance?

U.S., the U.K., and Australia coming together to create an alliance is not surprising at all, after looking at their historical relations and strategic interests.

The U.S. and the U.K. are in a **special defence partnership** for decades. The U.S. shared nuclear weapons technology with the U.K. after the American Manhattan Project 1940s and U.K. conducted its 1st nuclear weapon test in 1952 in the Montebello Islands in Australia.

Australia still regards the **British monarch as the head of state**. The governor-General of Australia exercises her powers (British Monarch) as per the constitution.

Also, U.S. and the U.K. fought the **2nd world war** as allies, together with Australia. During the Second World War, three Japanese midget submarines launched an attack on the Sydney Harbour. Which established that Australia's distant geographical location could not guarantee its security against a direct maritime threat. Now, **China's increasing naval capabilities** are a threat of the same level for Australia.

The AUKUS joint statement clearly acknowledges that trilateral defence ties are decades old. The word further in the aim (**to further joint capabilities and interoperability**) of AUKUS also signifies that it aims to include other areas of existing defense cooperation i.e. cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies, apart from undersea capabilities. This expansion of areas also provides an opportunity for AUKUS countries to engage the regional countries like New Zealand.

What are the other reasons behind the formation of AUKUS alliance?

China's policy of deliberately targeting Australian exports backfired and resulted in Australia Joining the alliance.

China's naval power is challenging the U.S. dominance in the Pacific. The U.S. has been looking for effective means to militarily counter China.

What are the challenges to AUKUS alliance?

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries are disunited over the emergence of AUKUS. A sudden increase in Australia's naval capabilities may cause unease in the region.

Although Australia has assured ASEAN countries of its support for the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty as well as the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, China can exploit the concerns of ASEAN countries. **For example**, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman has criticised AUKUS as an “exclusive bloc” and “clique” that gravely undermines regional peace and security and reflects a Cold War mentality.

Will AUKUS reduce the significance of QUAD grouping?

The Quad and AUKUS are distinct, yet complementary. While Quad initiatives cover the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, AUKUS has a Pacific-centric orientation. AUKUS will strengthen the security of countries like Japan and Taiwan. Also, QUAD's structure and mandate are not aligned to challenge the Chinese naval power.

2. How Those Critiquing Bureaucrats Get It Wrong

Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Role of civil services in a democracy

Source: This article is developed based on the article “**How Those Critiquing Bureaucrats Get It Wrong**” Published in the **Times of India** on **8th November 2021**.

News: The article addresses the allegations leveled against the bureaucracy.

Lately, bureaucracy has been criticized by many newspapers. It has been called bloated, inefficient, self-serving, obstructive, corrupt, and non-responsive to people. This article addresses these allegations against bureaucracy one by one.

Why the allegations against bureaucracy are misplaced?

Bloated bureaucracy: According to ILO (International Labour Organization) estimates, the percentage of public sector officials in the total workforce is much higher in other countries compared to only 3.8% in India. It is about 18-20% of the total workforce in France and the UK, 12-13% in Germany and the US, and 28% in China. Further, out of the total number of public sector officials, only 2.8% belong to group A, who would take up senior-level, managerial, and leadership tasks.

Self-serving or autonomous: In reality, bureaucracy is subservient to the political executive. It is its duty to implement and respond to the policies, programs, and orders of central and state governments.

Inefficient bureaucracy: There are more than one reasons for that, i.e. outdated rules and regulations, political interference in postings, transfers, corrupt recruitment systems, etc. However, overburdening of bureaucracy is the most important reason. The number of public officials per 10,000 people in India is very low. For example, it is 85 government officials for 10,000 people in India, compared to 625 full-time equivalent in New York State.

Inefficient and corrupt: Political patronage is a reality in bureaucracy. Ministers and MLAs in state governments have a say in postings and transfers of civil servants. Entrepreneurial bureaucrats accept the system and establish the system of political patronage. In many states, a **spoils system** is being established where the MLAs and ministers get bureaucrats of their choice. It gives rise to both inefficiencies and corruption.

3. China challenge: India must stabilise Kashmir to counter Beijing's multi-pronged strategy in the east

Source: This post is based on the article “**China challenge: India must stabilise Kashmir to counter Beijing's multi-pronged strategy in the east**” published in **TOI** on **7th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Relevance: Countering the Chinese threat on Indian borders

News: Pentagon recently released a report stating that that China has been undertaking incremental and tactical actions to press its claims along the frontier with India. How should India respond to this emerging situation?

Must Read: [China taking incremental action to press claims along frontier with India – Pentagon report](#)

What is the way forward for India?

India must take the following steps to counter the Chinese threat:

Keeping the situation in Kashmir under control: India must keep the situation in Kashmir under control. Pakistan's strategy is to keep India busy with China while it makes moves to destabilize peace in Kashmir.

Speed up normalisation in Kashmir: A diversion of security-military resources will only aid the China-Pakistan nexus. Hence, speeding up the pace of normalisation in Kashmir and restoring full political rights through elections must be treated as priority.

– **Elections in Kashmir:** For elections to take place, the delimitation exercise must be completed soon.

Stability and peace in Kashmir will ensure that India will be able to divert its full attention to the China problem.

Partnering with US and QUAD: Dealing with China will require India to partner more closely with the US and Quad.

4. The long road to timely MGNREGA payments

Source: This post is based on the article “**The long road to timely MGNREGA payments**” published on **8th November 2021** in **The Hindu**

Syllabus: GS2 – Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

News: There remain delays in the stage where the Central government transfers wages to the workers' accounts.

There are wage payment delays under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Eight crore MGNREGA wage transactions were pending on Diwali.

According to the **People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG)** findings, funds allocation for this financial year (FY) is 34% lower than the revised budget allocation of last year. And this year's funds have been exhausted.

Also, there are pending arrears of ₹17,543 crore from previous years.

What are the reasons for the delayed payments of MGNREGA wages?

Insufficient funds: There is ample evidence by now, including an admission by the Ministry of Finance, that delays in wage payments are a consequence of **insufficient funds**.

Stage 2 delays: There are two stages in the wage payment process. **a)** In Stage 1, States must electronically send invoices, also called FTOs, to the Central government within eight days of completion of work at a worksite. **b)** In Stage 2, the Central government then processes the invoices and transfers wages directly to the workers' accounts. Stage 2 is the Central government's responsibility that must be completed within seven days after Stage 1.

LibTech India, recently analysed 18 lakh invoices across 10 States from April to September in order to investigate Stage 2 delays. It was found that Stage 2 was completed only for 29% of the invoices within the mandated seven-day period.

There was also a **steady increase in Stage 2 delays** from July to September indicating depletion of funds.

How has central government responded so far?

Instead of ensuring sufficient funds for timely payments, the Central government has repeatedly tried to modify the payment architecture as if payment delays are an outcome of technological hurdles.

What are some other concerns/issues?

Violation of act: As per the Act, if Stage 1 plus Stage 2 exceeds 15 days, then workers are entitled to a delay compensation for each day's delay. However, in violation of the Act and the Supreme Court's orders, no delay compensation for Stage 2 is even being calculated.

Caste-based segregation of Invoices: Earlier, the invoices were not segregated by caste. On March 2, the Central government issued a circular to segregate invoices based on the caste of workers (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and 'Others').

Caste-based segregation has also resulted in tensions at worksites. It had also resulted in a threefold increase of workload for computer operators at blocks.

However, after critical media reportage, the Central government, has revoked the caste-based segregation of wage payments.

Issues in Payments platform: Shifting to Aadhaar Payment Bridge Systems (APBS) from traditional account-based payments has complicated problems. Misdirected payments and payment failures, are being caused due to erroneous Aadhaar mapping with the payment software.

These problems are difficult to resolve even for bank and block officials resulting in increased hardships for workers.

What is the way forward?

At least ₹50,000 crore needs to be allocated urgently and the Central government, in compliance with Supreme Court orders, must automatically calculate and pay the workers their entitled delay compensation.

To secure the payment systems there is a need for an impartial, independent assessment and audit of the payment systems.

5. The country needs to get a handle on mental health

Source: This post is based on the article "The country needs to get a handle on mental health" published in the **Livemint** on **8th November 2021**.

Subject: GS2-Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Relevance: Understanding mental health.

Synopsis: As mental health issues are increasing in India, there is need to address social, institutional and governance issues to overcome this impending crisis.

Introduction

India celebrates **10th October** as **World Mental Health Day**. Despite such campaigns, mental health remains under-invested and underappreciated in India.

What is the status of mental health issues in India?

The proportion of mental disorders to the total disease burden in India has doubled since 1990. **Lancet 2020 study** shows that over 197 million Indians suffered from mental disorders in 2017 (15% of India's population).

UNICEF survey has found that only 41% of people between 15 and 24 years of age in India sought help for mental health issues (compared with 83% in the world).

Read more: [Seeking a paradigm shift in mental health care](#)

What is the impact of the Mental Health issue?

World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that unaddressed mental health issues could cost India \$1 trillion between 2012 and 2030.

What steps have been taken by the Indian government?

The Mental Healthcare Act was passed in 1982. It was further improved with Mental Health Act, 2017. Act mandated each state to set up its own mental health authority by 2019.

Read here: [How can India address its mental healthcare problem?](#)

What are the issues in the Indian system?

According to the **WHO's Mental Health Atlas** for India, there were only 0.07 psychologists and 0.29 psychiatrists per 1 lakh people in 2017.

Psychologist needs a license which requires a 2 year MPhil degree from select institutions picked by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). Though national education policy abolished the need for this degree, RCI still insists on it.

What are the governance issues?

India specifies mental illness on WHO's criteria. But neither RCI nor the health ministry has any clarity or consistency on this in their textbooks. Also, **RCI is part of the Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment** while **mental health is under the health ministry**.

Quota system: RCI, run by bureaucrats, rations out seats for MPhil programmes. This limits the number of trained psychologists that can be produced every year.

What is the way forward?

There is a need to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach, where inputs from all the perspectives are taken to evolve a comprehensive policy.

6. Strengthening vaccine trust

Source: This post is based on the article "**Strengthening vaccine trust**" published in **The Hindu** on **8th November 2021**.

Subject: GS2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Relevance: Boosting vaccine confidence amongst the masses.

News: Vaccination is key to returning to normalcy and in curbing the further spread of COVID-19. Now is the time to put extra efforts to boost vaccine confidence among the public.

After the devastating second wave, India has performed well in controlling the spread of Covid. Vaccination, together with face masks and social distancing, have helped India in return to normalcy.

What is India's vaccination status?

About 78% of the adult population has received one dose and more than 36% has received both doses.

Why we need to make efforts to boost vaccine confidence?

Acceptance of COVID-19 vaccines in India is among the highest in the world. But even small pockets of unvaccinated individuals can threaten the success of the entire immunization campaign. This is especially true of highly transmissible Delta variant of COVID.

Moreover, the misinformation about vaccines can erode vaccine confidence. In 2017-2019, false rumors about the measles-rubella vaccine spread through social media led to vaccine refusals in some areas.

Also, as daily count of cases lessens, the enthusiasm to get vaccinated can subside.

Hence, considerable efforts need to be made to boost vaccine confidence.

What should be done to build confidence?

First, The government should **provide authenticated information** to help curb the rumors and mis-perceptions.

Second, Promoting vaccination as a default normative behaviour should be encouraged. The messenger used for this should belong to local areas and have public trust. For example a Sarpanch, Doctors and health workers.

What should be the way forward?

The Polio campaign with its tagline 'do Boond Zindagi ki' was a very successful campaign for polio vaccination. The message was hopeful and appealed to Indians. A strong endorsement from celebrities and the engagement of community leaders propelled the message. The ongoing campaign to vaccinate India requires similar energy.

For instance: A similar campaign launched with support of marketing agency Wieden+Kennedy, Delhi, "Teeka lagwaya, na?" is a step in the right direction.

Any health emergency requires a multidisciplinary approach. And so, creatives and public health experts must work closely together to bolster vaccine confidence.

7. A new jurisprudence for political prisoners

Source: This post is based on the article "A new jurisprudence for political prisoners" published in **The Hindu** on **8th November 2021**.

Subject: GS2 Indian Constitution – features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure

Relevance: Understanding bail provisions and UAPA.

News: The stringent provisions of UAPA have denied bail to many accused. However, Thwaha Fasal's judgment can now be invoked to release other political prisoners in the country who have been denied bail due to harshness or narrow interpretation of the law.

In **Thwaha Fasal vs Union of India**, the Court has deconstructed the provisions of **the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)**. This has great potential to check blatant misuse of UAPA.

What are the details of the case?

In this case, police arrested three accused. Some material containing radical literature was found and the provisions of the UAPA were invoked. These provisions were:

Section 38 of UAPA: deals with offence relating to membership of a terrorist organization.

Section 39 of UAPA: For support given to a terrorist organization.

Section 13 of UAPA for unlawful activities and **Section 120B of the IPC** on criminal conspiracy.

However, students accused that they were being labelled as terrorists based on their intellectual and ideological inclinations.

What is the SC's view?

Supreme Court granted bail to both accused.

Offences under Section 38 or Section 39: SC remarked that mere possession of documents or inclination to any ideology does not automatically make one a terrorist. Unless and until the association and the support were with intention of furthering the activities of a terrorist organisation offence under Section 38 or Section 39 is not made out.

How *Thwaha Fasal vs Union of India* resolves various issues with UAPA?

Presumption of guilt & Bail provisions: Instead of presumption of innocence, the UAPA holds presumption of guilt of the accused. This makes it hard to obtain bail.

Further, section 43D(5) of the UAPA says that bail should not be granted if there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation is *prima facie* true. UAPA thus permits keeping a person in prison for up to 180 days, without even filing a charge sheet.

The Court, while granting bail to the accused, took a progressive step and refused to interpret this Section in a narrow and restrictive sense.

This was also a reversal of the previously held stand of SC in the *Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali* case. In *Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali*, the Court said that by virtue of Section 43D(5) of UAPA, the burden is on the accused to show that the prosecution case is not *prima facie* true

This error has now been corrected by Supreme Court.

