

9pm
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November, 2021

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ForumIAS

General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

1. **CoP26: Women need more space at the climate table**

Source: This post is based on the article “CoP26: Women need more space at the climate table” published in **Down To Earth** on **30th October 2021**.

Syllabus: GS1 – Women issues.

Relevance: To understand the link b/w climate change and its impact on women.

Synopsis: Women are affected more by the climate change. Yet, mainstreaming of women gender in key roles and processes has seen inadequate progress. Women need to have more say in global climate action.

Introduction

Climate change affects women and girls disproportionately, as they are more vulnerable to threats posed by the crisis. Women and girls in all the regional and occupational diversity, experience its impacts differently.

This should translate to women having a larger say in advancing **gender-responsive climate action**, however the case is not so.

How are women more vulnerable to climate change?

Impoverished women gather fuel, water and food, and hence, often suffer the most when shortages are caused or made worse by the climate crisis.

No land rights: They don't usually have land rights, so they are also more likely to be **displaced** in climate disasters. UN report stated that nearly 80% of people displaced by climate change are women.

Gender-based violence: The climate crisis exacerbates **gender-based violence** against women. Climate change increases women and girls' risk for marital violence, sexual exploitation and early and forced marriage.

They **lack representation** in influencing decision-making at regional and global level.

What are the events voicing women participation at UNFCCC?

CoP-7 in 2001 stressed on the need need for women's equal participation and representation in bodies established under the UNFCCC or Kyoto Protocol. It was reiterated in CoP16 in 2010.

At **CoP-20** in 2014, parties were formally invited to enhance participation of women in the Convention process. They established the first **Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG)**.

The **first gender action plan (GAP)** under the UNFCCC was established at **CoP23**.

At **CoP25**, parties agreed for a five-year enhanced 'LWPG' and 'GAP'.

What is the progress seen in women representation?

A marginal increase: According to UNFCC, since 2013, female representation has **increased** in eight bodies, most significantly the adaptation committee.

IUCN 2015 data showed that only 12% of national environmental ministries were led by women. In 2020, the figure was 15%.

Inadequate Progress: Effective gender mainstreaming is not seen in global bodies, and in most national climate policy efforts. **Members** on key panels and decision-making groups are **mostly men**.

2. Covid 19 as a tail of job hardship and marginalisation

Source: This post is based on the article “Covid 19 as a tail of job hardship and marginalisation” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS1 population and associated issues.

Relevance: Understanding problems by Indian women working in West Asia during Covid times.

News

Covid-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerabilities of women migrant workers residing in the West Asia region.

According to [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#), [Gulf Cooperation Council\(GCC\)](#) hosts about 23 million migrant workers. Among these, Women account for 39% of migrant workers, and this count is continually growing.

How working women in West Asia can be divided?

In West Asia, Working Women can be divided into two categories:

Skilled: include persons in the organized sector, mainly health care workers in West Asia.

Semi/Unskilled: They are domestic workers, care workers, cleaning crew, manufacturing workers, salon staff and salespersons.

What are the job hardship and marginalisation faced by women in the West Asia region?

Skilled women employees: 1. Increased working hours without any remuneration, 2. Not provided enough safety equipment like masks, PPE kits to health care employees, 3. Increased mental stress levels of nurses and hospital staff.

Semi/unskilled women employees: 1. Business enterprises were bankrupt forced women to leave the country or work for lower wages, 2. Not able to finance their health costs as their health insurance does not cover all the costs, 3. illegal employees face more exploitation and abuse.

How to address job hardship and marginalisation of women employees in West Asia?

1. Address the lacunae in the system to identify the root cause,
2. Implement Right-based policies to safeguard the interest of migrants.

3. 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, Patels firm hand in administration and Ambedkar's legal acumen translated the Indian national movement into the Indian nation. Some major contributions include,

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Mahatama 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.

ForumIAS

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Future Imperfect: On unemployment

Source: This post is based on the article “Future Imperfect” published in **Indian Express** on **1st November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors

Relevance: Rising unemployment among youth

Synopsis: There is a huge pool of unemployed university graduates with unfulfilled aspirations. The article highlights the present situation and the steps that can be taken to address this issue.

Introduction

There has been an increase in number of higher education institutions and rates of enrollment of students from diverse backgrounds. But a scarcity of govt and pvt sector jobs is ultimately leading to large scale unemployment amongst these students.

This group of dissatisfied, disgruntled youth can lead to disastrous consequences for our society.

What has led to an increase in the enrollment?

Reservation: The reservation for backward classes(OBCs and EWS) has increased the enrollment of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Number of Higher education institutions: The massive increase in the number of higher education institutions has led to an enlargement of the number of available seats. There are more than 45,000 universities and colleges in the country.

The Gross Enrollment Ratio for higher education, which is the percentage of the population between the ages of 18-23 who are enrolled, is now 27 per cent.

What are the associated concerns?

Huge mismatch between enrollment and jobs availability: The increase in enrollment has not been matched by a concomitant increase in jobs.

Government jobs: Employment opportunities in the government have not increased proportionately and have decreased with increased contractualisation.

Private sector: Though the jobs have increased with economic growth, most of the jobs are contractual.

Gig workers: The majority of the jobs are created in the unattractive sector like call centers and delivery agents for e-commerce or fast food companies.

What are the existing challenges with vocational institutions?

Poor quality of vocational institutions: They are poorly maintained and lack resources, both physical and human. The curriculum remains outdated and has not been upgraded to include some of the newer skills like maintaining networking and telecom equipment.

Huge competition for admission: it is harder to get admission into these institutions compared to the local government colleges. Manufacturing units prefer hiring them for blue-collar jobs since they at least have a modicum of training.

What is the way forward?

First, there is need of concurrent increase in the number of high-quality vocational institutions. There are around 15,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in the country currently.

Second, upgrading the existing ITIs with high-quality infrastructure and a new curriculum.

Third, Industries should be aligned to bring in more funding (via the CSR route) to the institutions.

2. Indian students are interesting keen on overseas opportunities

Source: This post is based on the article “Indian students are interesting keen on overseas opportunities” published in **Livemint** on **1st November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding all the dimensions related to studying abroad.

Synopsis: Indian students use many methods to obtain visas to study abroad.

Introduction

With the international borders began opening up, Indian students are now preparing themselves to get their visas approved for study in foreign countries.

How do Indian students use various opportunities to study abroad?

Apart from Conventional routes, Indians also use invest-and-immigrate options for their education. For example,

America EB-5 Immigrant Investor Programme: It provides a green card to investors and their immediate family members if they invest \$500,00 in a US project that creates 10 American jobs.

Portugal Golden Visa Programme: It provides permanent European residency upon investing a minimum of €280,00.

Read more: [Brain drain in the health sector – Explained, Pointwise](#)

Why studying abroad is an attractive option for Indian students?

1. Unmatched Infrastructure,
2. The diverse international community,
3. The flexibility of the system (to switch majors and graduate on time),
4. Foreign university curriculum that opens the doors to research and helps to gain practical experience,
5. Build professional networks and a chance to settle abroad.

What are the hurdles in studying abroad?

-Most of the countries are opting for the conventional routes like US F1 visas for students, **H1B visas** for works.

-Students depend on their universities or employers for sponsoring their visas.

-Residency rights of students are closely tied to the immigration law of the respective country.

Read more: [Visa crackdown: On Indian students' arrest](#)

3. In the wake of China-US rivalry, India needs to reboot its ASEAN strategy

Source: This post is based on the article ” In the wake of China-US rivalry, India needs to reboot its ASEAN strategy” published in the **Indian Express** on **1st November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding India-ASEAN relations.

Synopsis: India needs a comprehensive effort to promote a better India-ASEAN relations.

Introduction

Indian PM in the recent ASEAN Summit extended his support for the centrality of ASEAN and also to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

Read more: [Prime Minister co-chairs the 18th India-ASEAN Summit](#)

India and ASEAN relations

Read here: [India-ASEAN](#)

What are the challenges in India ASEAN relations?

1. Caught between the rivalry of China and the USA in the Indo-Pacific.
2. ASEAN nations are worried about India joining **QUAD** as it impacts ASEAN centrality.
3. India's withdrawal from **RCEP** and
4. India's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative is seen as economic inwardness by ASEAN countries, instead of open trade.

ASEAN-India relations are an important pillar of Indo-Pacific. Thus, India should need to build its narrative strongly and convey the same to the members of ASEAN.

4. Getting nutrition back on the school high table

Source: This post is based on the article "Getting nutrition back on the school high table" published in **The Hindu** on **1st November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the need for nutritional requirements for the growth of children.

Synopsis: Covid-19 or otherwise, there is a need to ensure children are nurtured or nourished properly.

Introduction

Covid has heightened the risk of increasing malnutrition. Even before it, India was facing significant nutritional challenges. So, there is an urgent need to immediately tackle and address the nutritional requirements of children and adolescents in schools.

What is India's triple burden of nutrition in schools?

Indian school faces a combination of problems like 1. **Undernutrition**, 2. **Overweight/obesity**, 3. **Micronutrients deficiency** such as iron, zinc, calcium and several vitamins.

Read more: [India's malnutrition challenge](#)

What are the Social factors impacting nutrition?

–**living environment** under which children are living.

–**lack of diet diversity** are leading to imbalanced micronutrient intake or consumption of high carbohydrate and high sugar foods.

These endanger the child's health by compromising their immunity.

What is the government's role to tackle the nutritional problems?

The government introduced PM Poshan Shakti Nirman Yojana to tackle the nutritional challenges.

Read here: [POSHAN 2.0 and tackling malnutrition in India](#)

What India should further do to tackle nutritional challenges in schools?

India should **look beyond minimum calorie requirements** and ensure children consume a **balanced diet** in schools.

1. The diet should consist of fresh fruits, cooked meat/poultry and sea fish sufficient to meet daily proteins and fats requirements.
2. The diet should have adequate micronutrients as they are essential for the production of enzymes, hormones and other substances for good immune function, healthy growth and development.

5. Kashmir's fragility has more complex reasons

Source: This post is based on the article "**Kashmir's fragility has more complex reasons**" published in **The Hindu** on **2nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers.

Relevance: Understanding the violence in Kashmir.

Synopsis: Recently there has been an increase in violence in Kashmir. This needs careful analysis to avoid the failure of the Kashmir Policy.

Introduction

Several civilians and armed forces personnel have been killed by terrorists in a series of violent attacks in Kashmir. This has led to comparisons with the situation that existed during the 1990s and the early years of the 21st century. But one needs to have a look at the ground reality.

What is the ground reality?

After the abrogation of [Article 370](#), there was silence and peace in Kashmir. But recent events have created an impression of increasing support to militancy.

Read more: [What the attacks against minorities in Kashmir reveal](#)

What is the role of Pakistan and China in the violence in Kashmir?

There has been an undeniable role of Pakistan in the violence in Kashmir. This is complicated by the fact that Kashmir is bordered by Afghanistan and China. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan has further strengthened the role of Pakistan.

Read more: [Return of Taliban has implications for India](#)

As India expands its role and world view, the changes of its competitors like China and Pakistan increase manifold.

Read more: [What India can learn from China's foreign Policy](#)

How India can solve violence in Kashmir?

Credible and quick intelligence: India needs a broader set of agencies than the current RAW, IB and National Security Council. This will

1. Prevent any miscalculation (As highlighted by America's war on Iraq, where they failed to find any weapons of mass destruction),

2. Predict the events of the future with precision,
3. Bring lasting peace.

Engage all segments of society and polity in reducing trust deficit.

6. Trade and climate, the pivot for India-U.S. ties

Source: This post is based on the article “**Trade and climate, the pivot for India-U.S. ties**” published in **The Hindu** on **03 November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Relevance: To understand the trade and climate dimension of Indo-US ties.

News: The climate and trade and its interplay have a huge potential in strengthening further relationship between India and USA. However, issues needs to be tackled to realize that potential.

India and the USA have forged a strategic relationship over time. Their recent cooperation in creating a free and open Indo-Pacific advancing democratic values and confronting autocracies has given much boost to the partnership.

However, relatively less explored **areas of climate and trade** needs to be tackled. More areas need to be worked upon.

What are the areas of convergence for the two nations?

China is viewed by both as a strategic competitor. The shared concerns about China provide the U.S.-India partnership a much-needed impetus. However strategic partnerships cannot be based simply on a negative agenda.

Climate and trade- Besides the ongoing ones, the further path of relationship depends on how well India and US collaborate in two less explored areas— climate and trade.

How India and US are collaborating on climate and trade?

Climate-The U.S. Special Presidential **Envoy for Climate** has visited India twice. India and the U.S. are also collaborating under the **Climate and Clean Energy Agenda** Partnership.

Trade-Both countries are now prioritising the bilateral trade relationship by rechartering the **Trade Policy Forum**.

What are the challenges and threats to a long term Indo-US partnership?

India's rhetoric of **climate justice**, especially with China, has not been given due importance by US.

The failure of the U.S. and India to articulate a shared vision for a comprehensive **trade relationship** has been seen. **Protectionist tendencies** infect the politics of both countries these days.

An **immediate threat** could be the possibility of tensions were India insists that technology is transferred in ways that **undermine incentives for innovation** in both countries.

Other threat could be if the U.S. decides that imports from India be subject to increased tariffs in the form of carbon border adjustment mechanisms(CBAM's).

What is the way forward?

Solar panel trade- Both countries should align their climate and trade approaches, starting with a resolution of their disputes in the WTO on solar panels.

Ethanol trade– India currently bans imports of fuel ethanol. The two countries could chart a path that allows trade to flow for energy sources, such as fuel ethanol. Concerted action on both the climate and trade fronts is mutually beneficial and will lend additional strength to the foundation of a true partnership for the coming century.

7. Summitry in the East and India's Asean ambitions

Source: This post is based on the article “**Summitry in the East and India's ASEAN ambitions**” published in **Business Standard** on **3rd November 2021**.

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

News

Recently, the [18th India-ASEAN summit](#) and [16th East Asia Summit](#) has occurred.

Over the last few days two major summits, [ASEAN summit](#) and [East Asia Summit \(EAS\)](#), were held. These Summits and their declarations highlighted the changing geopolitical scenario of the region and the world.

Southeast Asia is emerging as the new geopolitical hotspot with the intensifying rivalry of China and the USA. India has to navigate tactfully to secure its interest in the region.

What are the initiatives adopted by various countries in the ASEAN region?

USA: 1. Announced \$100 million initiative to boost investments in healthcare, climate change and economic recovery. 2) Criticized China's record on human rights and its actions in Taiwan.

China: 1. Announced \$3.1 million Program to purchase medical relief supplies, 2) Criticized USA for supporting pro-independence groups in Taiwan. 3) Announced a special summit to cement China – ASEAN relations.

Read more: [impact of US-China rivalry on India](#)

Australia: 1) Announced \$93 million economic package to fund climate change, COVID-19 relief, transnational crime and terrorism. 2) Assured its regional partners that [AUKUS](#) alliance will not hurt regional security.

Read more: [With AUKUS dividing the Western bloc, is there a role for India?](#)

India: 1. Contributed to COVID-19 mitigation efforts, resumption of vaccine exports, connectivity projects. 2) Extended 1 bn \$ line of credit for physical and digital connectivity. 3) Ph.D. fellowships to ASEAN students.

What were the challenges within the group of ASEAN countries?

- 1) **Diverse opinion between ASEAN members:** Indonesia and Malaysia have expressed concern at the prospect of an evolving arms race in the region, on the other hand, Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines have supported AUKUS and other such initiatives,
- 2) Disputed territories in the South China Sea, 3. Human rights violations in Myanmar.

What should be India's strategy in the ASEAN region?

India can use its expertise its knowledge by Collaborating with the [QUAD](#) countries in various fields like science and technology, sustainable finance, climate change etc. India should make full use of the newly built [Quad Critical Emerging Technologies grouping](#) to develop technical standards and digital infrastructure in Southeast Asia according to its advantage.

Read more: [Quad and India: challenges and opportunities](#)

8. What we need to fix our judicial system

Source: This post is based on the article “What we need to fix our judicial system” published in the **Indian Express** on **6th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: understanding issues of judicial infrastructure and processes.