What other cases did SC rely upon to reach its verdict?

Court relied on a later three-judge Bench decision in *Union of India vs K.A. Najeeb (2021)*.

– In *K.A. Najeeb*, the larger Bench said that even the stringent provisions under Section 43D(5) do not curtail the power of the constitutional court to grant bail on the ground of violation of fundamental rights.

This was further strengthened in the Delhi riots case as to where HC and SC had both granted bails on similar grounds.

Delhi riots case: Delhi HC granted bail to student activists who were charged under the UAPA for alleged connections with the Delhi riots. But in appeal, Supreme Court held that this judgement shall not be treated as a precedent.

8. India's new rare diseases policy offers a lifeline to many

Source: This post is based on the article “**India's new rare diseases policy offers a lifeline to many**” published in **Indian Express** on **8th November 2021**.

Subject: GS 2 Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Relevance: Understanding rare diseases policy.

News: India needs a rare diseases policy to address the health issue of those for whom the cost of treatment is extremely high.

India requires a policy that is entirely focused on rare diseases, especially blood-threatening diseases, whose burden is huge in India.

Read more: [All about Rare Diseases](#)

What is the burden of haematological disease in India?

Every year, over 10,000 children are born with thalassemia and over 7,000 cases are diagnosed with aplastic anaemia. The per-year incidence of blood cancer is over 1,00,000.

Blood stem cell transplant plays an important role in the treatment of such disorders. But Indian stem cell donors only form about 0.04 per cent of the total listed unrelated donors globally.

What steps have been taken by India?

India has introduced the [National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021 \(NPRD\)](#). It aims to cover 40 % of the population that is eligible under the [Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana](#).

What role can the social sector play?

Multi-stakeholder approach: include stakeholders who can fill critical gaps. For example organisations like DKMS BMST Foundation India who have more than 50,000 donors.

Public engagement: By raising awareness, conducting webinars, donor registration events, and various other media campaigns.

Technological innovations: DKMS has developed **HAP-E Search**, which helps connect haematologists and oncologists to potential donors across the globe.

Thus, an approach that is based on public-private partnership and includes civil society can best handle the issues of rare diseases.

9. We need greater global cooperation

Source: This post is based on the article **“We need greater global cooperation”** published in **Indian Express** on **8th November 2021**.

Subject: GS2 Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Relevance: Understanding great power, competition, and collaboration.

Synopsis: The rivalry between USA and China is unfolding on a global stage. This is also creating a problem of consensus on global problems, which requires urgent attention.

Introduction

Secretary Antony Blinken outlined the US approach to China: **“Competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be.”** While this is true for foreign policies of most countries, in the current context of US-China rivalry the scope of cooperation seems limited.

Why scope of the cooperation is limited?

Two factors that could have led to collaboration are under great strain.

Interdependence: Global economy and supply chains are highly interlinked. But American initiatives against China will target the Chinese economy. This will reduce global economic interdependence.

Global cooperation: It is needed to tackle issues like climate change etc. But, as pointed by Bruno Macaes – all issues of global cooperation have become the sites for global competition. For e.g. Instead of cooperating on climate change, countries are fighting to maintain technological superiority and economic supremacy.

What are the challenges facing global cooperation on climate change initiatives?

Technological innovations: Not sufficient to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Climate justice or common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) has not been accepted by the developed world as they only seek to preserve their developmental hegemony.

Credibility of the countries: While the US is talking of climate change, domestically it is taking contradictory actions by pushing for more hydrocarbon production.

This lack of global cooperation is also threatening the system of multilateral world order which was established after the collapse of USSR and bipolar world order.

What are the challenges to multilateralism?

The old multilateral system, dominated by the USA, was full of conflicts e.g. Gulf wars. Countries have not taken credible actions to make new multilateralism better as it is still dominated by USA.

Often there is no agreement or consensus on global rules ranging from COVID-19 vaccine to climate change or solving the problem of public goods.

Read more: [Let us revitalize multilateralism: The future of the world is at stake](#)

So the real challenge is not choosing between the USA and China. The real challenges between choosing to solve global problems or just preserving national supremacy. We do need a collaborative approach where world countries act as one to solve global problems.

10. It's time to engage in 'lawfare'

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

Source: This post is based on the article "It's time to engage in 'lawfare'" published in The Hindu on 9th November 2021.

News: India has failed to utilise the international law to advance its national security interests.

International laws cover wide array of security issues ranging from terrorism to maritime security. For example, Article 1(1) of the UN Charter recognizes the maintenance of "international peace and security" as a principal objective of the UN. However, India has not been able to fully utilize international law to advance its national security interest.

What are the examples of non-usage of international laws in India?

First, after Pulwama attack of February 2019 by a Pakistan-based terror outfit, India struck the terror camps in Pakistan. However, in its justification for this action, India did not invoke the **right to self-defense**, rather, it relied on a contested **doctrine of 'non-military pre-emptive action'**.

Second, as per General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), countries can deviate from their **MFN obligations** on grounds of national security. But India did not use this provision for suspending the most favored nation (MFN) status of Pakistan after Pulwama. Instead, India increased the customs duties on all Pakistani products to 200% under Customs Tariff Act, 1975.

Third, India wants to **deport Rohingya refugees**, as they pose a security threat. But the justification for this action is being given that India is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention, whereas, India is bound by the principle of non-refoulment to not deport them. National security is one of the exceptions to the non-refoulment principle in international refugee law, which is not used as a justification yet.

However, there are also instances, like Kulbhushan Jadhav case and pushing for international law to counter terrorism, where India has utilised international laws effectively.

Why India is lagging behind in 'lawfare'?

Lawfare means using law as a weapon of national security.

First, International lawyers are marginally involved in foreign policymaking. **Legal and Treaties Division** of the Ministry of External Affairs is understaffed and also ignored in policy making. This division was formed to advise government on international law matters.

Second, ministries like Commerce and Finance with negligible expertise in international law, also deal with different facets of international law.

Third, Institutions created to undertake cutting-edge research in international law are suffering from low research quality and neglect.

Fourth, many of the outstanding international law scholars have failed to international law among the larger public.

11. India's latest dengue outbreak ought to ring alarm bells again

Source: This post is based on the article "India's latest dengue outbreak ought to ring alarm bells again" published in the Down to Earth on 9th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS- 2, India and neighboring countries

Bhutan is graduating from least developed country (LDC) in 2023. The country has experienced impressive growth in the past four decades.

Least developed countries (LDCs) are low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development. They are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets.

Poverty levels have declined from 36% in 2007 to 10% in 2019. UNDP Human Development Report 2020 ranks Bhutan highest amongst LDCs. Furthermore, Bhutan is the only carbon-negative country in the world. Bhutan has also achieved 100% electricity access. The following approaches have contributed to the Bhutan's development:

Niche markets: It has diversified its exports considering its domestic industries of natural resources, tourism, culture, handicrafts and textiles.

Digital transformation: Due to accessible and affordable backbone infrastructure such as electricity and internet in Bhutan, it was able to launch of the Thimphu TechPark in 2012. The TechPark increased productive employment in Bhutan and enhanced ICT skills amongst the Bhutanese workforce.

What are the challenges facing Bhutan?

First, Bhutan's export concentration is high on hydropower, tourism services and the mining sector. Whereas the growth of its manufacturing sector is stagnant. Its export market concentration is also high, with 80% of exports are to India.

Second, LDC category will result in the erosion of preferential treatment.

Third, its small size of market, landlocked status and high cost of trading means it cannot compete in the global market at a large scale.

Bhutan is lagging behind in attracting the foreign direct investment (FDI) compared to other LDCs such as Cambodia and Maldives. The small size of the Bhutanese market has remained a disincentive to foreign investment in the country.

12. No Quota without quantifiable data

Source: This post is created based on the article “No Quota without quantifiable data” published in **The Hindu** on 9th November 2021.

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

News: The Madras High Court recently **quashed the provision of 10.5% reservation** for Vanniyakula Kshatriyas within the overall 20% quota for Most Backward Communities (MBCs) and Denotified Communities (DNCs). This has highlighted the **importance of quantifiable data** while taking a decision on reservation in education and employment.

What is the issue?

The State Assembly had granted the special internal quota in February 2021, but the move was challenged in the High Court. The Court opined that there were **no data, quantifiable or otherwise, available with the State Government** for decision making and hence quashed the provision.

No exhaustive study has been undertaken in Tamil Nadu on the representation of various communities in education and employment since the **Second BC Commission (J.A. Ambasankar)** in 1982-85.

In 2011, the State BC Commission couldn't present the community wise break-up after being asked to justify the 69% quota granted to the BCs/MBCs/DNCs/SCs/STs under the 1994 Reservation Act (which was subsequently placed in the 9th Schedule of the Constitution)

What is the need for the exhaustive study on status of communities?

The Madras HC observed that the quantifiable data are required in order to understand the representation of communities in services along with their social and educational backwardness to grant reservation in employment. The two BCs Commissions set up earlier had expressed similar opinion.

The Second BC Commission had argued for internal reservation within the backward communities based on their status, while the first BC commission (A.N. Sattanathan, 1969-70) had advocated periodic removal of top communities from the provisions of the reservation.

What can be done?

One of the terms of reference of the existing BC Commission (set up in July 2020), is to examine the demand for internal reservation and make a recommendation on the matter. The Commission can undertake a comprehensive study to compile data and understand the way the benefits of reservation get accrued to the various communities within the Umbrella BCs, MBCs, DNCs.

13. India needs a new integrated approach to Eurasia (1200)

Source: This post is created based on the article “India needs a new, integrated approach to Eurasia” published in Indian Express on 9th November 2021.

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

News: India's Indo-Pacific strategy has got a concrete political and institutional shape with the setting up of QUAD. India must develop a similar strategy for Eurasia as well. The Eurasian Strategy will complement the Indo-Pacific Strategy as the latter influences maritime geopolitics while the former will be in the Continental domain.

What is the concept of Eurasia?

The concept of Eurasia poses challenges similar to the Indo-Pacific. While the region can be defined unambiguously by the Physical Geographers, the political definition of Eurasia remain fluid. Russia defines Eurasia in terms of territory and neighbourhood of the former Soviet Union. Some others define it in terms of “Central Asia”, “Inner Asia” and “Greater Middle East” by including West Asia as well. India must consider Eurasia in broadest term to shape its Eurasian strategy.

How is the geopolitics changing in the regions?

China’s dramatic rise: China asserts deep influence in the region due to its long borders. China has grown more aggressive in recent times as the region is central to its BRI project which extends till Atlantic Coast of Europe. Moreover Russia’s differences with the West has brought China and Russia closer.

US Realignment: While the US has increased focus on the Indo-Pacific, there is realignment of America’s strategic view regarding the Atlantic and Eurasia. US has already withdrawn from Afghanistan. The US and NATO are debating the rebalancing of Europe’s collective defense where the US had played a central role since WWII. The US is calling this rebalance as “Burden Sharing” while EU might call it “Strategic Autonomy”. But in essence, the US might reduce its role in Europe’s strategic defense and Europe might take a more central role and would require a rethink regarding Europe’s conception of Eurasia.

What has been India’s relationship with Eurasia?

India’s connection with Eurasia dates to ancient civilization links since the Buddhist era. Foreign forces continued to come to India through the western border while the British got entangled with the Russians in the Great Game in 18th and 19th centuries. The partition of India and a hostile neighbour in the West cut off India from Central Asia and Eurasia. Overcoming this barrier would be central to India’s Eurasian Strategy.

What should be India’s Strategy?

There should be 3 core elements to India’s Eurasian Strategy

1. Centrality of Europe: Many Indian nationalists had made Europe their base during the freedom struggle. Post independence, India’s relationship with the USSR had led to distancing from Europe. India must have strategic engagement with Europe (both EU and NATO) on Eurasian Security and should set up a military office in Brussels as the first step.
2. Engagement with Russia on Eurasian security: There are differences between India and Russia regarding QUAD, China and Taliban; but there are significant common grounds between the two regarding Eurasian security
3. Collaboration with Iran and Arab world: While Iran is central to connectivity; the Arabs are critical due to their religious influence. Both might help in countering the hostile Turkey-Pakistan alliance.

India shouldn’t let the internal contradictions between all the regional and extra-regional stakeholders. Eurasia presents both a challenge and opportunity to India’s foreign policy.

14. A vital cog in Bongaigaon’s response in malnutrition

Source: This post is based on the article ” **A vital cog in Bongaigaon’s response in malnutrition** ” published in **The Hindu** on **9th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the measures to tackle malnutrition.

News: Given the seriousness and complexity of the issue of malnutrition in India, innovative approaches are needed.

Hippocrates famously stated that **Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food**. This highlights the importance of nutrition in the growth of a child.

A unique **Project Sampoorna** was conceived in the Bongaigaon district of Assam. This is in line with the UN SDG goals and Kuposhan Mukta Bharat initiative of India. The project has resulted in the reduction of malnutrition in children using near zero economic investment.

Initiatives like these are needed to tackle the vicious cycle of malnutrition.

How malnutrition impacts children?

The highest risk is posed by anaemia. An anaemic child goes into an unhealthy adolescent, an anaemic pregnant young woman. The woman would give birth to an asphyxiated low-birth-weight baby. This baby will then face developmental delays and grow into a malnourished child.

Read more: [A multi-dimensional approach to tackle malnutrition](#)

How Project Sampoorna helped Bongaigaon district?

The project yielded **encouraging results** – maternal deaths for six months have fallen from 16 (Apr to Sep 2020) to three (Apr to Sep 2021) and infant deaths from 130 to 63.

Project Sampoorna had prevented at least 1,200 children from becoming malnourished over the last year

Why was Project Sampoorna launched?

The National Family Health Survey (NHFS)-5) documented that the number of children under five who are stunted, wasted, underweight and the number of anaemic women and children in the district are higher than the national average. And anaemia is a major determinant of maternal and child health.