News: The recent case involving the son of a famous celebrity highlighted the “bail-jail” connectivity issue.

A recent case has highlighted an important issue, that grant of bail by a court does not automatically immediately releases an accused. Bail orders are required to be deposited in the physical letterbox of prisons, within a timeframe of the day. A delay means, an accused spending an extra day or days in prison.

After the incident, the supreme court had directed the creation of the **FASTER (Fast and Secured Transmission of Electronic Records) System**, which would transmit e-authenticated copies of the interim orders, stay orders, bail orders, and records of proceedings to the duty holders. However, after looking at the past result of such initiatives, the hope for reforms is very little.

What are the reasons behind issues in bail-jail” connectivity?

In 2014, the phase 2 document for the [e-courts project was launched](#). However, it has failed to set up the transmission of information between key institutions in the criminal justice system. It is suffering from various issues.

Read more: [The Pros and Cons of e-Courts project](#)

First, The E committee, which runs the e-Court project, is headed by the Chief Justice of India. So the onus of the project and its implementation lies completely with the judiciary. The e-Committee is not accountable to anybody. Neither the [Comptroller and Auditor General \(CAG\)](#) nor [Public Account committee](#) of the Lok Sabha has reviewed the e-courts project.

Second, The Department of Justice (DoJ), under the Ministry of Law and Justice, commissioned two evaluations of the project. These evaluations were very limited in their scope.

Third, A budget was already approved by the government for Phase I and II of the project. But it did not achieve the expected outcome.

Fourth, ensuring Judicial independence has resulted in a lack of public scrutiny. For example, even financial audit reports are not revealed by high courts under RTI.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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 division 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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 advice 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.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. [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.

25. [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.

26. 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.

27. 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.

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.

28. 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 unsatisfactory?

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.

29. 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.

30. [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](#)

31. [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](#)

32. 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.

33. 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.

34. [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.

35. [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?](#)

36. 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?](#)

37. 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.

38. [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.

39. **Striding back into the Afghan theatre**

Source: This post is based on the article “[Striding back into the Afghan theatre](#)” published in **The Hindu** on **15th 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: [Afghan tangle: No easy options for New Delhi, especially given broader threats posed by Beijing, Islamabad](#)

About Delhi Declaration

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

What are the challenges in India's approach towards Afghanistan?

1. India does not completely accept the consequences and realities of the Taliban in power, so Pakistan has a free hand in Afghanistan, 2. The recent meeting does not contribute to addressing the vast challenges that India now faces in its entire western neighbourhood, especially Afghanistan.

What should India do?

India will **have to play a multi-faceted diplomatic game** to safeguard and promote its interests in Afghanistan and the region. It cannot join the game unless it re-establishes a presence in Kabul.

1. **Immediate re-assessment of the regional situation**, 2. **Develop a comprehensive action** with salience given to strategic considerations, 3. **Follow 'all of political and strategic classes' approach** that is unaffected by political considerations of any nature, 4. **Keep Indian missions open**, for instance, all-important regional players and Russia have kept their missions open in Kabul, 5. As suggested by Taliban leaders, **India-Afghan trade** via Wagah should be allowed by Pakistan, 6. Enhance India's assistance to Afghanistan

Note: India offered one million metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan at the Tokyo Afghanistan conference 2002.

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

40. A routine matter or a punishment post?

Source: This post is based on the article “**A routine matter or a punishment post?**” posted in **The Hindu** on **15th November 2021**.

Subject: GS2-Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: Understanding judicial transfers.

News: Recently, the Supreme Court **collegium** recommended the transfer of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court. It also recommended the transfer of the senior-most judge of the Allahabad High Court to the Madras High Court. These transfers raise certain questions.

What does the constitution say about the transfer of high court judges?

Article 222 (after the formulation of collegium) states that the supreme court will provide recommendations for the transfer of HC judges. If the proposal came from the Supreme Court collegium, then the Central government can ask for relevant material before tendering any advice to the President of India.

If the Central government is not satisfied, then it can ask the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision.

What are the questions raised by these transfers?

A matter of punishment: Meghalaya HC has only 4 judges while Madras High court has sanctioned strength of 75. So, the transfer of CJI of Madras HC to Meghalaya HC seems like a punishment.

A matter of reward: Transfer of the judge of the Allahabad High Court to the Madras High Court, makes him a senior-most judge in that court. It may also be possible that he will become the next CJI of Madras HC in the coming future.

Non-transparent: The court took one and a half months to make the appointments public, which raises the questions of transparency.

Not consultation with senior judges: While transferring of the judge, senior-most judges are also consulted. It is seen that in the case of transfer of Allahabad HC judge, only the junior most judge of SC is consulted not the senior one.

Also read: [Appointment of judges stuck on the same road](#)

What should be the way forward?

Any decisions, factors and reasons related to transfer/appointment should be put in the public domain to instil trust in minds of the public.

The central government should also step in and clear all the doubts raised about the appointment mechanism and make it a transparent process.

41. The EU's role in the Indo-Pacific

Source: This post is based on the article “**The EU's role in the Indo-Pacific**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

Relevance: Understanding the EU policy & strategy in the Indo-Pacific region.

News: To cope with the rise of China and other Asian economies, the EU unveiled its strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in 2016. In this backdrop, The Council of EU recently announced the initial policy conclusions.

Read here: [EU unveils Indo-Pacific strategy](#)

What does the EU strategy and policy say?

The **strategy** aims to enhance the EU's engagement across a wide spectrum, It will work on various fields like maintaining “rules-based international order”; promoting a level-playing field for trade and investment, working towards Sustainable Development Goals and multilateral cooperation; support “truly inclusive policy-making” encompassing the civil society and the private sector, and protect human rights and democracy.

The **policy document** focussed on strengthening cooperation in sustainable and inclusive prosperity, green transition, ocean governance, digital governance and partnerships, connectivity, security, etc. It promises to focus on the security and development dimensions of its relationship with the region.

Read more: [Increasing Importance of Indo-Pacific for EU](#)

What are the shortfalls in the EU approach?

1) Limited security and defence capabilities, when compared to the U.S. and China. 2) Internal Market divisions.

What is the impact of EU strategy on India?

Read here: [EU, Indian and the Indo Pacific](#)

42. Pegasus inquiry must reverse the ‘chilling effect’

Source: This post is based on the article “**Pegasus inquiry must reverse the ‘chilling effect’**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th November 2021**.

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

News: Pegasus controversy has raised many questions on the privacy right of citizens.

What is Pegasus? Why there is so much controversy surrounding it?

Read here: [Pegasus spyware issue – Explained, pointwise](#)

How did different governments handle the Pegasus controversy?

USA: The government blacklisted the NSO group by putting it on an “entity list”.

India: The government has not taken any strict action. Even the RTI is filed on seeking government response on whether the government had purchased the Pegasus was met with the response is like no information available. The government was tight-lipped in Parliament and even a Parliamentary inquiry into the matter was quashed.

What is the Supreme court’s reaction to Pegasus?

Given the seriousness of the matter and the right to privacy of citizens, SC appointed an inquiry committee to look into the issue.

Read here: [SC Judgment on Pegasus spyware case – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the Supreme Court’s stance on privacy?

In **R. Rajagopal case 1994:** Though privacy was not a specifically guaranteed right earlier, unabated surveillance was never allowed.

2017 case judgement: SC said that the [Right to privacy](#) is as sacrosanct as human existence and is inalienable to human dignity and autonomy.

Court judgement on Privacy: Court restricts the conditions on snooping. It can be done only on 3 grounds.

1) the restriction must be by law; it must be necessary and only if other means are not available 2) It must be proportionate (only as much as needed) 3) It must promote a legitimate state interest (e.g. national security)

43. [Structural inequality and the response to global emergencies](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Structural inequality and the response to global emergencies**” published in **Indian Express** on **16th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries

Relevance: Understanding the risks associated with global emergencies i.e climate change and covid

News: Structural inequalities in political and economic systems are compromising humankind’s capacity to deal with **global emergencies** such as **climate change and Covid**.

About the pandemic and climate change

World Health Organization’s message at the pandemic’s outset — “No one is safe till everyone is safe” expresses the need of adopting a collaborative approach. Also, with the rise of climate-related catastrophe, there is a need to put human well-being above parochial interests and commercial profits.

What are the key issues with respect to Climate change?

The occurrence of extreme weather events like storms, sea-level rise and floods led to an increase in deaths and generates livelihood issues, especially in the coastal regions. A recent example is of Madagascar that is currently in the grip of a drought. Fear escalates that it could trigger the first climate change-induced famine.

How is the world community dealing with Climate Change?

It is true that all countries are obliged to address global warming, but the responsibility lies more on the developed countries. So, the concept of **CBDR** arises.

Read more: [How has developed world responded to the problem of climate change?](#)

With the carbon space shrinking, the principle of climate justice has come under duress and its scope has become compressed. Even in the recently held COP 26, there are many challenges that were not addressed. These are:

- Decarbonization should not threaten the development of developing countries.
- Not addressed the challenges of intermittency related to wind and solar power.
- Not mentioned any solution to meet the funds of \$2.4 trillion required by 2035, as estimated by IPCC.

Read here: [Glasgow Climate Pact – Explained, pointwise](#)

What is the impact of covid on people?

- 1) It impacts social classes differentially, 2) Increased the lack of basic social security needs.

Read more: [A Crisis of Reverse Migration](#)

What is the status of vaccine equity?

Vaccine equity is vital in the battle against Corona. But data suggests that less than 10% of the adult population in at least 70 countries have completed the vaccination.

WHO also pointed that developed countries are giving extra booster doses while there are pockets of the inoculated population around the world.

44. Questions for SC: Chief Justice Banerjee’s transfer from Madras HC again points to the opaqueness of collegium

Source: This post is based on the article “**Questions for SC: Chief Justice Banerjee’s transfer from Madras HC again points to the opaqueness of collegium**” published in **Times of India** on 15th November 2021.

Subject: GS2-Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: Understanding judicial transfers.

News: Supreme Court **collegium** recommended the transfer of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court. Chennai bar commission has in fact raised many valid questions.

Read here: [A routine matter or a punishment post?](#)

What are the questions raised by the Chennai bar commission?

The bar raised questions like:

- What is the rationale behind transferring a judge heading a High Court with a sanctioned strength of 75 judges to a much smaller High Court with four judges.
- Whether all the procedural checks in the memorandum of procedure were followed.

What does the Memorandum of Procedure say?

Paragraph 25.2 of MoP: CJI should ascertain the views of Supreme Court judges knowledgeable of High Court concerned.

Paragraph 25.3 of MoP: CJI and four senior-most SC judges should seek the response of the judge to be transferred and his preferred choices of destination.

What should be the way forward?

The Supreme Court had already struck down [NJAC](#) citing independence of the judiciary. But this independence should also ensure accountability. So, the reason and rationale behind the transfer need to be disclosed to the public.

45. [Extension of terms of CBI, ED chiefs by ordinance goes against SC verdicts](#)

Source: This post is based on the following articles

- **“Extension of terms of CBI, ED chiefs by ordinance goes against SC verdicts”** published in **Indian Express** on **16th November 2021**.
- **“Extension of power”** published in **Business Standard** on **15th November 2021**.
- **“Exception to the rule”** published in **The Hindu** on **16th November 2021**

Syllabus: GS2 – Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions, and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Relevance – Understand the recent amendment to extend the tenure of CBI and ED directors.

News: The Government of India has brought two ordinances to extend the tenure of [Enforcement Directorate \(ED\)](#) and Central Bureau of Investigation(CBI) directors up to 5 years.

Must read: [Centre brings Ordinances to extend tenure of ED, CBI directors up to 5 years](#)

What are the concerns associated with the ordinances?

The criticisms include,

1. Can be used to target political opponents and take away the independence of CBI and ED,
2. Circumventing the Supreme court’s directive in two different cases:
 - i) SC stipulated a minimum of a two-year term for Directors of CBI and ED in the **Vineet Narain case**, ii) fixed tenure for certain posts means their superannuation within that period will not end their term. In the **SK. Mishra’s case**, the Supreme Court declined to interfere with the one-year addition to his original term of appointment. But the court held that “extension of tenure granted to officers who have attained the age of superannuation should be done only in rare and exceptional cases”. And that the further extension should only be for “a short period”.
3. Instead of a consolidated five-year term, the Ordinances enable the government to extend each director’s tenure for a year at a time for three years. This will act as a reward for guided functioning instead of a necessity to keep ongoing investigations on track,
4. Dilute the ‘doctrine of pleasure’ implicit in civil service,
5. Using ordinance route,

Article 123 and 213 of the Constitution allows the Centre and state governments to frame laws through an ordinance respectively. But the Constitution-makers envisaged a much-restrained use of this practice.

In the **DC Wadhwa case**, 1986, the Supreme Court clarified that “the power to promulgate an Ordinance is essentially a power to be used to meet an extraordinary situation, and it cannot be perverted to serve political ends.”

The current government on average proclaim 11 ordinances a year.

What needs to be done?

1. As held in the Vineet Narain case, 1997, the organisations need “**permanent insulation against extraneous influences**”, 2. In the SK Mishra case, the court made clear that no further extension shall be granted to the incumbent Director of Enforcement. The government must abide by and not give the benefit of the amendment to the present Director of Enforcement.

Must read: [How Enforcement Directorate \(ED\) became so powerful?](#)

The extension allowed in exceptional circumstances cannot become a rule and a norm.

46. [What the SC order on RERA means for homebuyers](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**What the SC order on RERA means for homebuyers**” published in Live mint on **17th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – issues related to Statutory, Regulatory, and various Quasi-judicial Bodies.

Relevance: Changes in the Real Estate Regulatory Authority Act.

News: Recently, The Supreme Court had suggested some changes in the [Real Estate Regulatory Authority Act](#) (RERA) to protect the interests of homebuyers.

What are the impacts of ruling on the RERA act?

The ruling strengthens the interests of homebuyers, protects their rights, and tells developers to conform to the RERA provisions. SC rulings can be classified under the three categories as given below.

Retroactive application of RERA: Making RERA retroactive means it will cover the projects, that were ongoing at the time of the Act’s implementation and for which the completion certificate was not issued. It will go against the states that diluted the RERA act to exclude such projects.

Jurisdiction under RERA: The top court ruled that RERA has exclusive jurisdiction to direct; refund and interest on the refund, or direct payment of interest for delayed delivery of possession, or penalty and interest, to the allottee.

Faster dispute resolution: The Supreme Court made it mandatory for developers to deposit at least 30% of the penalty ordered by the regulator before they challenge any RERA order in the High Court. Earlier home buyers had to wait for the resolution due to lengthy legal procedures and appeal against orders.

What are the implications of the judgment?

For states: Many states which diluted RERA provisions may now have to amend the regulations.

For homebuyers: It will result in a better grievance redressal mechanism and a uniform regulatory framework across states.

For developers: Now developers have to register the projects ongoing during the commencement of the Act.

47. Longer term, better impact

Source: This post is based on the article “**Longer term, better impact**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions, and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Relevance – Understand the recent amendment to extend the tenure of CBI and ED directors.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November, 2021

News: The Government of India has brought two ordinances to extend the tenure of [Enforcement Directorate \(ED\)](#) and Central Bureau of Investigation(CBI) directors up to 5 years.

Must read: [Centre brings Ordinances to extend tenure of ED, CBI directors up to 5 years](#)

What are the concerns associated with the ordinances?

Read more: [Extension of terms of CBI, ED chiefs by ordinance goes against SC verdicts](#)

Why the ordinance is necessary?

1. **Check on frequent transfers:** Earlier temporary appointments were given to favour certain individuals considered to be 'compliant'. Seniority was often ignored in appointments, and Directors were removed frequently. A longer tenure will reduce frequent transfers. 2. **Provides much-needed continuity:** A two-year tenure for a CBI head is too short for any officer to make an impact on the organisation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation Chief in the U.S. gets a 10-year term. In the five year term, the directors can take highly sensitive investigations which requires continuity of tenure. 3. **Not targeting politicians:** Only 5-10% of the cases registered by the CBI involve politicians, so the ordinance might not target political opponents as feared by oppositions.

Must read: [How Enforcement Directorate \(ED\) became so powerful?](#)

What should be done?