Low number of beds: District Nutritional Rehabilitation Centres, or NRCs, usually have up to 20 beds. This means that they are not equipped to deal with high number of severely acutely malnourished children.

Loss of wages: Parents of the children have to abandon their farmlands and forego their wages for 10 days.

Back home, siblings of the severely and acutely malnourished (SAM) child are not taken care of and may become malnourished. The treated child could also slip back to a SAM state after being discharged and if not cared for.

Considering the challenges of this, Project Sampoorna was launched.

Based on the success of the community-based COVID-19 management model (Project Mili Juli), Project Sampoorna was launched targeting the mothers of SAM/MAM (Moderate Acute Malnutrition) children.

How did Project Sampoorna work?

Project Sampoorna's tagline states its purpose – **empower mothers, healthy children**.

– **Buddy mothers:** First a healthy mother is identified and paired with the target mother (buddy mothers) of the same Anganwadi Centre (AWC). They were usually neighbours and

shared similar socio-economic backgrounds. The pair is given diet chart to indicate daily food intake for the children. they would have **discussions about this on all Tuesdays at the AWC. Local practices related to nutrition** would also be discussed.

– The project also arranged 100 millilitres of milk and an egg on alternate days for all children for 1st 3 months. Children who did not show improvement were treated by doctors under [Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram](#).

Assistance was taken from UNICEF, IIT Gauhati, Tezpur University and social welfare department for periodic course correction.

Also read [POSHAN 2.0 and tackling malnutrition in India](#)

What were the challenges faced by the project?

The major hindrance to the project was patriarchy. Mothers had to be empowered financially for sustained results.

Therefore, they were enrolled in Self Help Groups (SHGs) under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) [*Women Empowerment*]

What is the way forward?

Project Sampoorna was recognised in the innovation category of the National Nutrition Mission. It also prevented at least 1200 children from becoming malnourished every year.

There is a need to implement **Buddy Mothers Model and Women Empowerment Model** in the world so that children can enjoy their right to stay healthy.

15. Jail should be the exception, not the norm

Source: This post is based on the article "Jail should be the exception, not the norm" published in the **Indian Express** on **9th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Fundamental Rights.

Relevance: Understanding the issue of granting bails.

News: Unlike most democratic countries, arrest seems to be becoming a norm in India. This needs an urgent course correction.

There are so many cases of unjustified arrests and denial of bails like of Aryan Khan, journalist Siddique Kappan, and many others. These all incidents raise questions on rule of law in India.

It is time to seriously consider whether the practice of creating too many non-bailable offences and the routine denial of bail serves the public interest at all.

What are the safeguards available in India?

[Article 21](#) states no person shall be deprived of personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

Supreme Court – has clearly stated that bail is the norm and jail is an exception.

Read more: [The process is the punishment](#)

What are the issues in granting bail?

-**Conflict** between personal liberty of the accused and interest of the community as a whole

-**Sensational cases:** The lower courts are reluctant to grant bail

-**Legal issues:** The presence of many non-bailable offences and routine denial of bails.

Read more: [India's system of bail and personal liberty](#)

What is the way forward?

Amendment: Legal laws imposing difficult conditions for grant of bail should be amended. For example, section 45 of the prevention of money laundering act requires a judge to be satisfied that the accused is not guilty and will not commit any offence while on bail. This makes the grant of bail very subjective.

Decriminalization of several provisions: Amendments should be done in Central and State enactment e.g. companies act 2013 amended in 2020.

Sensitivity: Supreme Court: should take *suo moto* notice of unacceptable arrests and issue urgent directives to the Centre and state. Judges should also understand the importance of bail, particularly when most of the poor and illiterate accused have little or no access to legal assistance.

Read more: [Supreme Court on Protecting Rights of People](#)

Making an arrest at an FIR stage destroys a person's reputation. A subsequent acquittal cannot heal the scars. So while the investigation is going on and if the accused are cooperating, bail should be allowed to become the norm.

16. How to fix India's creaking health infrastructure?

Source: This post is based on the article "How to fix India's creaking health infrastructure?" published in **Livemint** on **9th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding India's poor health infrastructure.

News: COVID-19 pandemic revealed the poor status of India's health infrastructure. Now it is time to revamp this infrastructure.

COVID-19 pandemic in India exposed the weakness of health infrastructure. Overflowing intensive care units, empty oxygen cylinders, lack of medicines, dead bodies outside hospitals all revealed the poor status of health infrastructure in India.

What is the status of health infrastructure in India?

Physical infrastructure: India has 1.3 beds per 1,000 people; 0.5 pharmacists per 1,000 people & 0.8 physicians per 1,000 people—which is less than half of the world average.

Funding: Economic Survey 2020-21 observed that India ranks 179th among 189 countries in prioritizing health care in the government budget. The public expenditure on health at 1.4% of the gross domestic product (GDP) is low. E.g. it is 3.5% in Ghana.

Disease burden: India has 17% of the world's population but a disproportionately high share of the global disease burden at 20%.

Quality of healthcare: Economic Survey pointed out that India ranked 145th out of 180 countries (Global Burden of Disease Study 2016) on the quality and access to healthcare.

Doctors: India will require 2 million more doctors by 2030 to achieve a desirable doctor-to-population ratio of 1:1000.

Read more: [Why India needs an NHS-like healthcare model?](#)

What is the status of primary healthcare in India?

At present only 12% of primary health centres (PHCs) and 13% of community health centres are functioning. The major factor behind this is the lack of finances.

Even schemes like [Ayushman Bharat -Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana \(AB-PMJAY\)](#) do not cover primary healthcare services.

Why budgetary allocation for health is poor?

With lower growth rates, and focus on spending on social indicators, health is ignored. Under the [national health authority](#), as a percentage of gross health expenditure, centres share is 31% and states share 69%. But States have little tax collection after the GST regime.

Read more: [An inclusive plan for healthcare systems to be built back better](#)

What are the government initiatives to improve healthcare?

ABHIM – Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission: It will work with the National Health Mission in building public health facilities, critical care infrastructure and PHCs.

Read more: [PM launches PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission](#)

Drug prices: 70% off out of pocket expenditure goes towards medicine. So government introduced tight control over the crisis and cut retail prices in 2018.

Ayushman Bharat–National Health Protection Mission (AB–NHPM), 2018: It provides health coverage of ₹5 lakh per family per annum for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to nearly 110 million poor and vulnerable families.

What is the way forward?

Building public infrastructure. For this India needs to increase budgetary support to healthcare to around 2.5% of GDP.

Incentivize state expenditure on healthcare: Finance commission parameters for Definition can include healthcare. Better performing states should be incentivized example Aarogyashree scheme of Telangana state.

Learn from international best practices for example Thailand and Cuba model. Thailand passed the affordable care act and brought health insurance premiums down. Cuba focused on the best quality primary healthcare system.

What we can learn from these is the community participation in healthcare by focusing on awareness, sanitation and involving civil society. This can eventually pave the way for universal healthcare.

17. [After selling the Maharajah](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “[After selling the Maharajah](#)” published in **Business Standard** on 10th Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 – Governance

Relevance: Privatisation of Air India, Re-organisation of Civil Aviation Ministry

News: The gains from the sale of Air India would be incomplete if follow-up steps are not taken to reorganise the civil aviation ministry. Reforms of this ministry are long overdue, and the Air India sale should expedite such a decision.

What does the Union civil aviation ministry do?

The ministry is responsible for formulating national policies and programmes for the development and regulation of the civil aviation sector in the country.

It is also responsible for the administration of the Aircraft Act, Aircraft Rules and a few other laws pertaining to the aviation sector.

More importantly, the ministry exercises administrative control of organisations such as the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERAI), the Commission of Railway Safety (CRS), the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Air India.

Why downsizing of civil aviation ministry is necessary?

Downsizing the manpower in the aviation ministry would make it leaner and more efficient. More importantly, this will make the regulatory bodies in the civil aviation sector, like the DGCA, the AERAI, the BCAS and the AAIB, truly autonomous. The aviation ministry would also be restricted from influencing these organizations beyond playing its legitimate role in policy-making.

Must Read: [Privatisation of Air India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What steps should be taken by the govt?

Civil aviation governance structure reforms: Redeploying or curtailing excess manpower under Civil Aviation Ministry.

DGCA should be structured as an independent regulator rather than being an extension of civil aviation ministry. The ministry should lay down the policy and give the DGCA the freedom to implement the policy. If there is a need for an appellate body to address grievances of aviation players against decisions taken by the DGCA, such a body should be created.

AERAI: As ministry plans to hand over the ownership and management of many airports to private enterprises, exercising any administrative control over AERAI would not be optimal.

The functioning of organisations like the BCAS and the AAIB should also be made independent of the civil aviation ministry. The functions and role of these organisations are best performed if they do not operate as an extension of the ministry.

CRS should be made a truly independent and sufficiently empowered organisation to examine railway safety issues and accidents. No purpose is served by keeping it under the civil aviation ministry. CRS was created under the administrative control of the civil aviation ministry, many years ago in 1989 under the Railway Act.

What is the way forward?

If this major ministerial reorganisation can be achieved in the civil aviation ministry, the same template could be enforced in other central ministries.

For instance, if banks are to be privatised, the role and relevance of the **department of financial services** should be revisited.

18. Do WTO like you did COP

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

Source: This post is based on the article “**Do WTO like you did COP**” published in **TOI** on **10th November 2021**.

News: India should balance its geopolitical interests and geo-economic interests equally.

In COP26, by offering to do more than what was expected out of it, India has tried to disarm its critics from the Western countries while voicing the concerns of the South.

Later this month, India will find again find itself in a similar situation at the 12th ministerial conference (MC12) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

What are the issues/challenges for India at WTO?

Criticism on India’s Protective Trade policies: Unlike COP26, India might not be enjoy the support of South countries at WTO. India’s inclination towards protectionism, accompanied by

the raising of average applied tariff over the past four years, as part of its 'atmanirbharta' agenda is criticised by both countries of the North and the South.

Criticism on India's policy stands on foreign trade: India's criticism of free trade agreements entered into by the previous government and the [decision to withdraw from the RCEP](#), distanced India from many newly industrializing economies seeking greater market access to India.

Loss of status amongst developing countries: India has also been losing its longstanding status as a champion of developing country interests in multilateral trade negotiations.

What have been the implications?

Geo-economic consequence: Further weakening of the India-Africa compact that defined WTO discussions at least till 2008.

Impact on Exports: With India opting out or being left out of all major plurilateral and regional FTAs, exports, despite recent growth, have taken a setback. Exports remain static in nominal terms over the past decade and actually shrinking by 20-30% in real terms.

Driving out FDI: Most foreign direct investments coming into India are aimed primarily at the domestic market. Export-oriented western FDI continues to leave India, going to countries to India's East.

How India's position on geo-economic challenges differs sharply from its position on geopolitical challenges?

Indian position on geo-economic challenges like climate change, trade, and industrial policy differs sharply from the clarity with which it has been dealing with geopolitical challenges.

While China's geopolitical and geo-economic aggression has **pushed India closer West with respect to defense and security ties**, India's economic interests continue to place it in the middle of the North-South economic divide.

This dichotomy between India's geopolitical and geo-economic interests is also reflected in the **agenda of the two Quads** of which it is a member.

While geopolitics of China's rise defines the agenda of the **East Asian Quad** (*Australia, India, Japan, and the US*), the geoeconomics of trade, manufacturing, and technology define the **West Asian Quad** (*India, Israel, UAE, and the US*).

India is now engaged in negotiating FTAs with members of both Quads and with the European Union, especially France, Germany, and Scandinavia.

The challenge for India is to **balance its geopolitical interests, along the East-West axis**, with its geo-economic interests along the North-South axis.

What is the way forward?

First, India needs to balance its geopolitical interests, with its geo-economic interests. For this there has to be greater coordination between the external affairs and commerce ministries

Second, the new messaging on climate action should also define India's approach to foreign trade.

19. [Wanted: A truly generous health cheque for underserved Indians](#)

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to the health sector In India.

Source: This post is based on the article "[Wanted: A truly generous health cheque for underserved Indians](#)" published in **Live mint** on **10th November 2021**.

News: India's public health expenditure remains one of the lowest among major economies in the world. It needs to do more to achieve decent standards of healthcare for all.

How much India spends on Health care?

India's annual spend on Health care is around ₹2,000 per capita.

India's annual health budget has stayed barely above 1% of gross domestic product (GDP) for the past decade. In the fiscal year 2019-20, it was ₹2.57 trillion, or 1.3% of GDP.

This ratio compares unfavorably even with emerging market peers such as

- Indonesia (1.4%)
- China (2.9%)
- Russia (3.2%)
- South Africa (3.6%)

And, worse, this fiscal year, the Centre and most state governments have budgeted lower health spending.

What are the implications of a lower public health expenditure?

High out of Pocket expenditure: Low government spending means Indians spend out more on health expenses from their pockets. According to the WHO's health financing profile for 2017, roughly 2/3rds of expenditure on health in India is out-of-pocket, nearly four times the global average of approximately 18%.

The vicious cycle of poverty: Low public health spending, together with high out-of-pocket expenditure, a catastrophic health event such as this pandemic push the vulnerable further into poverty.

Poor health indicators: WHO ranked India 57th out of 195 countries on its **Global Health Security Index**, pointing out weak spots in India's health preparedness.

What are the emerging trends w.r.t states' spending on health care?

One, states have not achieved their policy targets. Analysis of the past decade's data, though, suggests that most states are making slow progress.

Two, richer states tend to spend more on healthcare. Goa, Kerala and Gujarat, for example, were relatively high spenders, whereas Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha spent less.

Three, higher per capita health spending result in visibly better health outcomes. An analysis of data taken from **NITI Aayog's Healthy States, Progressive India report of 2019** shows that states with higher average health expenditure per capita over 2012-17 registered better health outcomes in fiscal 2017-18

What is the way forward?

One, better resource mobilization and/or greater targeted transfers to the country's poorer states to help them catch up.

Two, as a topmost goal, India must focus on achieving universal health coverage.

Three, attention to non-communicable diseases will need to be balanced with that to infectious diseases such as covid-19.

Four, the benefits of technology should be leveraged to provide last-mile healthcare access, particularly through telemedicine. In this context, the recently announced PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission, which aims to spend ₹64,180 crores over the next five years to fill critical gaps and improve long-term health care infrastructure, is a welcome move.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November (Second Week), 2021

For Centre: The National Health Policy, 2017, the latest Economic Survey, have both recommended a national public health spending target of 2.5-3% of GDP by 2025.

For States: Health is a state subject. Three-fourths of India's public health expenditure is, in fact, undertaken by state governments.

The National Health Policy, in addition to recommending an increase in overall public health spending, had also proposed that states increase their health expenditure to 8% or more of their respective budgets, by 2020.

20. The saviour complex of Facebook's critics

Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – issues related to the functioning of social media

Source: This post is based on the article “**The saviour complex of Facebook's critics**” published in **Indian Express** on **10th November 2021**.

News: How the media covered its own coverage of the revelations made by Haugen is disheartening.

Read about the issue here: <https://blog.forumias.com/5-questions-on-facebook/>

Why the conduct of Western media in the present case is unstatisfactory?

Whistle-blowers and the Western media have exposed how the social media platform allows dangerous social media manipulation in developing countries. But they haven't made the media and journalists from the global south a part of this coverage.

The sharing of Haugen's documents related to Facebook was tightly orchestrated. Only a few media organisations had the access to the Facebook Papers.

For instance, Media that publish in Hindi or Bengali or any of these other developing world languages from anywhere in the global south were not part of this exclusive Facebook Papers consortium

This shows that even those who have the power to regulate Facebook (*US lawmakers and regulators, the whistle-blowers, and the media with privileged access*) don't seem to care much for the developing world or at least trust them enough to include them.

21. India needs to sign up for life course immunization

Source: This post is based on the article “**India needs to sign up for life course immunization**” posted in **The Hindu** on **10th November 2021**.

Subject: GS 2 Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Relevance: understanding immunization.

News

Right from the days of smallpox, vaccines were designed for all age groups. However, after the smallpox eradication and launch of an expanded programme on immunisation (EPI), there were efforts to increase vaccination for children.

But as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that there is a need to take stock of the status of adult immunisation in the world.

What is the status of adult vaccination in India?

There have been incidents of India undertaking adult vaccination, like after the outbreak of Japanese encephalitis in 2005.

1. Limited research and data on the burden of **vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs)** in adult age groups. 2. The National vaccine policy of India, 2011 had no mention of adult vaccination.

3. **National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI)** paid no focus on adult vaccination.

Though Non-government professional groups like the **Association of Physicians of India** have released guidelines on adult vaccination, but these are only voluntary.

But now there is emerging scientific evidence on winning immunity and the need for booster doses in the adult age group. This has resulted in the global stakeholders agreeing to 'the **Immunization Agenda 2030**' which emphasises vaccination to all age groups.

What steps should be taken?

First, the mandate of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) should be expanded to include adult vaccination. An NTAGI sub-group on adult vaccination can be constituted.

Second, the VPD surveillance system and capacity to record, report and analyse data on the disease burden and immunisation coverage require to be strengthened.

Third, Boost research and development in academic institutions.

Fourth, initiate the roadmap for drafting India's **national adult vaccination policy**.

Fifth, address the issues of supply chain and shortages of vaccines. Revive the public sector vaccine manufacturing units.

What should be the way forward?

It is time that policymakers take the decision on adult vaccination and empower adult citizens to make informed choices about vaccines. There is a need to focus on a universal immunization programme plus, which should include everyone and all citizens of India.

22. Reservation on hiring

Source: This post is based on the article "**Reservation on hiring**" published in the **Business Standard** on **10th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Relevance: Understanding the provisions of the Employment Act introduced by the Haryana government.

News

Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act, 2020 is all set to be implemented from 15th January 2022.

Read more: [Concerns associated with Local Reservation Laws](#)

What are the provisions of the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act?

It provides for a **75% job quota for local people** in private sector jobs which offer a salary of Rs. 30,000 (earlier 50k) a month. There is a modification in the act as domicile stipulation reduced from 15 years to five years

Read more: [Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act of 2020](#)

What is the impact of the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act?

First, It violates the constitutional right of citizens to reside in any part of the country and practise any occupation or business.

Second, The Act creates barriers for businesses by attaching severe monetary penalties for alleged non-compliance.

Third, It will diminish opportunities for small firms as they have to meet Rs. 30,000 thresholds to keep non-local employees on their books.

Fourth, Many industries will seek to move to neighbouring Delhi and UP states owing to restrictions implied by the act. This will have a negative impact on the revenue of the state.

Read more: [The ill effects of Job reservation for locals](#)

23. [Afghan tangle: No easy options for New Delhi, especially given broader threats posed by Beijing, Islamabad](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Afghan tangle: No easy options for New Delhi, especially given broader threats posed by Beijing, Islamabad**” published in **The Times of India** on 11th Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and its neighbourhood- relations.

Relevance – Understand India’s recent attempts towards Afghanistan.

News: India hosted Third Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan. The dialogue concluded with the **Delhi Declaration**.

Must Read: [‘Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan’](#)

What are the key features of the Delhi Declaration?

The declaration 1. Strongly objected to the use of Afghan soil for planning, financing and carrying out terrorist activities, 2. Called for collective cooperation against the menace of radicalisation, extremism, separatism and drug trafficking in the region.

Read more: [The importance of the Gulf in shaping the geopolitics of Afghanistan](#)

Why Pakistan and China did not participate in the dialogue?

1. To undermine Indian interests in the region, 2. **The difference in perceived security threat:** China and Pakistan want to stabilise their borders with Afghanistan. On the other hand, India and Iran worried more about the Taliban’s lack of inclusivity or their exporting terror to other countries, 3. [Pakistan’s Troika Plus summit on Afghanistan](#): China, US and Russia are participating in the ongoing Troika Plus summit. That conference has a clear political dimension with the presence of the Taliban’s acting foreign minister.

Read more: [Is the Indian foreign-policy ship changing course?: About India-Afghanistan relations](#)

What should India do to improve relations with Afghanistan?

India needs both defensive and proactive strategies to build relations and enhance Afghan people’s tremendous goodwill for India.

1. **Adopt wait and watch approach** towards the Taliban, 2. **Deliver aid directly** to the suffering Afghan people, 3. **Start full visa services** for Afghan citizens who may want to temporarily leave Afghanistan, 4. **Explore alternate ways** to send aid to Afghanistan that doesn’t need Pakistan’s land routes, 5. For the China-Pakistan threat, India should shore up domestic security and **work with both the US and Russia**.

Must Read: [Implications of the rise of Taliban for India – Explained, pointwise](#)

24. Carbon tariffs: On 12th Ministerial of WTO

Source: This post is based on the article “Carbon tariffs” published in the **ToI** on **11th November 2021**.

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

News: India must follow a constructive approach while negotiating trade rules in the upcoming WTO summit.

A range of issues will be discussed in the upcoming 12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO at Geneva such as fishing subsidies, progress on pandemic-related intellectual property issues, broader questions about WTO reform, including fixing the broken dispute settlement system etc.

India is being seen as a barrier in addressing many of these questions. The **inflexible attitude** of India’s trade negotiators can cost India.

Why India’s attitude at the upcoming WTO ministerial needs to be constructive?

It helps India to act in the broader public interest. Consider this example: India alongside other developing economies has opposed the incorporation of labour or environmental standards into multilateral trading rules.

This was for good reasons,

- One, as these could translate into **protectionism by rich nations** with higher such standards.
- Two, lowering tariffs on crucial environmental goods such as, say, solar panels to zero may well **not be in India’s interests** and those of other emerging economies.

But, sustainability has also a broader role to play in the trading architecture in the current age of climate crisis. Hence India’s attitude at the WTO needs to be accommodative.

Secondly, India needs to be a part of the process: If India is not in the room where crucial trade policy decisions are being made, they will be made without India’s interests in mind.

Consider the question of “border adjustment” mechanisms, which essentially put a tax on the implicit carbon emissions in imports.

The European Union has already moved towards imposing such a **tax**, which may become a reality whatever India’s position at the WTO would be.

Other markets will inevitably follow, and India will be left out in the cold. This would obviously be against India’s interests.

What is the way forward?

India’s negotiators need to be well-informed with facts and figures regarding the structure of fuel taxes in India and the implicit price of carbon this implies.

They should also present positive and constructive suggestions about how such national taxation can fit into a broader trans-national carbon pricing scheme.

25. How loopholes in Civil Procedure Code delay justice

Source: This post is based on “How loopholes in Civil Procedure Code delay justice” published in **Indian Express** on **11th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Judiciary.

Relevance: Understanding the lacunae in the Civil Procedure code.

News:

Recently, the Supreme Court awarded judgement in a civil court case after a prolonged delay. In an amendment introduced to the **Civil Procedure Code (CPC)** in 2002, the Law minister assured to resolve civil cases in one and a half years, but this has not yet become the ground reality.

What are the challenges of delay in getting justice in the civil procedure?

- 1) Vested interest of one of the parties in continuing the case as mentioned in **Salem Advocate Bar Association case**.
- 2) Legal process mostly relies on facts and reports and not on common sense.

What should be the way forward?

Modification in the syllabus: References of the cases should be added in the legal syllabus where litigants intentionally delayed the justice process.

Use of artificial intelligence: AI is capable of delivering judgements in simple cases. Thus, freeing court time for non-trivial cases.

Address the weakness that blocked the process of CPC.

Amendments: The government should amend and adopt a guideline to resolve civil cases in one-and-a-half years.

26. [Hunger isn't about biology. It's about politics](#)

Source: This article is based on the post "**Hunger isn't about biology. It's about politics**" published in the **Indian Express** on **12th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

News: In the absence of an organized food security net and political commitment, India is being crippled by the challenge of pervasive hunger and malnourishment

James Vernon in his book Hunger: A modern history wrote that hunger is a timeless and inescapable biological condition. While he was right, the real problem was captured by Karl Marx. **Karl Marx** had stated that hunger is actually a problem of politics, capitalism, and the state.

What is the hunger status of India?

In Global Hunger Index 2021 India has slipped to 101st of 116 countries, from its 2020 position of 94th. This is when India's foodgrain output was at a record 297.5 million tonnes in 2019-20 (July-June).

Read more: [Global Hunger Index and India's stand – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the lacunas in the Indian system to control hunger?

- 1) India's expenditure on health over the last five years has either remained static or declined.
- 2) Lack of Political will and commitment. For example, an absence of an organized food security net, especially in urban India will worsen the hunger situation of India.

What should India do to control the rising hunger?

To achieve the **SDG target of achieving 'Zero Hunger**, India should adopt the inclusive approach.

Read more: [Several trade-offs impede Zero Hunger goal. A UN report explains why, and](#)

[how](#)

It should learn the practices adopted by various countries like Bangladesh, which has shown significant progress on many socio-economic parameters over the last decade.

27. [How to play the Kabul game?](#)

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

“**How to play the Kabul game**” published in the **Times of India** on **11th November 2021**.

“**Undefined role: On India-Afghanistan bilateral relations**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th November 2021**.

“**Helping Afghanistan**” published in **Business Standard** on **11th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Relevance: Understanding Delhi regional security dialogue.

Synopsis: After the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, India needs to evolve a strategy to secure its interest in the region.

Introduction

India recently held [Delhi regional security dialogue](#) on Afghanistan. It was attended by security chiefs of Russia, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. Though Pakistan and China were also invited, they declined to attend the event.

Read more: [Afghan tangle: No easy options for New Delhi, especially given broader threats posed by Beijing, Islamabad](#)

What was the message sent by the summit?

The summit sends three strong messages:

- Delhi is an important Player and will remain engaged with Afghanistan.
- Solution for the Afghanistan crisis requires a consensus of regional players.
- Afghanistan humanitarian crisis requires urgent attention.

What was the outcome of the Delhi declaration?

Read more: [Allow unimpeded aid into Afghanistan, say NSAs in Delhi Declaration](#)

Though countries showed consensus, The chances of success seem difficult because each country has its own objective.

What are the challenges for India in achieving its Afghanistan objectives?

The main challenge for India is to bring all other stakeholder countries on the same road. At present, every country’s aims and objectives differ vis-à-vis India.

India: To ensure that Afghanistan is not used by Pakistan for terrorist activities against India. India also seeks to focus on Central Asia and South Asia connectivity through Afghanistan.

Russia: Russian version of the Delhi declaration omitted the objective: “to ensure Afghanistan would never become a safe haven for global terrorism”. It also did not commit to the Declaration’s 2022 timeframe for another meeting. Thus, it is an indication of a difference in approach towards Afghanistan.

Pakistan wants to control the government and government formation in Afghanistan. Pakistan will host the Troika-plus summit which will include the US, China, Russia.

Iran, which is a largely Shia country, wants to keep radicalization in check, in Afghanistan. It also wants Afghanistan to buy oil and natural gas from Iran.

Central Asian countries want peace and stability in the region, they also want to supply oil and natural gas to Afghanistan. For example, Turkmenistan approach Afghanistan for a gas pipeline.

What is India's approach towards Afghanistan?

Following are India's aims regarding Afghanistan:

- Provide Afghan people humanitarian assistance;
- Ensure that Afghan territory is not used to spread radicalism or terrorism;
- Preserve the social and economic gains made over the past two decades;
- Establish inclusive governance, with the representation of women and minorities;
- Allow the United Nations to play an important role; implement the United Nations Security Council resolution 2593;
- A unified international response to the current situation.

Read more: [India's future Afghan policy – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be the way forward for India?

Though India does not support the Taliban or the Taliban regime, it has to secure its regional interest. India has begun engaging with the Taliban government on international platforms. This combined with regional and multilateral engagements will help India to become an important stakeholder in the Future of Afghanistan.

Read more: [What can India do?](#)

28. UAPA acts enacts as punishment

Source: This post is based on the article " **UAPA acts enacts as punishment**" published in the Indian Express on 12th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 2 Fundamental Rights.