1. **Drafting a CBI Act:** Successive chiefs of CBI have suggested a CBI Act for the following benefits, a) To ensure the organisation is not dependent on the State governments for consent. b) Enable CBI to launch investigations from its own statute instead of depending on the Criminal Procedure Code, which makes the CBI a police organisation, c) Enable the officers to act on their own like Income Tax Act and the Customs Act.

Note: So far Eight States have withdrawn consent for the CBI to function in that State. The Court termed this a "serious issue".

Must Read: [The Issue of Withdrawal of General Consent to CBI – Explained, pointwise](#)

2. **Ensure accountability:** The Director will have to keep the government informed of all major administrative decisions. He or she should inform the executive but not take orders from it, 3. **Ensure a straight five-year term for the Director,** instead of providing one-year extensions after mandatory two-year term as is provided in the Ordinance (the provision of one-year extensions is also susceptible to misuse).

48. SC collegium's endorsement of Saurabh Kirpal as Delhi HC judge is very welcome. Govt must not stand in the way

Source: This post is based on the article "SC collegium's endorsement of Saurabh Kirpal as Delhi HC judge is very welcome. Govt must not stand in the way" published in the **Indian Express** on 17th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 2 Fundamental Rights.

Relevance: Understanding homosexual rights in India.

News: Supreme Court [collegium](#) has recently recommended the name of Saurabh Kirpal as judge of Delhi High Court. If the government does not reject the name, then he will become India's first openly gay judge.

What were the challenges in his appointment?

- 1) The initial reluctance of the collegium to recommend his name.
- 2) Opaque nature of collegium's decision making process.
- 3) Government's objection that the Judge's partner is a foreign national and could lead to a conflict of interest and security risk.

What is the stand of the Supreme Court?

In the [Navtej Johar versus Union of India](#) case, Supreme Court decriminalized consensual same-sex relationships and stated that it is a matter of personal choice, "an expression of their autonomy and self-determination".

What should be the way forward?

The Collegium has taken a bold step by recommending the name of Mr. Kirpal. This will promote the notion of equality of opportunity and nondiscrimination and help de-stigmatize homosexual minorities.

49. House not ordinance: Extending tenures of key officials of premier agencies should be debated in Parliament

Source: This post is based on the article "**House not ordinance: Extending tenures of key officials of premier agencies should be debated in Parliament**" published in the **Times of India** on **16th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Relevance: Understanding the role and need of the ordinance.

News: The Government of India has brought two ordinances to extend the tenure of [Enforcement Directorate \(ED\)](#) and [Central Bureau of Investigation \(CBI\)](#) directors up to 5 years. This raises questions about Government's use of ordinance as the same matter has already been adjudicated by the Supreme Court before.

Who can promulgate an ordinance?

Article 123 of the Constitution allows the President to promulgate an ordinance when Parliament is not in session.

According to **PRS Legislative Research's data** 16 and 15 central ordinances were promulgated in 2019 and 2020 respectively. In the 2010s, the yearly average was 7.

Misuse of an ordinance making power

Although BR Ambedkar said that ordinances are not meant to be used as a parallel power of legislation, still there have been several instances when the various governments used ordinances to bypass normal legislative process.

Read more: [Misuse of Ordinance Making Power](#)

Why does the present ordinance defeat its very purpose?

The 1997 SC judgment (Vineet Narain Judgment) created a legal structure to give operational autonomy to investigative agencies and statutory status to CVC.

The November 2014 amendment to the DSPE Act strengthened it further by providing for a selection committee for directors posts which included the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha. This ordinance reverses the trend where the SC and GoI were progressively taking such matters through the legislative route.

Read here: [Extension of terms of CBI, ED chiefs by ordinance goes against SC verdicts](#)

50. Kabul, Kashmir and the return of the real politik

Source: This post is based on the article "Kabul, Kashmir and the return of the real politik" published in **The Hindu** on **17th November, 2021**.

Subject: GS2-India and its neighborhood relations.

Relevance: Understanding the Afghan situation.

News: Withdrawal of US troops, fall of Afghanistan and return of Taliban has opened the geopolitical contestation for influence over Afghanistan.

What are the recent developments?

Afghanistan is reeling under economic crisis and humanitarian crisis with an acute shortage of food. Considering this Taliban has shown interest in engaging with India.

Read here: [Aiding Afghanistan: On both humanitarian and strategic grounds, India must provide succour to ordinary Afghans](#)

Also, India recently hosted [Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan](#). But, China and Pakistan opted to stay out of it.

Read here: [What are the challenges for India in achieving its Afghanistan objectives?](#)

What are the strategies adopted by different countries?

China: It is engaging the Taliban, but is proceeding with caution. Eventually, it seeks to include Afghanistan through BRI and also CPEC.

Pakistan: It views Afghanistan as its backyard. So it seeks to gain international acceptance for the Taliban regime. At the same time, it seeks to keep the Indian influence away.

What is the dilemma facing the global countries?

Countries have the following concerns:

-Whether to send aid to Afghanistan or not – If the West sends aid via Taliban, it may not reach Afghan people.

-Whether to invest in stabilizing Afghanistan – If they stabilize Afghanistan, the beneficiaries may be Pakistan and China.

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

What is the Indian dilemma? How does this impact Pakistan's Kashmir policy?

It has the question of **Whether to engage with the Taliban or not** – a closer engagement with the Taliban will make Pakistan insecure and create troubles in India-Pakistan relations and in Kashmir. There is rise in cases of violence in Kashmir after the Taliban Takeover. Pakistan's earlier stand to accept the withdrawal of Article 370 seems to have changed.

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

But with the recent convening of Regional security dialogue, India has indicated it will engage with the Taliban. If this helps in stabilizing the Taliban regime, it is likely that the Taliban may not be hostile to India.

What can be expected in the future?

There can be a heating up of the Kashmir issue. Given the absence of China-Pakistan from the Indian initiative, it would be best for India to coordinate its Afghan policy through Moscow for now.

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

51. There's a need for transparency in transfer of judges

Source: This post is based on the article “**There's a need for transparency in transfer of judges**” published in the **Indian Express** on **17th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: understanding the transfer of judges.

News: Supreme Court [collegium](#) recommended the transfer of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court. Chennai bar commission has in fact raised many valid questions.

Read here: [A routine matter or a punishment post?](#)

What does the constitution say about the transfer of high court judges?

Article 222: It deals with the transfer of judges. It states that the President may, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI), transfer a judge from one high court to another.

How did SC cases interpret Article 222 in different cases?

In the **Sankalchand H Sheth case:** Justice Bhagwati said that the transfer of a judge from one court to another inflicts many injuries on the individual. So, the consent of the judge proposed to be transferred should be required. He also held that if the power of transfer is vested solely with the executive, it undermines judicial independence and impacts the basic features of the Constitution.

In the **K Ashok Reddy case:** Court held that primacy of the judiciary in the matter of appointments and in transfers introduces the judicial element in the process. As the process of transfer happens with the concurrence of the senior members of the judiciary, there is no need of further judicial review to check for executive's arbitrariness or excess.

How should transparency be maintained?

The concerned judges and the other stakeholders should be informed beforehand about the reasons behind their transfer. This will help to build trust in the system.

52. Why should India invest in its adolescent population? New study has an answer

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why should India invest in its adolescent population? New study has an answer**” published in the **Down to Earth** on **16th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Issues Relating to Development and Management of Human Resources.

Relevance: Understanding the adolescent population.

News: The **Population Foundation of India**, a non-profit, recently commissioned a study **'Investing in Adolescent Development'**. It examines current interventions in key aspects of adolescent development in India, including physical and mental health, education and prevention of early marriage.

Who are the adolescents?

There is no universally accepted definition of adolescents. But, according to the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#) and the **Government of India**, adolescents belong to persons aged 10–19 years.

India– It has the highest adolescents population in the world. According to the 2011 census, the country is home to over 250 million adolescents.

Globally- There are over 1.2 billion adolescents globally, which accounts for about 16% of the world's population.

What are the findings of the study?

Earnings: It found that an additional year of education in India increased the monthly income of individuals by about 7.02% on average. Also, every rupee invested towards the completion of school education is expected to bring an economic benefit between Rs 4.50 and Rs 8.20 in terms of the future earnings of each individual.