Relevance: Understanding UAPA.

News: Tripura violence has led to cases against journalists under UAPA. It is time for political parties to forgo their conventional approach and make a concerted effort to repeal this unlawful law.

In the backdrop of the Tripura violence, the police used the provisions under the UAPA (**Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967**) to charge journalists and 100-odd social media users for posts on communal violence. There are also many incidences when police use UAPA in an irrational manner.

Note: *The majority of the content from this article has been covered in our previous articles. You can read our previous articles using the given links.*

Read more: [UAPA and the recent judgments – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is UAPA?

Read here: [UAPA or Unlawful Activities Prevention Act – Explained, Pointwise](#)

Why UAPA is controversial?

The provisions of UAPA make it prone to misuse. For e.g. Section 13 states that whoever in any way assists any unlawful activity will be punished. The term anyway is very vague and broad and can be easily misused by police.

Read more:

[A new jurisprudence for political prisoners](#)

[UAPA being misused to silence voices against injustice'](#)

29. [For inclusive development, support Dalit entrepreneurs](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**For inclusive development, support Dalit entrepreneurs**” published in **Indian Express** on **13th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Policies and schemes for the development of the marginalized communities

Relevance: Understanding the factors impeding growth of Dalit entrepreneurship and steps that can be taken to resolve this problem.

News: Dalit entrepreneurship holds promise for the much-needed social transformation.

Many attempts have been made to transform the highly-stratified Indian society into an inclusive one. However, the expected social transformation in our Indian society remains unfulfilled, esp with regard to Dalits. Their situation has improved, but social exclusion still persists.

In this context, promoting Dalit entrepreneurship can further the much-needed social transformation.

Why the government needs to support Dalit entrepreneurship?

- **Employment opportunities:** With the dominance of a few castes over business and commerce and lack of access to capital, an individual from a marginalized section of society has limited options of employment. He can either take up a government job or continue their manual and low paying caste-based occupation.
- Supporting Dalit entrepreneurship can **improve their access to rights** while helping them fight the social hierarchies.
- **Material well-being and financial autonomy:** Entrepreneurship often results in gaining of material benefits, and the relative autonomy.

What steps are being taken by the govt?

The District Industries Centre (DIC) stipulates that to nurture entrepreneurs, the government must increase the share of goods produced by Dalits in its procurement. It has also sought to get financial institutions to amend their rules for collateral in order to ease financing for the projects of Dalit entrepreneurs.

State financial corporations have also been instructed to increase financial support to Scheduled Caste entrepreneurs.

Stand-Up India initiative, a focussed financial intervention for SC/ST entrepreneurs guarantees credit up to Rs 1 crore.

The **Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation** has allocated 16.2% of plots to SC entrepreneurs

The **Small Industries Development Bank** of India offers an additional subsidy to Dalit entrepreneurs.

What are the issues/challenges faced by Dalit entrepreneurs?

- **Artificial inaccessibility:** Despite the existence of government schemes and policies, the actual benefit is not reaching the beneficiaries due to the artificial inaccessibility created by inherent social and caste biases.

For instance, the Stand-Up India initiative failed to deliver the expected results due to the unavailability of so-called eligible SC/ST entrepreneurship, with most of the funds lying unutilised.

– The lack of enthusiasm of loaning branches and officials towards proposals by Dalit entrepreneurs

What is the way forward?

Dalit-focussed alternate investment finance (AIF) and private equity (PE) funds are needed to create a vibrant and inclusive MSME ecosystem.

Creation of **inclusivity cell** in banks and lending institutions/NBFCs in order to inform, educate and foster Dalit entrepreneurship.

Formulate **multiple credit guarantee trusts** by raising contributions from MNCs, FDIs, portfolio investors, corporates, etc. to provide guaranteed support to the banks for them to extend credit to Dalit entrepreneurs.

A **social vulnerability index** can also to be introduced.

30. [NAM at 60 marks an age of Non alignment](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**NAM at 60 marks an age of Non alignment**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Foreign policy of India.

Relevance: Understanding the holistic view of NAM.

News: The birth anniversary of Nehru reminds of 60 years of NAM. This concept of NAM can be traced to the policy of Switzerland in 1814-15 Vienna congress.

Read more: [Non Aligned Movement\(NAM\)](#)

What is Nehru’s version of NAM?

1. Believed that world problems are interlinked, and it is for One World that free India should work. 2. Opposed to ideological confinement imposed by two power blocks. This was visible from India’s opposition to American weapons in Pakistan from 1954 and the creation of western-led military blocs in Asia.

NAM was seen as a cost-effective method to achieve Indian objectives. India also supported anti-colonial movements in African states.

Read more: [Relevance of Non Aligned Movement](#)

However, India’s inclinations towards NAM were reduced post Nehru. But it was retained to provide flexibility to maintain India’s diplomatic and economic relations.

What are the failures of NAM?

–There was a **lack of collective action and collective self-reliance**. For example, only Cyprus and Ethiopia supported India during the India – China war.

–**Ideological challenge to the concept of nonalignment**. For example, Yugoslavia and Egypt became nonaligned and they defied the great power blocs. But such an alignment of nations goes against the very concept of non-alignment.

–**Non-establishment of an equitable international economic or information order**.

–NAM countries themselves **did not work on their human rights issues**.

In India, Change in the course of NAM is visible after Nehru’s death. India adopted a pragmatism approach under Indira Gandhi to opportunism after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the semi-alignment of today.

What is the future scope of NAM?

Centre for policy research produced a document [Nonalignment 2.0](#), but that made no impact. All organizations have a shelf life starting from the League of Nations, [SAARC](#), and [BRICS](#) etc. So, the success of NAM for India will depend on its utility for India.



General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. The dirty secret of EV supply chains that can't be overlooked

Source: This post is based on the article “**The dirty secret of EV supply chains that can't be overlooked**” published on **8th November 2021** in **Livemint**

Syllabus: GS3 – Infrastructure: Issues related to energy sector.

News: Increasingly, electric vehicles are being seen as a major solution to the severe emissions problem. However, many tend to ignore the carbon emissions produced during the process of manufacturing these cars.

The transport sector is responsible for almost a quarter of direct carbon-dioxide emissions from burning fuel. EVs were supposed to be the answer to this.

But while cleaner cars may eventually solve the tailpipe-emission problem, they don't address all the damage done to the environment while making them.

How manufacturing of EVs contribute to an increase in GHG emissions?

Firstly, compared with traditional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, greenhouse gases released while making battery-electric cars account for a higher portion of life-cycle emissions. Every step of making a vehicle's 20,000-30,000 parts, involves a few thousand tonnes of aluminium, steel and other materials, produces emissions.

With increase in sale of EV vehicles, material emissions will rise to over 60% by 2040 from 18% today.

Secondly, EVs uses 45% more of aluminium than traditional vehicles. Emissions from aluminium have started rising, too, because it's energy-intensive to mine and produce.

Thirdly, Materials used for essential parts of the battery are even more carbon intensive. And as companies try to make batteries that can take cars further, they are using nickel, cobalt and manganese, which generate still more greenhouse gases.

Finally, the metals used for making the battery-electric ones make up 47% of the manufacturing carbon footprint, according to the Greenpeace report.

What is the way forward?

Policy and car-makers should start focusing to control the emission during the process of manufacturing the EV's. it can be done by the following ways,

Mandatory Scope 3 disclosures by car manufacturing companies: Scope 3 disclosures is defined by Greenpeace as *'indirect emissions that are a result of an organization's operations, but are not owned or controlled by the company'*.

Emission control strategies: These should include battery recycling, prioritizing types that use less carbon-intensive materials, or emission caps on the battery and electric vehicle manufacturing process.

Supply chain decarbonization: Small companies like Nano One Materials Corp and Euro Manganese Inc are thinking about how to decarbonize supply chains for battery parts. Other, bigger players need to catch on, too.

2. Pledges at Glasgow could change the global distribution of power

Source: This post is based on the article “**Pledges at Glasgow could change the global distribution of power**” published on **8th November 2021** in **Livemint**

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to climate change and its impact.

News: India's commitments at the Glasgow COP-26 meeting came at a substantial cost to its medium-term economic prospects, while other developed countries such as EU, US and China will have an advantage.

How new commitments will cost India its medium-term economic prospects?

New commitments related to energy transition mean the challenge of raising the living standards of hundreds of millions of our people has become even more difficult.

It is uncertain if high economic growth at the scale required to create the 20 million jobs, we need every year is possible within the parameters of India's carbon commitments.

Rapid decarbonization is likely to cause a **supply shock, raise prices and raise public debt**. It will create winners and losers, and the latter could push back, as they have done against globalization.

Must Read: [India's new climate targets at COP26 – Explained, pointwise](#)

How EU, US and China will benefit from the CoP-26 commitments?

China: The transition from fossil fuels to modern renewables, for instance, presents China with a massive economic opportunity, given its dominance in solar, battery and nuclear power.

Europe: it can protect its domestic industries from foreign competition by imposing green standards and tariffs.

US: Given its advanced research and development ecosystem, the US is sure to derive economic benefits from the emerging global market for green technology.

Why India can neither rely on the rich countries' promises nor on climate financing?

First, the rich countries have failed to make covid vaccines available to billions of people in need of them today. So, they can hardly be relied upon to help future generations.

Second, the talk of \$1 trillion in green financing and assistance from rich countries, cannot be believed given their past records. For instance, the \$100 billion per year promised by rich countries at Paris six years ago has remained as an unfulfilled goal till now.

Why it has become more difficult to address common global challenges?

It is because the political structure of the world is not optimized to formulate solutions for humankind as a whole.

Our failure to adopt coherent global approaches to a growing number of important issues, such as international terrorism, public health, environment, etc is in large part due to political structures.

What is they way forward?

There is a need to evolve a stable balance of power that creates a global order that permits global solutions for global problems.

Nation states need to rethink political structures. Within countries, mechanisms of representative democracy and bureaucratic administration need overhauling.

3. Agritech startups have great potential in India

Source: This post is based on the article "**Agritech startups have great potential in India**" published on **8th November 2021** in **Indian Express**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Use of Technology in Agri sector.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November (Second Week), 2021

News: The Agritech startup ecosystem can be the next-generation technology revolution in the agri-food sector.

Agritech Startups are raising large sums, despite many of them currently making losses. This is because they disrupt the traditional system of doing business and increase efficiency.

India witnessed an increase in funding from \$619 million in H1 2020 to \$2 billion in H1 2021.

Many of them use artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), internet of things (IoT), etc, to unlock the potential of big data for greater resource use efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness.

Currently, it is estimated that there are about **600 to 700 Agritech startups in India** operating at different levels of agri-value chains.

How Agritech startups are empowering farmers?

Ninjacart, Dehaat, and Crofarm (Otipy) are a few of the many startups that are redefining the agri-food marketplace.

Ninjacart & Crofarm (Otipy): it sources fresh produce from farms and supplies to retailers, restaurants, grocery and kirana stores, and small businesses.

Dehaat: it is an online marketplace providing all the agricultural products and services to farmers.

These startups have had a demonstrated impact.

For instance, **Ninjacart reduced wastage** to 4% compared to up to 25% in traditional chains through demand-driven harvest schedule.

Logistics optimisation enabled delivery in less than 12 hours at one-third the cost in traditional chains.

Farmers' net incomes are reported to have increased by 20%.

Dehaat has enabled up to 50% increase in farmers' income as a result of savings in input costs, increased farm productivity, and better price discovery.

Agritech startups-led e-commerce platforms have the potential to steer the shift from government-controlled agricultural markets towards more demand-driven digital markets.

These startup network is able to leverage the bigger front-end players who demand bulk quality produce and have challenges in directly linking with farmers.

What are the associated challenges?

Sustainability and scalability: There are likely to be a lot of changes in Agritech startups in the future. Many ventures are falling out while others are consolidating through mergers and acquisitions. In India, the biggest challenge is to sustain and scale up the farmer outreach.

Underutilised potential: An Ernst & Young 2020 study pegs the Indian Agritech market potential at \$24 billion by 2025, of which only 1% has been captured so far.

What is the way forward?

The startup-Farmer Producer Organisation partnership can be strengthened by incentivising the FPOs under the central government's programme to add 10,000 new FPOs by 2024.

Working together: The network of Agritech startups, incubators, accelerators and investors need to work closely with policymakers, academia, think tanks, and government departments to understand the dynamics of the agri-food sector better. This will also enable the government and policymakers to leverage the existing Agritech pool and co-create solutions for shared value.

4. The energy headwind

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Infrastructure – Energy

Source: This post is based on the article “**The energy headwind**” published in **Times of India** on 9th November 2021.

News: The rise in prices of energy may slow down the economic recovery and growth rate.

How are energy prices linked to economic recovery and growth?

Economic Productivity is directly related to the use of dense forms of energy*. Improvements in Indian economy’s energy density means India’s energy demand grew 2.5% slower than India’s GDP growth. **But lack of reserves of dense fuels (oil, gas etc.) means India’s imports are growing faster than the GDP.**

Energy imports accounted for nearly 80% of India’s trade deficit in 2019-20. The rapid rise in energy prices globally has bloated India’s energy import bill. While some deficit can be covered by exports; the shortfall is covered through **fund inflows (sale of equities) or through loans.** This additional payout to foreign suppliers limits demand for domestic products.

Household consume almost 40% of the crude oil products directly, while 60% are used by Industry. Industry will pass on the price rise to consumers eventually which will **reduce the demand and slow the growth.**

What were the reasons for cut-down on excise duty on fuels?

The cut-down announced by the Government on excise duties will reduce cost to consumers by \$20 billion. The Government has surplus receipts due to high fuel prices and consequently higher revenue from duties. The Union Government has already received 56% of budgeted receipts in the first 6 months (April-September) compared to the norm of 40%. Thus, the reduction in duties made sense.

Another reason was inflationary pressure of high fuel prices. The fuel price cut will reduce the CPI by at least 30 basis points.

What is the outlook for the future?

Rise in prices of Coal has been short-lived as production of coal has ramped-up in China. Inventories are also better in Indian thermal plants. This showed that there are no structural issues in the energy supply chain, only that production had gone down during the pandemic phase due to low demand. Rising demand is now a signal for fast economic recovery.

Now the focus of the policymakers should be on sustaining this recovery and focus on the priorities of next phase of economic cycle.

For Indian economy to grow at 7%, energy demand would grow by 4-5% annually. **India’s energy security and insulating the economy from external energy price shocks** should be the top-most policy priority. Moreover, with new emission targets, India’s energy mix should be at the center of energy policy.

* Energy density means energy stored per unit mass or volume, higher the energy density, higher the energy, and better the fuel, e.g., Energy density of Natural Gas is 55MJ/kg while Wood has 16MJ/kg, Gas is much better fuel than wood)

5. Methane question: It is easier to cut CH₄ than CO₂

Source: This post is based on the article “**Methane question: It is easier to cut CH₄ than CO₂**” published in the Times of India on 9th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Environment – Climate Change

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November (Second Week), 2021

News: In CoP 26 summit, 105 countries have [pledged](#) to reduce their methane emissions by 30% from 2020 levels, by 2030.

IPCC research estimates that 1/4th of global warming is done by CH₄ or Methane. Cutting Methane emissions is easier compared to other emissions due to tech solutions. Also, UN's latest assessment is that over 50% of available targeted measures have negative costs – they quickly end up saving money.

But it is not yet clear that industrialized meat production system, which globally accounts for 32% of anthropogenic methane emissions, will be a part of reform or not.

What India should do?

livestock and paddy cultivation, which accounts for 8% of CH₄ emissions, is the main reason behind India not signing the agreement. India can use technologies that reduce methanogenic activity in bovines and sheep. For example, ICMR has developed a feed supplement that cuts down their methane emissions by 17-20%.

Further India can also take a lead in the future “green meats” or laboratory meats.

6. [Big claims of rapid economic formalization are suspect](#)

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

‘**Gains of demonetization and worries over growth**’ and ‘**Big claims of rapid economic formalization are suspect**’ published in **Livemint** on **9th Nov 21**;

‘**Who shrunk India’s informal sector?**’ published in **TOI** on **9th Nov 21**.

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

Relevance: Formalization of Indian economy

News: The formalization of India’s economy has increased over the years, but regaining a fast-growth trajectory is a challenge yet to be fully tackled.

What is the size of India’s informal economy?

Estimate done in 2018 suggests the size of the informal economy at 52%. This number was expressed by NSC (National Statistical Commission) with very limited methodological details.

How the size of informal economy can be measured?

e-Shram initiative: GoI is making earnest efforts to bring such unorganised employment into the formal stream by incorporating MSMEs through the GST portal. It also recently launched the e-Shram initiative that is creating a comprehensive database of unorganised employment in India.

Digital footprints: the consumption of the informal sector can be captured through digital footprints. For instance, an informal wage-earner’s trace in the economy may be captured by the shampoo-sachet or glucose biscuit she may be purchasing. Likewise, a small entity may be a seller in an online platform and accepting UPI-based payments.

What are the signs that indicate an increase in formalization of the economy?

Provident-fund enrolments have steadily risen amid a job scarcity – a chunk of these could be due to payrolls going formal.

Extra bounce seen lately in collections of GST.

Inc in UPI transactions: In October, transactions done via the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) hit a record 4 billion, worth over \$100 billion.

The EPFO portal shows that around 2.25 lakh business units have been formalised since that data has been made online.

The total number of outstanding KCCs (Kisan Credit Cards) is currently at 6.5 crore. The credit offtake per KCC translates into agri-credit formalisation of Rs 4.6 lakh crore.

What are the issues that still remain?

As a proportion of gross domestic product, **cash in circulation has risen** above its level before demonetization.

The extent of formalization still lacks a sound estimate. Recent research work by State Bank of India estimated that the informal sector's share of India's output had shrunk from over half the total back in 2017-18 to under a fifth. The way this fraction was arrived at, however, does not lend it the reliability needed for such an important ratio.

Has there been a considerable decrease in the size of the informal economy?

A recent [report](#) by SBI made a striking claim that the informal sector's share in India's GDP has shrunk from about 52% three years ago to a "max 15-20%" of GDP.

There are four key problems with this analysis.

Firstly, the **assumption** that the entire GDP loss in 2020-21 represents the loss of just the informal sector is **too simplistic**. The informal sector was undoubtedly hard hit. But given the widespread evidence of revenue losses suffered by the formal sector, it is hard to justify the assumption of zero loss in the formal sector.

Secondly, SBI's analysis uses **an extraordinary reference point** (the pandemic year) to make a claim about a structural transformation in the economy. This is a problematic approach. Small enterprises fold easily when faced with external shocks, be they pandemics or droughts. Compared to large firms, they are also easier to restart once the shock subsides.

Thirdly, SBI's report makes an **implicit assumption that the reported GDP figures capture the informal sector's contribution accurately**. To calculate growth of the informal sector, national account statisticians use the available data on formal-sector indicators for each sub-sector of the economy (with some exceptions such as agriculture) i.e. they make assumptions for informal sector.

Fourthly, share of workers with social security benefits is also considered to estimate the extent of formalization across the world. In India, such data is now available annually, via the **periodic labour force surveys (PLFS)**. As per the survey an overwhelming majority of workers in India do not have regular employment. Even among the small minority that have regular jobs, a majority don't have a written contract or paid leave, according to the last pre-pandemic PLFS survey conducted in 2018-19.

7. How India's Gati Shakti Plan can have an impact beyond its borders

Source: This post is based on the article " **How India's Gati Shakti Plan can have an impact beyond its borders**" published in the **Indian Express** on **9th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Relevance: Understanding the importance of Gati Shakti Plan.

News: Gati Shakti Plan can generate positive spillover effects, strengthen India's economic ties with its neighbours.

Prime Minister recently launched the Gati Shakti – National Master Plan for Multi-modal Connectivity. Apart from the economic multiplier effect at the domestic level, the plan has also great significance in shaping India's relations with other countries.

What are the components of the Gati Shakti Plan?

- **Read here:** [PM Gati Shakti – National Infrastructure Master Plan – Explained, pointwise](#)

What will be the impact of Gati Shakti on India's foreign relations?

With the focus on infrastructure and to boost the last-mile connectivity, it will **help India to deepen its economic relations** with neighboring countries as well as countries from Southeast Asia and Indian Ocean origin.

For eg: India trade relations with Nepal reached new heights because of the various initiatives in the infrastructure sector like new rail and road routes, modernisation of border control systems etc.

Read more: [What PM Gati Shakti plan means for the nation](#)

What should India do to ensure the success of the Gati Shakti Plan?

First, India's connectivity issues need to be coordinated with domestic issues. Also, India should deepen bilateral consultations with its neighbouring countries to measure their connectivity strategies and priorities.

For eg: India's integrated check post lack complementary infrastructure on the other side of the border. Similarly, in the case of digital systems, while India has joined Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) convention, none of its eastern neighbours have.

Second, India should work collaboratively on various regional institutions and platforms. This will help India to develop a regional vision and standards for connectivity, reducing bilateral transaction costs etc.

Third, India should work closely with global players who are keen to support its strategic imperative to give the Indo-Pacific an economic connectivity dimension.

These all measures will give the Gati Shakti plan a truly regional and global dimension and help India achieve its developmental targets at home.

8. Net-zero presents many opportunities for India — and challenges

Source: This post is based on the article "**Net-zero presents many opportunities for India — and challenges**" published in The **Indian Express** on **10th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Analysing the net-zero target set by India and what's required to achieve it.

News: At Glasgow COP26 summit, one of the key announcements made by India was a target for achieving net-zero. India committed to a 2070 net zero target.

This is not just significant for the world, but also a sizeable economic opportunity for India. The challenge now is to overcome the obstacles along the way.

Must Read: [India announces new climate targets – Explained, pointwise](#)

The new net-zero approach will require dramatic changes in the power mix and industrial processes.

It will need the share of fossil fuel to fall from 85% now to 20% by 2070, assuming a high use of hydrogen technology and carbon capture strategies.

What are some potential benefits of a net-zero approach?

A net-zero approach could bring more benefits over time:

India will be spared from re-fitting obligations: Much of India's wealth is yet to be created. 60% of India's capital stock — factories and buildings that will exist in 2040 — is yet to be built. The country can potentially leapfrog into new green technology, rather than being overburdened with “re-fitting” obligations, like developed countries.

Better market access: Despite India's large domestic market, exports are a critical driver of overall GDP growth. They open up new markets, bring in international competition, forcing the domestic industry to become more efficient. Further, they push up FDI inflows and technical know-how. All high-growth periods in India have had the support of fast-growing exports. If India's exports achieve a green stamp, they'll find better market access.

Employment opportunities: 2-2.5 million additional jobs can be created in the renewables sector by 2050, as the renewable energy technologies tend to be more labour intensive than conventional energy technologies. In fact, distributed renewables such as small-scale hydro, rooftop solar and biomass create most jobs per unit of installed capacity.

What measures need to be implemented?

Sorting discom issues: The finances of [power distribution companies](#) need to be improved to fund the grid upgrades necessary for scaling up renewables. This would require a host of reforms, including having a truly independent regulator who ensures market pricing of power tariffs, incentives that speed up smart metering and plug T&D losses, and policies that lead to the privatisation of discoms.

India needs a coordinated institutional framework that can help overcome multiple levels of complexity like federalism, fiscal constraints and bureaucracy.

Funding the transition to clean energy: The energy investment requirement will be high, rising from about \$70-80 billion per year now to \$160 billion per year. Alongside this, a similar amount will be needed for transportation and other infrastructure. While the private sector will be required to fund much of this, the government can play a pivotal role, especially in the early days.

9. Burning problem: Fast urbanising India can't be cavalier on safety & have pathetic fire-fighting infrastructure

Source: This post is based on the article “**Burning problem: Fast urbanising India can't be cavalier on safety & have pathetic fire-fighting infrastructure**” published in the **Times of India** on **10th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Disaster Management.

Relevance: Understanding the cause behind the increase in fire-related deaths.

News: There is a need to adopt various mechanisms to control fire incidents.

There are many loose ends in ensuring the fire safety standards. In 2019 alone, India recorded 10,915 deaths due to fire accidents. Recently, a fire broke out in a hospital in Maharashtra, which led to the loss of 11 lives.

Where do the fire incidents, mostly occur?

Most of the fire fatalities occur in residential buildings.

In 2019, compared to 2% fatalities in factories, fire fatalities in residential areas counts to 58%. Therefore, the focus has to be on residential buildings in order to cut down both accidents and related fatalities.

Moreover, Urbanisation is growing fast, with about half of the population in a few states living in urban areas. Tightly packed urban clusters mean a higher likelihood of accidents.

Read more: [The issue of Urban Fires in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What steps need to be taken?

- **Adoption of guidelines-** [Guidelines of National Building Code to Ensure Fire Safety in Public buildings](#) should be adopted in letter and spirit.
- **Allocation of resources:** Fire safety standards fall under the municipality which is often resourced deprived. Government should ensure proper allocation of resources to them.
- **Proper infrastructure:** Fire-fighting infrastructure needs to be bolstered. In 2018, there were barely 10 people for every 100 needed and about 22 vehicles for 100 assessed as the requirement.

Read more: [Need for Fire Safety training and technologies](#)

India should learn from other countries like the USA which in 2017 reported over a million fire incidents, but maintaining High safety standards, it ensured to reduce fatalities to one per lakh population.

10. Does India have a right to burn fossil fuels?

Source: This post is based on the article “**Does India have a right to burn fossil fuels?**” published in

The Hindu on 11th Nov 2021. **Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment. **Relevance:** Why India doesn't need to depend on coal for its future development?

News: In the backdrop of COP26, India's dependence on coal has remained a much talked about issue. Fossil fuel sources like coal have contributed significantly to global carbon emissions.

But, neither India's historical nor its current emissions come anywhere near to those by developed countries.

And as India needs energy for development, some experts have therefore argued for a fair share of the **carbon budget framework** for India.

Hence, the question is: *Does this fair share entail a **right to burn** fossil fuels, and do the countries in the global South necessarily need to increase their share in the global carbon budget?*

The answer is 'no' and it does not come at the cost of development, even in the limited sense as development is defined generally.

Must Read: [Phasing out coal in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why India doesn't/shouldn't need to depend on coal for its future energy requirements?

Alternative forms of energy: Normally the argument in favor of coal is on account of its **cost**, **reliability**, and **domestic availability**. But a deeper analysis reveals the truth.

– **Cost:** The recent data shows that the levelised cost of electricity from renewable energy sources like the solar (photovoltaic), hydro and onshore wind **has been declining sharply** over the last decade. It is already less than fossil fuel-based electricity generation.

– **Reliability:** With technological progress, the reliability issues are being addressed by the frontier renewable tech.

– **Domestic availability:** As for the easy domestic availability of coal, it is a myth. According to the Ministry of Coal, India's net coal import went up from ₹782.6 billion in 2011-12 to ₹1,155.0 billion in 2020-21. India is among the largest importers of coal in the world.

The abundance of renewable natural resources in the tropical climate can give India a head start in this competitive world of technology.

South-South collaboration: This type of collaboration can help India avoid the usual patterns of trade between the North and the South, where the former controls technology and the latter merely provides inputs.

Benefits of a greener development path: The high-employment trajectory that the green path entails vis-à-vis the fossil fuel sector may help address the issue of surplus labor, even if partially. Such a path could provide decentralised access to clean energy to the poor and the marginalised, including in remote regions of India. So, it simultaneously addresses the issues of employment, technology, energy poverty, and self-reliance.

Arguing for burning more coal will make the situation worse for developing countries like India. Due to its tropical climate and high population density along the coastal lines, India remains vulnerable to climate change. Hence, burning more coal is not the solution.