Returns: It found significant disparity in the returns to education between males and females. Returns were higher for females. However, their average wages were lower than that of males.

Contributors: The study reveals that health and education as the important contributors to adolescent development. Early investments in these fields are more efficient in preventing the social problems than investing later on to resolve them. The report also outlined the investments required e.g., INR 8,134 Crore to address the gaps in India's mental healthcare for adolescents, and INR 3,000 Crore per year to provide iron and folic acid tablets to school-going adolescent boys and girls and out-of-school adolescent girls.

53. Naval Ambition

Source: This post is based on the article “**Naval Ambition**” published in **Times Of India** on 18th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS2-India and its neighborhood- relations.

Relevance: To understand India's naval prowess and the need to further strengthen it.

News: Indian navy aims to become a 170-warship force from its current strength of 130 warships over the next decade.

What is the significance of India's naval plan?

Firstly, there is a high possibility that the most consequential **strategic battles of this century** will be played out on the high seas.

Secondly, China's aggressiveness in the Indo-Pacific and building the world's largest navy. China already has 355 warships, including at least 50 conventional and 10 nuclear submarines.

Third, A **collusive threat of China-Pakistan**. **China** recently transferred its largest and most advanced warship to Pakistan.

Fourth, Reorientation of India's military – India has traditionally been focused on land-based forces. Now it requires boosting its naval prowess. India currently has just one nuclear-powered submarine, the INS Arihant.

What are the challenges in front of India?

India's target of 170 ships seems achievable, as 39 naval ships and submarines are already under construction in various Indian shipyards. However, it may not be sufficient, India's initial plan was for a 200-plus naval force, it was reduced to 170 ships, and that too with an extension of timeline by 5 years.

Thus, considering the present circumstances, India needs to increase the **pace of India's naval modernization**.

54. A collaborative tech vision for US, UAE, Israel and India

Source: This post is based on the article “A collaborative tech vision for US, UAE, Israel and India” published in **Indian Express** on **18th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand the potential of Quad nations on technology partnerships.

News: Recently, India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States have decided to launch a new quadrilateral economic forum. The technology dimension of this partnership promises a far greater potential for collaboration.

Must read: [Quadrilateral economic forum and India – Explained, pointwise](#)

How the Quad countries are collaborating with each other on Technology?

Israel and UAE’s startup sectors sign a deal to collaborate on fintech and digital security. This will create regulatory sandboxes and accelerators for start-ups and provide them with market access opportunities.

Read more: [IFSCA introduces framework for ‘Regulatory Sandbox’](#)

India and the US have been separately working with the two countries on multiple projects. For instance, an Israel-based company, specialised in robotic solar cleaning technology, signed an agreement to utilise its manufacturing facility in India for a project in the UAE.

Israel, the UAE and the US are collaborating on water and energy projects.

What are the advantages for the Quad countries if engaged in Technology?

- Can **shape an innovation-based partnership**, which can conjoin the technology hubs of Silicon Valley, Dubai, Tel Aviv, and Bengaluru,
- Can focus on emerging technologies according to their respective national priorities,
- Counter the technological growth of China: By collaborating with Russia, and domestic flagship initiatives like “Made in China 2025”, China reduced the capability gap with the US. With the Quad nation’s shared technological goals, they can utilise each country’s unique advantage for common good.

How do the technological collaborations benefit India?

India can leverage Silicon Valley’s venture capital funding, Tel Aviv’s close-knit organic linkages between start-ups, industry, and academia, and UAE’s funding and focus on innovation.

Provide an opportunity for India on transformative technologies: The startup community in the US, Israel and the UAE have already reached an advanced research and development stage on three transformative technologies Quantum science, blockchain, and 3D printing. India can build expertise and offer the scale to the development and applications of these technologies.

For instance,

–**3D printing:** Israel manufactures about 40% of 3D printers worldwide. On the other hand, India is lagging behind the 3D printing bandwagon.

–**Quantum computer:** Israel, UAE and the US have made a research on [quantum technology](#) a priority. India is catching up with them through [National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications](#).

–**Blockchain:** India and the UAE can leverage the American and Israeli expertise in cyber and cryptography to craft customised applications for use in banking, fintech and trade financing. This can contribute to reducing administration and transaction costs in India.

What should Quad nations do to strengthen technological collaboration?

Add opportunities for scaling up and manufacturing: Indian towns like Bengaluru and Hyderabad that have vibrant technology bases along with multiple defence public sector units and research establishments, private sector companies can be potential towns for such manufacturing.

Begin technology cooperation in transformative technologies: Quantum science, blockchain, and 3D printing can be a priority area for the four countries as they offer exciting applications for encrypted communications, cryptography, aerospace engineering, and manufacturing.

Their dual-use nature offers the potential to give a technological edge to the four countries' militaries. This, in turn, can add the security cooperation element to the grouping's agenda.

Plug innovation ecosystems: The new quad nations should broaden the base of cooperation, rather than restrict it to the government-to-government domain. This can be done through seed-funding, academic collaborations, industrial partnerships and MoUs.

55. What Biden-Xi summit presages for the future

Source: This post is based on the article "**What Biden-Xi summit presages for the future**" published in **Business Standard** on **17th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand the recent developments in US-China relations and its impact on India.

News: During a virtual summit between US President and the Chinese President, both the nations have decided to nudge their relations towards greater engagement and expanded cooperation.

What are the recent initiatives by US and China to mitigate tensions?

Recently, both nations took significant steps to give a new and more positive direction to US-China relations.

These include

-Inauguration of **high-level engagement on key bilateral and global issues**,

-Agreed to engage in **structured talks on their respective nuclear stockpiles** to ensure "nuclear stability". This is due to rapid and significant advances in the Chinese nuclear stockpile.

Read more: [US-China missile rivalry opens up new opportunities for India](#)

-US has rolled back to its earlier position in Taiwan and recognised the **One China Policy**.

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

-Both Nations announced a "**US-China Joint Glasgow Declaration on Enhancing Climate Change**" on the eve of the Glasgow summit. The declaration will 1. Enhance the bilateral programme of cooperation on Climate Change, 2. A substantial initiative on reducing methane emissions, 3. Expanding forestry, 4. "phasing down" of coal-based power by China, 5. Achieve a carbon-free electricity sector by 2035 in the US.

Read more: [Glasgow Climate Pact – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the reasons behind the US's policy shift?

1. **Opinion of American investors in China:** China Business Report mentioned that 72% of American companies in China had no plans to move production out of the country in the next

three years, 2. The Chinese economy is now fully integrated into the global economy, So the US has to adjust its external policy to reflect this reality. 3. **Growth of Chinese nuclear stockpile:** China now has more long-range and sophisticated missiles, including those with multiple warheads. Further, China successfully tested a [hypersonic glide weapon](#) that is capable of penetrating anti-ballistic missile systems deployed by the US.

Read more: [Explained: Agni \(ICBM\) vs China's Hypersonic missile](#)

What are the challenges in China-US relations?

1. Issue of the trade war, 2. Discrimination against Chinese companies on spurious national security grounds by the USA, 3. The spillover effect of the US's domestic economic policy on global economic recovery and on China.

What it means to India?

The growth of the Chinese nuclear stockpile will have implications for the credibility of India's own limited nuclear deterrent.

Affect India's geopolitical calculations, and India need to reassess the value of partnership with the US and platforms like the Quad.

56. More a private sector primer than healthcare pathway

Source: This post is based on the article "**More a private sector primer than healthcare pathway**" published in **The Hindu** on **18th November 2021**

Syllabus: GS2 Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to health.

Relevance: Understanding universal healthcare.

News: NITI Aayog recently released the document "**health insurance for India's missing middle**".

About the document

Read here: [NITI Aayog Releases Report on 'Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle'](#)

What are the existing health insurance programs?

[Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana\(AB-PMJAY\)](#), Other state-level health insurance schemes and private health insurance programs.

The report proposes voluntary, contributory health insurance dispensed mainly by private commercial health insurers as the prime instrument for extending health insurance to the 'missing middle'.

This is a major departure from the universal health coverage (UHC) vision, which had earlier proposed a tax-funded, government-backed universal health coverage plan. This also creates many challenges.