Moral high ground: If the global south including India takes an independent and greener approach to development, then it affords it a moral high ground. This will allow developing countries to push for a more inclusive carbon budget framework, like [South Africa at Glasgow](#). It'll force the global north to come to the table for negotiations on climate finance.

Must Read: [Coal crisis in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the way forward?

Current climate dialogue is stuck in a perennial deadlock. The global North justifies operating coal mines since the South continues to emit more, while the global South negotiates for a higher share in carbon budget based on the past emissions of the North.

The wrongs of the **global injustice** are captured rightfully by the carbon budget framework, but the need of the hour is a global progressive agenda that abstains from the dangerous model of competitive emissions.

11. How to buy better: India needs new mechanisms for defence purchases, for enhancing both efficiency & reputation

Source: This post is based on the article “**How to buy better: India needs new mechanisms for defence purchases, for enhancing both efficiency & reputation**” published in **TOI** on **10th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.

Relevance: A transparent and robust defence acquisition policy is the need of the hour.

News: French portal Mediapart recently claimed in a new report that it has evidence of kickbacks^[1] being paid by French aircraft manufacturer Dassault Aviation to help secure the sale of Rafale fighter aircraft to India.

Reports have further alleged that the CBI and the ED had evidence of bribes being paid since October 2018 but did not pursue the matter.

It is time for India to formulate a robust procedure for defence acquisition from foreign manufacturers.

What factors should India consider for designing an efficient defence acquisition policy?

First, as is the case now, **armed forces should decide** what suits them best, via multi-vendor trials and budget permitting.

Second, the process of acquisition must be undertaken by a **specially tasked unit**. This can draw talent from bureaucracy, armed forces, lateral recruitment from the private sector, carefully vetted specialists from law and finance.

It should report to the political executive and must operate separately from armed forces and the bureaucracy.

Its mandate will be fast and clean acquisition, both goals clearly defined.

Third, there must be true **parliamentary oversight on defence acquisition process**. A select committee of MPs from all parties should have the power to ask questions, even if in-camera, of the specialised body doing the deal.

Fourth, once a deal is through, **all relevant papers**, including all financial details, **must be placed in full Parliament**. Security-sensitive details can be left out.

What is the way forward?

The country's security challenges are growing, and sadly domestic defence manufacturing ability is limited, so foreign weapons and technology will remain relevant for a long time.

Hence, a clear and efficient defence acquisition procedure will be best for India's defence readiness and to its standing on the world stage.

[1]: A kickback is a form of negotiated bribery in which a commission is paid to the bribe-taker in exchange for services rendered.

12. Money Is The Key To Happiness

Source: This post is based on the article "**Money Is The Key To Happiness**" published in the **TOI** on **11th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3- Inclusive Growth and issues arising from it.

News: Per capita GDP, not GDP itself, is the real measure of national progress

GDP does not reflect a society's well-being. GDP captures neither population decline nor welfare. Moreover, it doesn't measure social indicators of wellbeing such as the health, education, and welfare of children.

In this context, many alternatives have been proposed such as

- Gross National Happiness to the Well-Being Index,
- The Malaysian Fuzzy Quality of Life Index,
- India's Green GDP.
- The Genuine Progress Indicator being promoted by the U.S
- The Better Life Index proposed by the OECD

Until the world settles on a new standard, per capita GDP can replace GDP as the key measure of progress.

Why per capita GDP should be used as a measure to reflect society's well-being?

Firstly, per capita GDP **reflects progress on many social welfare indicators** and also captures threats which the new alternatives ignore i.e. population decline.

For example: Consider a country whose population is decreasing rapidly and its economy is going through a recession. Now, its GDP will decrease, and this might suggest that the average income might also be decreasing as well. But, this is not the case.

Due to a rapidly shrinking population, a slowdown in GDP has no effect on the average income of the people. And this specific trend is captured by 'per capita GDP', not the traditional indicator of GDP.

Here, GDP has failed to capture both welfare and the declining population trend in the country.

Secondly, Nations with higher per capita GDP tend to have **higher life expectancy** and levels of social support, lower infant mortality and poverty levels, less air pollution, and corruption. Many of these measures are strong predictors of life satisfaction, which helps explain why richer countries tend to be happier. **For instance:** The latest **World Happiness Report** ranks just one country with per capita GDP under \$15,000 (Costa Rica) in the top 25 and none with per capita GDP over \$15,000 in the bottom 70.

Among emerging countries, those with higher per capita income also typically score better on the **UN's multidimensional poverty index**.

Thirdly, unlike the new alternatives, per capita GDP is available now in real-time for most countries.

Should India adopt per capita GDP?

Over time, India's gains on welfare indicators like life expectancy and infant mortality have been accompanied by rising per capita GDP. India was one of the countries that made the largest strides in reducing the number of people living in severe multidimensional poverty, according to the UN.

But, India has been sliding down the happiness rankings and now stands 139th out of 149 countries.

That is well below what one would expect for a country with a per capita GDP of around \$2,000 and may owe to rising concern over inequality and corruption.

What are the advantages of adopting per capita GDP as a measure of growth?

Adopting per capita GDP as the new standard would **indicate a less alarming picture of the global growth** slowdown. This is because as the population declines, even with a GDP slowdown the per capita GDP (average income) might still not decrease.

It would **ease pressure on politicians** to generate growth faster than what shrinking labour forces will allow.

Indirectly, it would promote the aims of those who want slower growth to limit climate change. And it would be a step towards the broad measure of human happiness.

13. Dualism and its discontents

Source: This post is based on the article "**Dualism and its discontents**" published in the **Business Standard** on **11th November 2021**.

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

News: Covid has substantially sharpened economic dualism in India. Poverty rates are increasing and government needs to focus on the expansion of job opportunities in both the formal and informal segments

India has been characterised by significant economic dualism and disparities over many years.

Dualism indicates co-existence of two different worlds. Economic dualism therefore denotes existence of disparities in economic sphere. In this case it denotes the disparities between, Urban vs rural, formal vs informal, land (and other assets)-owning vs landless. employed vs jobless, well-educated vs ill-educated, and rich vs poor states.

What are the possible reasons for the economic dualism in India?

Rise in poverty: India is witnessing a substantial increase in rural poverty in several major states and an overall increase in the poverty ratio for the first time in four decades.

Slow economic growth in the last ten years

Twin shocks of demonetisation in late 2016 and **transition to goods and services tax** in 2017-18.

Sharp deterioration in employment conditions, youth unemployment rate and a massive decline in female labour force participation between 2011-12 and 2017-18 as recorded by the employment/labour force surveys.

Impact of the Covid pandemic and the nationwide lockdown imposed in late March 2020. This further worsened the unemployment rate and labour force participation rate.

Disproportionate impact on the non-agricultural informal sector: The loss of jobs and earnings was disproportionate in the non-agricultural informal sector accompanied by slow recovery.

What are the possible consequences of an increase in economic dualism?

It is likely to exert **lasting negative influences** on our economic and social trajectory in the medium and long run. These might include

- **Reduced potential** for economic growth
- The persistence of very weak employment and poverty situation.
- Rising social and political discord
- Heightened vulnerability to geopolitical challenges.

What is the way forward?

The central focus of the government has to be the **expansion of job opportunities** in both the formal and informal segments of the economy. Higher rates of employment will reduce poverty and strengthen overall economic growth.

This can be done via the following measures:

- Strengthening rural employment guarantee programmes.
- Encouraging labour-intensive manufacturing for both domestic and external markets through better policies.
- Enhancing learning outcomes in schools and overall skill-development.
- Removing regulatory impediments to employment expansion in all areas.
- Strengthening programmes for public health and basic health care.
- Raising the national tax to GDP ratio to undertake more expenditure on public goods like education, health, roads and other social infrastructure.
- Improving the business climate to nurture higher private investment.

14. The case of demonetisation in India

Source: This post is based on the article "**The case of demonetisation in India**" published in **The Hindu** on **11th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning

News: Popular narratives play a much bigger role in economic policymaking than economists and policymakers acknowledge.

For instance, the Weimar hyperinflation of 1921-24 is deeply embedded in the German consciousness. Even now, nearly 100 years after the event, German society trusts financial stability and distrusts public debt.

Fiscal conservatism remains the dominant narrative and has inhibited the post-2008 recovery in Europe.

Similarly, the demonetisation of high-value currency in India in 2016 is a classic example of policy based on faulty narratives.

How demonetisation was a failure?

Disruption: The demonetisation in 2016 caused widespread disruption in the economy. For instance, personal hardship, the loss of income and savings, and economic slowdown.

Very little of its declared objectives were achieved such as eliminating black money, corruption, moving towards a “less cash and more digital economy”, or increased tax compliance.

Also, more than 99.3% of the cancelled notes were returned to the banks. If black money had existed as stockpiles of illegal cash, clearly all of it was very efficiently laundered.

No difference in tax base: If the objective was to register a permanent upward shift in the tax base, it failed miserably.

Increased use of Physical cash: The cash-in-circulation has now exceeded pre-demonetisation levels. Also, post-COVID-19, reliance on cash is much higher, and with more higher denomination notes in circulation.

How the popular narrative on black money dictated demonetisation policy?

Black money is not really kept in cash except in small quantities but mostly accumulated through real estate and other assets. However, the way the narrative was framed made it hard for critics to explain their opposition.

The folklore of black money: it is easily recognised and understood by the common people, who witness corruption in daily life and they see it in the cinema, newspaper stories, or in daily conversation over the years.

Psychological satisfaction: The idea of dramatic action and the striking of a powerful blow against illegal wealth is deeply satisfying.

Moral issue: To criticise demonetisation would suggest that critics have a vested interest in defending black money and corruption.

Changing narrative: When it became clear that the cancelled currency was being returned to the banks in larger numbers than expected, the narrative changed focus from black money and fake currency to digital/cashless payments.

Linked sub-themes: A key point in selling the story is to introduce complementary sub-themes to reinforce the main narrative. Such as appeals to nationalism and patriotism.

15. Managing Cryptocurrencies

Source: This post is based on the article “Managing Cryptocurrencies” published in **Business Standard** on **11th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Identifying a plausible approach towards managing cryptocurrencies by the government.

News: Since March 2020, when the Supreme Court ruled it was legal to trade Cryptocurrencies, over Rs 50 crore in Crypto-assets is traded every day by resident Indians. On the other hand, RBI has often expressed its serious concerns regarding the dangers these instruments pose to the macroeconomic and financial stability of the country.

Hence, governments need to create a regulatory framework for these virtual assets on a priority basis

It is to be noted that the central bank’s panel, which is tasked with studying Crypto-assets, is expected to submit its report in December 2021.

Must Read: [Cryptocurrencies and Indian regulations – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why Cryptocurrencies are so popular in India?

There are various reasons behind their popularity:

– **Efficient transfer of remittances:** The ease of remittance is one big reason why cryptocurrencies have become popular. Cryptocurrencies are extensively used to manage the efficient transfer of remittances. They are quicker and their transfer charges are less too.

For example: El Salvador's stated reason for adopting bitcoin as an official currency is precisely its dependence on remittances. Facebook is also trying to bring together a cryptocurrency alliance to enter the remittance market.

– Due to the possibility of higher returns, many investors see these as a **hedge against inflation**, and against shocks like demonetization.

Must Read: [The Crypto conundrum](#)

What are the risks/concerns associated with Cryptocurrencies?

These are volatile, high-risk instruments.

These are also used by fraudsters, to cheat people of their money.

And these assets can be used to enable cybercrimes, including ransomware.

Must Read: [What are Cryptocurrencies and what are the associated risks?](#)

What is the way forward?

Ban is not recommended: Despite all the associated risks and the fact that cryptocurrencies have survived various global financial crises over the years, Crypto growth signifies that they are here to stay, hence banning them won't be an optimum solution.

Moreover, it would be impossible to enforce a ban without imposing draconian currency controls. Attempting to impose currency controls would be deeply regressive, hurting importers, exporters, and students overseas.

Comprehensive regulatory framework: Policymakers should bring out a comprehensive plan for such instruments. This will not only enable the central bank to manage financial stability risks and protect investor interests but also give clarity in terms of taxation.

Mass awareness campaign: The government should run mass awareness campaigns to inform investors about the risks associated with such instruments.

16. In our efforts to be green, we must not greenwash: On India's net zero pledge at COP26

Source: This post is based on the article **"In our efforts to be green, we must not greenwash: On India's net zero pledge at COP26"** published in **The Indian Express** on **12th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding various dimensions of India's net-zero target

News: India's net-zero pledge at Glasgow, though commendable, raises several questions.

Apart from serious doubts about their techno-financial feasibility, there are at least three reasons to question the commitments made by India at COP26.

Must Read: [India announces new climate targets at COP26 – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the issues with India's net-zero target?

i). Sustainability issues: Commitments made by India at COP26 regarding non-fossil fuel and renewable energy generation entail ecological and social costs.

– Nuclear and large hydro projects will cause deforestation, people's displacement, climate change emissions, and hazardous radiation, etc.

– Solar and wind energy promotion in India is largely focused on mega-energy parks, requiring **enormous amounts of land**. For example About 60,000 hectares of Kachchh's ecologically fragile grassland-desert ecosystem have been allotted to energy mega-parks.

ii). Continued use of coal and thermal power: The government has continued promoting coal mining and thermal power, and has no intentions of even plateauing fossil fuel use or reducing it. At this rate, it may overtake the US and China as the highest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. This also means continual devastation of India's most valuable forests for mining and the displacement of communities. Thousands of Adivasis have been protesting against proposed mining in the biologically rich Hasdeo forests in Chhattisgarh, but the government is busy clearing it.

iii). Net zero target is merely a greenwash: Net zero simply means that emissions at one place can be offset elsewhere by activities like planting trees, or by capturing carbon, etc. It is to be noted that net zero doesn't necessarily talk about reducing the emissions rather just canceling them out. In India, the pursuit of net zero targets might result in govt grabbing land from communities for massive new plantations, like in the case of compensatory afforestation.

Greenwashing means to make people believe that more is being done to protect the environment than it really is.

iv). 2070 is too late a target: Additionally, scientific opinion is that we need to drastically cut emissions within a decade or so; waiting till 2050 or 2070 is simply too late for the earth.

Must Read: [Does India has a right to burn fossil fuel?](#)

What is the way forward?

India can achieve its net zero targets only if it commits to fundamental changes in its economy, focused on **meeting the basic needs** of all. This can be achieved via

– **community-based strategies** based on sensitive use of land and nature including decentralized energy generation, without costly and massive infrastructure.

– leveraging **India's traditional knowledge and skills** with the best in modern systems.

– **Prioritising small and medium manufacturing**, promoting **worker-led cooperatives and producer companies**.

– **addressing energy-guzzling production processes and lifestyles** that are being pushed in the name of development.

– **Accelerated deployment of electric or fuel-cell vehicles** must go alongside a rapid reduction in personal vehicle use and a major push for mass transportation.

– Minimising **Carbon lock-ins** and **energy use** through **mandatory green construction codes** for the huge housing and other buildings stock, highways and infrastructure yet to be built.

– Encouraging **employment-intensive recycling of waste goods and materials**, including in solid and liquid waste management linked to methane recovery, would deliver substantial benefits across sectors.

– Embracing a multidimensional approach, embodied in the **idea of LIFE** (Lifestyle for Environment (LIFE), that India gave to this world at COP26.

17. Cleaning Yamuna will require improving sewerage networks, cooperation between Delhi and neighbouring states

Source: This post is based on the article “Cleaning Yamuna will require improving sewerage networks, cooperation between Delhi and neighbouring states” published in the Livemint on 12th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 3- Conservation, Environmental Pollution, and Degradation.

News: A layer of froth was seen floating over parts of the Yamuna River in New Delhi. For the past three days, social media has been flooded with visuals of devotees taking a dip in the Yamuna River enveloped by the toxic foam. The formation of froth is a sign of an ecologically-dead river.

What are the reasons for froth formation in the Yamuna River?

Direct release of untreated wastewater into the Yamuna Barrage: for example, Sugar and paper mills in places like Meerut and Shamli.

Inadequate river flow: The Haryana government has been criticized for limiting the river’s flow to the capital. When the river’s flow is lean, it is not able to wash off this detritus.

What is the way forward?

Institutionalize mechanisms of cooperation: cleaning up the Yamuna requires cooperation between the Delhi government and its counterparts in the neighboring states.

Maintain minimum river flow: Need to devise adequate measures to maintain the minimum flow of the river.

Strict enforcement of laws: Government needs to prohibit rituals along the Yamuna’s banks to maintain the sanity of the river.

18. Season of floods: On TN’s long-term solutions to avoid monsoon woes

Source: This post is based on the article “Season of floods: On TN’s long-term solutions to avoid monsoon woes” published in The Hindu on 12th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Disaster and Disaster Management

News: The ongoing spell of heavy rain in Chennai has again exposed its vulnerabilities. It has also raised questions about the Government’s preparedness to deal with the problem of inundation (flooding).

Why the problem of flooding is persistent in cities?

The crux of the problem is the issue of drainage. The reasons that are responsible for the mess are:

- Shrinking open spaces
- The gap between the coverage of the drains and that of sewer lines
- Ageing drains and sewer networks in core areas of the city
- Encroachments or obstructions hampering the free flow of water
- Inconsistent efforts towards finding a long-term solution on the issue of waterlogging.

What is the way forward?

Ensure proper maintenance of water bodies: The city is blessed with a few rivers such as the Cooum and the Adyar, apart from a number of canals including the Buckingham Canal. All these water bodies, if properly maintained, can be very effective flood carriers.

Integrated storm-water drains projects should be executed in a short span of time.

Responsible citizens: People too should be responsible enough in ensuring that the water bodies and drains are not turned into dumps.

19. The high cost of India's illusive quest for formalization

Source: This post is based on the article "The high cost of India's illusive quest for formalization" published in the **Livemint** on **12th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development, and Employment.

News: Formalisation of India's economy has not benefited the informal workforce in India. A recently released report by the State Bank of India (SBI) research team has claimed that the informal sector's share in the overall economy has shrunk from 52% in 2017-18 to 15-20. While the decline of the informal sector looks like a sign of an economy being formalized and therefore worth celebrating, the reality is much more complex.

Why the recently released report by the State Bank of India (SBI) research team is said to be inaccurate?

The report is inaccurate and also reveals an inadequate understanding of the informal economy on several accounts.

Firstly, increasing digitalization and registration in official records is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for any enterprise/worker to be classified as formal.

Secondly, the registration of workers on the e-Shram portal is no indicator of formalization of jobs like the registration of National Rural Employment Guarantee workers in official records does not make them formal workers.

For example: 92% of the workers registered on E-shram have monthly incomes of under ₹10,000, which is lower than the minimum wages of unskilled manual workers in most states.

Thirdly, the findings of the report are in contradiction to the findings of the PLFS survey. According to the PLFS reports of 2019-20, the **proportion of workers in informal enterprises in the non-agricultural sector rose** from 68.2% in 2017-18 to 69.5% that year. This trend is also confirmed by more than the government's own reports.

Fourthly, the SBI research team has defined formalization as a measure of improvement in the economy. However, the real scenario is different. For example, the Indian economy is characterized by declining national output, job and income losses, and a worsening of human-development outcomes.

The real issue is whether the material condition of workers has actually improved, in terms of job availability or income earned.

In reality, the economy has performed poorly, with a worsening of India's employment situation, a decline in incomes, and setbacks on human-development indicators such as nutrition.

What is the way forward?

It is important to recognize the role of the informal sector and create an **institutional regulatory framework** to improve the working conditions and well-being of those engaged in it.

20. How Facebook can be more responsible when it goes local

Source: This post is based on the article "How Facebook can be more responsible when it goes local" published in **Indian Express** on **13th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges

Relevance: Vernacularisation of social media platforms, impact and steps needed to prevent misuse of such platforms

News: Facebook's approach to not invest in content moderation in Indian languages should be taken seriously and further scrutinized.

Recently, in the backdrop of the leaks by whistleblower Francis Haugen's, Facebook has admitted that it has hate speech classifiers in only four Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, and Tamil out of India's 22 scheduled languages. Moreover, its scale of investment towards screening fake, polarising, and hate-filled content in Indian languages on its platforms is too small.

Read about the entire issue in detail [here](#)

This, when there has been a mushrooming of online content as well as internet vernacularisation (*to translate into everyday language*) since the early 2010s.

In a country that has a long history of communal violence and ethnic tensions, Facebook needs to understand it can be misused to further amplify harmful content from partisan groups and vested interests.

What is Internet vernacularisation?

Internet vernacularisation refers to the increasing numbers of people accessing social media in their own languages.

It revolves around the twin aspects of **linguistic diversification** as well as the **massification of the medium**.

Why it is significant?

Its most important contribution is the **vast amount of user-generated online content available in various Indian languages**. This not only offers new opportunities to understand emerging digital cultures but also provides an opportunity to understand the regional public sphere.

It has led to the increase of digital consumption and interactions, digital nationalism and populism, and the emergence of multi-lingual, non-English, and vernacular internet spheres.

The trend of internet vernacularisation in India is in line with the **global trend of the decentralisation** and **de-Americanisation** of the world wide web along with the **rise of the global south** in terms of the number of web users.

What are the potential downsides of internet vernacularisation?

Manipulation of public opinion and political polarisation by targeted propaganda. These attempts have already had dangerous social consequences, contributing to conflicts and killings.

Further, social media platforms have become competitive hotspots for gaining **political power and control public opinion**. Internet vernacularisation will result in exacerbating this issue.

What is the way forward?

Business Ethics: Social media companies should be guided by social values and invest in understanding the societies in which they operate.

Culture-specific protocols: Social media companies should not be allowed to operate in a language for which they do not have content moderators

Ensure consumer protection: Facebook and other social media companies must invest in building an infrastructure to ensure users are not exposed to harmful and fake content.

Ensure Accountability: Facebook needs to be held accountable for the dominant role it has come to play in controlling the flow and access to information.

Effective regulations: Appropriate regulations that help in checking the abuse of market power, misuse of users' data, and privacy breaches from social media companies

Operational changes: While AI-based algorithms are faster in detecting harmful content, they are not good at understanding Indian languages. Facebook should hire and deploy human moderators directly, rather than outsourcing such jobs, to ensure more accountability from them.

Investing in local culture: Social media platforms should invest in understanding the societies in which they operate. This could help in developing strategies and policies that protect the public interest and safeguard users.

21. In age of hybrid crops, the importance of preserving landraces

Source: This post is based on the article "In age of hybrid crops, the importance of preserving landraces" published in **Indian Express** on **13th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to food security in India

Relevance: Significance of Landraces to India's food security

News: Recently, Rahibai Popere, popularly known as Seed mother, from Maharashtra won this year's Padma awards. It was in recognition of her work that has helped save hundreds of landraces (*wild varieties of commonly grown crops at the village level*)

How Landraces are different from commercially grown crops?

Landraces refer to naturally occurring variants of commonly cultivated crops.

These are different from commercially grown crops, which are developed by selective breeding (hybrids) or through genetic engineering to express a certain trait over others.

Why preserving landraces is important?

Adaptation to environmental stress: Genetic diversity ensures a natural mechanism for crops to develop traits to face challenging situations. However, given the large-scale human interference in crop selection and breeding, that ability is now lost in most commercially crops. On the other hand, naturally occurring landraces still have a large pool of still untapped genetic material, which can provide solutions to climate change induced biotic and abiotic stress factors.

For example: Kalbhat, a unique landrace of scented rice. It has better climate resilience than popularly grown rice and can withstand flood or drought better.

Boosting farmers income: With proper agricultural practices, landraces can give better yield with lower input costs.

Nutritional security: Landraces are richer in nutrients than commercially grown variants.

What are the threats being faced by landraces?

Today, landraces survive in only a few rural and tribal pockets, but they too are depleting due to **lack of proper conservation**.

Loss of traditional knowledge about the way these varieties need to be grown, or how seeds are to be saved, is also being lost over time.

Since 2008, BAIF Development Research Foundation has initiated a **community-led programme to preserve landraces** in villages of Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Gujarat. It aims to identify germplasm available and, through community participation, create seed

banks. So far, it has deposited 150 landraces of paddy, finger millet, and little millet to the [National Bureau Plant Genetic Resource](#). A network of 5,000 seed savers has also been developed.

What is the way forward?

Much remains to be understood about the germplasms (*a living tissue from which new plants can be grown*) of the landraces.

- It is necessary to understand how these landraces can contribute to climate-resilient agriculture.
- **Nutritional profiling** too can hold the key to fighting deficiencies, as many landraces are richer in nutrients than commercially grown variants.

22. What Chennai (and India) must do to prevent urban flooding

Source: This post is based on the article “**What Chennai (and India) must do to prevent urban flooding**” published in **Down To Earth** on **12th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Disaster and Disaster Management

Relevance: To understand the reasons behind floods in urban areas and learn about mitigation strategies.

News: The ongoing spell of heavy rain in Chennai has again exposed its vulnerabilities. This shows that the city has not learnt any lessons from 2015.

Must Read: [Season of floods: On TN’s long-term solutions to avoid monsoon woes](#)

What are the reasons behind floods in Urban areas?

1. Density of population,
2. Underdeveloped infrastructure,
3. Poor management across institutions,
4. Faulty construction design of Smart City Project works, for example, T Nagar neighbourhood in Chennai faces flood due to faulty stormwater drain designs,
5. Not planting the required number of trees in the urban ecosystem,
6. Not allow for groundwater recharge.

Read more: [Urbanisation to blame for Chennai’s flood woes, integrated system need of the hour: Report](#)

How India can mitigate the impacts of floods in urban areas?

Coordination between various institutions: For example, the coordination between water resources and disaster management authorities needs combined coordination and responsibility for disaster risk management.

Translate traditional water infrastructure investment into **nature-based solutions:** Ensure adequate space for river and flood plains to capture discharge from high-intensity rainfall, and invest in healthy watersheds.

Read more: [Nature-based, people-centred solutions for water](#)

Work closely with grassroots organisations: To promote awareness on holistic flood risk management and participatory approach for risk-based early action coordination among stakeholders to mitigate flood risks.

Utilise the power of digital technologies: To digitise informal settlements, identify levels of vulnerability for flood protection strategies and ensure timely actionable information including financial supports.

23. Tortuous trajectory of Uphaar case exposes the limitations of the legal framework to bring closure, fix accountability

Source: This post is based on the article “**Tortuous trajectory of Uphaar case exposes the limitations of the legal framework to bring closure, fix accountability**” published in the **Indian Express** on **11th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 Disaster Management.

Relevance: Understanding the cause of fire-related incidents.

News: There are so many fire incidences that occurred like in a coaching centre in Surat, children hospital etc. Delhi HC, recently, gave 7 years imprisonment to convicts involved in tampering with evidence in the 1997 Uphaar fire tragedy case.

All this raises a question on the efficacy of fire safety norms that fail to prevent such tragic incidents.

What are the reasons behind the increase in fire incidents?

- 1) Disregard of minimum safety standards
- 2) Criminal negligence
- 3) Lack of fire safety management infrastructure, especially in public spaces like cinema halls,
- 4) lack of trained staff in public premises.

Read more: [Causes for fire incidents](#)

What are the shortcomings in the governance process?

No uniform law: Absence of a comprehensive legal framework to fix claims and liabilities. Also, individual parameters adopted by states are often politically motivated.

Time-consuming victim compensation process: There is a delay in getting compensation to victims.

No proper implementation of guidelines: Fire safety standards fall under the municipality. But there is no proper guidelines have been followed and Municipalities are often resourced deprived.

What needs to be done?

Parliament has earlier introduced two bills on the recommendations of the first [Law Commission](#), but it has got lapsed. There is an urgent need to introduce a new law that makes the people accountable and award required punishment to people responsible for fire fatalities.

Read more: [Need for Fire Safety training and technologies](#)