What does the report suggest for in-patient care?

For hospitalization insurance, the report proposes a similar model as **Arogya Sanjeevani Scheme**, with a lower premium of 4000 to 6000 per family. But it will be provided by private insurance players. The reduced premium is not on account of government subsidy.

Challenges associated

From international experience, such plans have been successful when there is a government subsidy, a not-for-profit mode of operation, and some important checks and balances. NITI Aayog's report ignores all these.

For example in Switzerland, though insurance is provided by private players, checks and balances are insured through legislation that provides for mandatory insurance, no cream-skimming, and risk discrimination.

The report suggests **enrolment in groups**. But in India, where even free of cost government health insurance for the poor has seen low penetration, such models are **likely to fail**.

What does the report suggest for outpatient care?

Outpatient care comprises the largest share of out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare. The report proposes OPD insurance with an insured sum of Rs.5000 per family per annum.

Challenges associated

However, this will work on a subscription basis, requiring families to pay the entire insured sum in advance. This runs counter to the notion of universal healthcare, as it does not lead to any cost savings for the individuals.

Why is this report flawed?

UHC should involve a strong and overarching role of government. However, the report seeks to expand the footprint of private health insurance providers.

There is a need to move in the direction of [National Health Policy 2017](#) which envisaged increasing public health expenditure to 2.5% of GDP. This amount should also be used to provide government-funded health insurance benefits to the missing middle.

57. Targeting food: Gujarat civic bodies' unjustifiable action on vendors selling non-veg fare must be rolled back

Source: This post is based on the article " **Targeting food: Gujarat civic bodies' unjustifiable action on vendors selling non-veg fare must be rolled back**" published in **Times of India** on **18th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Relevance: Understanding problems faced by the street vendors.

News: Gujarat civic bodies recently targeted street vendors selling non-vegetarian food on unreasonable grounds. In another incidence, Haryana's local actions enforced a ban on meat shops during festivals despite no state-level directions on the issue.

What is the issue?

Ahmedabad civic body's town planning committee announced a drive against non-vegetarian street food vendors on the complaints of some residents. The committee said that they are targeting the food carts that are on arterial roads, near to schools or religious places.

However, clarification of Gujarat CM clarified that the state is not restricting the food choice of any individual. But, still, vendors are forced to move towards less visible parts of the city raises many questions on the CM's assurance.

Why the move is troubling?

To Food Vendors: Food vendors belong to the self-employed workforce, which already is facing the brunt of the pandemic. Pushing them to the smaller areas will have a drastic impact on their livelihood.

Also read: [Government launches PM SVANIDHI scheme to provide affordable loan to street vendors](#)

To Society: It will generate intolerance and have the potential to impact harmonious co-existence.

58. Transfer as punishment

Source: This post is based on the article “**Transfer as punishment**” published in **The Hindu** on **18th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding transfer of Chief Justice of Madras HC.

News: Recently, the Supreme Court [collegium](#) recommended the transfer of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court.

Read more: [There’s a need for transparency in transfer of judges](#)

What are the questions raised by the transfer?

Read here: [A routine matter or a punishment post?](#)

What does the Memorandum of Procedure for judicial appointments and transfers say?

It says that a proposal to transfer a High Court judge can only be initiated by the CJI. In addition, the views of “one or more knowledgeable Supreme Court judges” are taken. These views are considered by the five-member Collegium. This system was put in place as a safeguard against executive’s arbitrariness

Read here: [Questions for SC: Chief Justice Banerjee’s transfer from Madras HC again points to the opaqueness of collegium](#)

59. Vending For India

Source: This post is based on the article “**Vending For India**” published in **TOI** on **19th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors

Relevance: Understanding the role played by vendors in our cities.

News: Recent decision by multiple municipalities across the state of Gujarat to ban vendors selling non-vegetarian food has led to vendor organizations planning protests across these cities.

What are the critical roles played by street vendors?

Creating substantial employment opportunities. According to a study, 11% of the total urban workforce across India is in street vending.

Street vendors also play an important role in food distribution, food security, as well as in making public spaces safer.

Moreover, households across income classes (rich and poor alike) regularly rely on street vendors for procuring food.

What are the issues faced by Street vendors?

State or city governments crack down frequently on street vendors, in an effort to 'clean up' their cities, roads and public spaces. Attempts are also made to relocate public markets to the outskirts of cities.

Violence by police and local officials: In addition, **street vendors also face everyday harassment**, confiscation of goods, and sometimes violence by police and local level officials on the street. This leads to further exclusion for vendors.

Poor living conditions: Street vendors live in poorly serviced housing, work long hours with long commute times, face difficult conditions in carrying out their daily work.

What steps are being taken to ensure the development of street vendors?

Firstly, India is one of the few countries that recognise the right to work on the street, through the **National Policy for Street Vendors, 2004**, and the **Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending Act, 2014**.

– The Acts provide for the formation of a **Town Vending Committee**. However, the implementation of this remains partial. Evidence suggests that the TVCs have not been formed because the different stakeholders have been unable to work together.

Secondly, Main Bhi Dilli campaign, a collective of civil society organisations, have brought attention to the ways in which urban planning can be more responsive to the needs of street vendors.

Thirdly, government is experimenting with several approaches to address the question of providing social security or assuring basic minimum incomes for the street vendors. For instance, proposals on an urban employment guarantee program.

What is the way forward?

First, Vending should be included in the cities Master Planning process, which would help balance the needs of vendors, pedestrians and vehicular mobility.

Second, an entire Land use category (such as commercial, residential) should not be declared as a no-vending zone. This will help in providing improved amenities for vendors.

Third, adopting the spirit and the letter of the Street Vending Act, will help in forming genuine partnerships with vendor organisations. It will help them in addressing the governance issues related to street vending.

60. US's engagement with China is par for the course. Delhi should not panic, must enhance its global standing

Source: This post is based on the following articles

- **"US's engagement with China is par for the course. Delhi should not panic, must enhance its global standing"** published in **Indian Express** on **19th November 2021**.
- **"Agreeing to disagree"** published in **The Hindu** on **19th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand the recent developments in US-China relations and its impact on India.

News: Recently a virtual summit occurred between US President and the Chinese President. In that, both the nations have decided to expand their cooperation and engagement.

We have already covered the entire issue in our previous article: [What Biden-Xi summit presages for the future](#)

What are the challenges in China-US relations?

Failed fulfilments: During the Trump regime, the Phase 1 Trade Agreement, required China to buy \$380 billion worth of American goods by the end of 2021. But China didn't fulfil the agreement.

Deepening structural contradiction: Both the US and China have structural contradictions that are unlikely to resolve soon.

The approach of Trump and Biden on China: Under Trump, the US shifted from engagement at all costs with China to challenging it across a broad front, including trade, technology, human rights, security, and global governance.

Under Biden, the US has moved more systematically in challenging China. For instance, by strengthening US alliances and focusing on domestic economic renewal.

What US-China relations mean for India?

Many in India worry that any relaxation of tensions between the US and China would undermine India's position in relation to China. So, India must carefully monitor the state of US-China relations. But India has no reason to panic. This is because,

1. China is far too important for any major power to ignore it, 2. Even after Chinese aggression in Ladakh, India continued its engagement with China. More recently, in COP 26 also, India and China coordinated with each other. 3. All of India's Asian and European partners have huge stakes in a productive economic relationship with China.

So, engaging with China is a fact of international life today.

What India should do?

1. Strengthen India's partnership with all major powers, including the US, Europe, Japan and Russia, 2. Enhance India's own standing in the great power constellation.

Overall, India can't see itself as a victim of great powers, but as a nation that can shape the regional and global balance of power.

61. Ordinances extending tenures of CBI, ED chiefs show a worrying trend

Source: This post is based on the article "Ordinances extending tenures of CBI, ED chiefs show a worrying trend" published in **Indian Express** on 19th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 – Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions, and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Relevance – Understand the recent amendment to extend the tenure of CBI and ED directors.

News: The Government of India has brought two ordinances to extend the tenure of **Enforcement Directorate (ED)** and Central Bureau of Investigation(CBI) directors up to 5 years.

About the Ordinances

The two ordinances promulgated were the Delhi Special Police Establishment (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021, and the Central Vigilance Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021, which extend the tenures, respectively, of the director of the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate.

Must read: [Centre brings Ordinances to extend tenure of ED, CBI directors up to 5 years](#)

What are the concerns associated with the ordinances?

Read here: [Extension of terms of CBI, ED chiefs by ordinance goes against SC verdicts](#)

Why the ordinance is necessary?

Read here: [Longer term, better impact](#)

In our country, ordinances are no longer just ordinances. They are the forerunners of something harsher to come.

62. How SC verdict on real estate Act benefits homebuyers

Source: This post is based on the article “**How SC verdict on real estate Act benefits homebuyers**” published in **Indian Express** on **20th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 -Issues related to the development of the housing sector

Relevance: Real Estate Regulatory Authority Act (RERA) 2016

News: Recently, The Supreme Court has ruled some changes in the Real Estate Regulatory Authority Act (RERA) to protect the interests of homebuyers.

Read more: [What SC order on RERA means for homebuyers](#)

What did the court rule on homebuyers recovering their investment?

The Supreme court observed that, under Sec. 40 RERA 2016, the homebuyers are entitled to recover the amount invested along with interest as land revenue arrears from builders.

Why the Real Estate Regulatory Authority Act (RERA) 2016 was enacted?

RERA was introduced with the objective of ensuring greater accountability towards consumers, reducing frauds and delays, and setting up a fast-track dispute resolution mechanism.

To secure the hard-earned money of Indian citizens: More than 77% of the total assets of an average Indian household are held in real estate, and it's the single largest investment of an individual in his lifetime.

To provide accountability to consumers: Prior to the law, the real estate and housing sector were largely unregulated. Consumers were unable to hold builders and developers accountable. For instance, The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was inadequate to address the needs of homebuyers.

63. Global challenges can be tackled in spite of great power rivalry

Source: This post is based on the following article “**Global challenges can be tackled in spite of great power rivalry**” published in **Livemint** on 19th Nov 2021.

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

Relevance: To understand the global issues of today that need the cooperation of all countries including the great powers despite their rivalry.

News: The Global Commission has issued a similar dire warning, as it was issued in 1972 through a study on ‘The Limits of Growth’.

In its recent report, the Commission(group of eminent global citizens drawn from across the world), has highlighted the **key challenges facing the world today**.

What does the report states about global challenges and their management?

Firstly, the report states that while technical solutions to global challenges are known, the **global institutions and governance** priorities necessary to deliver these solutions are **missing**.

-There is no global institution, not even organizations of the United Nations, that has the clout required to override the priorities of individual countries, especially major powers.

Secondly, there is an asymmetry between key global challenges and national policy responses, especially those of advanced countries, which is itself a key challenge.

-Several **covid** vaccines are now available, a great achievement of scientists, but the distribution of vaccines in most developing countries has been very limited.

-Climate crisis-Once again, the technologies required to replace carbon emitting fossil fuels by renewables are known and commercially viable. But most developing countries lack the resources to finance the massive investments required to make the transition within the time available to prevent catastrophic global warming.

Thirdly, the Commission has identified increasingly fraught relations between the two most powerful nations, China and the US, as the most dangerous challenge we face today.

-A robust framework of communications can preempt misunderstandings and accidental conflict.

What is the role of India?

India will mainly be a passive recipient of what great power rivalry leaves up. However, along with its partners, India can seek to nudge both China and the US towards positive-sum outcomes that address the key global challenges of our times.

64. Error corrected: Regarding POCSO Act

Source: This post is based on the article “**Error corrected**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Relevance: To understand the reason behind the recent Supreme Court Judgment on POCSO Act.

News: Recently, the Supreme Court has set aside the controversial judgment of the Bombay HC which held that ‘skin-to-skin’ contact is necessary for an act to be classified as sexual assault under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences(POCSO) Act.

About the judgment

Read here: [Sexual intent, not skin-to-skin contact, key: SC](#)

About the POCSO Act

Read here: [The POCSO Act and associated issues](#)

Why the Bombay High Court verdict is controversial?

-Ignored the basic fact that the entire Act is aimed at penalising actions rooted in ‘sexual intent’. So the judgment is out of sync with the legislative intent behind the enactment of stringent law.

-The law is to protect children based on principles found in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

-Restricting the interpretation of the words 'touch' or 'physical contact' to 'skin to skin contact' would be a narrow and pedantic interpretation of Section 7 of the POCSO Act. So, the Supreme Court verdict ensured that the core ingredient of a sexual offence is the "sexual intent".

65. Keeping a close eye on China's nuclear capabilities

Source: This post is based on the article "Keeping a close eye on China's nuclear capabilities" published in The Indian Express on 7th Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Relevance: Understanding a shift in China's strategic military capabilities and India's response.

News: The PRC's nuclear capabilities, in particular, are undergoing a fundamental transformation and a shift seems to be evident in both the quantity and the quality of the PRC's atomic arsenal. India needs to be cautious.

How China's military capabilities are undergoing a major shift?

China Military Power Report (CMPR) recently released by the Pentagon reveals four specific areas where change is underway —

i). Quantitative strength: the size of the PRC's nuclear arsenal, is set to increase. Presently, it has around 200 nuclear warheads. By 2027, they are likely to increase to 700.

ii). Atomic yield: The PRC is likely to favor the expansion of low-yield weapons. They are weapons ideal for battlefield use during conventional military operations and against conventional targets such as concentrations of armoured, artillery and infantry forces. Lower yield warheads help the PRC avoid causing collateral damage.

iii). Delivery capabilities: these low-yield nuclear warheads are also likely to find their way into a key delivery capability — the PRC's Dong-Feng-26 (DF-26) ballistic missile. In addition to the DF-26, China has also developed the JL-2 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) with a range of 7,200 kilometres capable of striking targets across continental Asia.

iv). Posture: China has moved towards a Launch on Warning (LoW) nuclear posture. A higher alert posture risks reducing the threshold for nuclear use in the form of preemption. It could also lead to miscalculation and unintended nuclear use.

What are the implications for India of China's increasing military capabilities?

For India, there are some serious implications with China's increasingly minatory nuclear military capabilities.

First, the size of China's nuclear arsenal complicates the potency of India's nuclear arsenal. A significantly larger Chinese nuclear arsenal paired to missile defences will limit damage to the PRC. It also threatens the survivability of the Indian nuclear arsenal.

Secondly, the Launch on Warning (LoW) posture reduces the decision time for any Indian retaliatory nuclear strike in the heat of a war or crisis and places pressure on India to pursue its own LoW. The PRC could also significantly degrade an Indian retaliatory strike if China chooses to resort to First Use (FU) of nuclear weapons, and completely eradicate India's nuclear forces.

Thirdly, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese have added two new Type 094 (Jin class) SSBNs/nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarines to their existing fleet. The Chinese Navy has carried out **bathymetric** and **ocean mapping surveys** in the Indian Ocean, crucial to the execution of sub-surface military operations. The Bay of Bengal's sea depth is very

conducive for nuclear submarine missions, which will leave **India exposed to a Chinese atomic pincer** from the maritime & the continental domain.

A pincer attack is a military attack by two coordinated forces that close in on an enemy position from different directions

What is the way forward?

Indian strategic planners will have to think about the quantitative nuclear balance and India's nuclear posture *vis-à-vis* the PRC.

The maritime dimension of China's nuclear capabilities might not be an immediate strategic challenge but will potentially become one in the coming years for New Delhi. It will have to specifically watch the pattern in the People Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) nuclear submarine deployments and address the deficit in its subsurface nuclear delivery capabilities.

66. Flaws in the system

Source: This post is based on the article "**Flaws in the system**" published in **The Hindu** on 21 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 –Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: To understand the constitutional and supreme court stand on the transfer of judges.

News: The transfer of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee from the Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court has given rise to a controversy.

What is the Constitutional provision on the transfer of judges?

Article 222 of the Constitution provides for the transfer of High Court judges, including the Chief Justice.

-It says the President, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, may transfer a Judge from one High Court to any other High Court.

-It also provides for a compensatory allowance to the transferred judge.

What is the Supreme Court's stand on the issue?

In **Union of India vs. Sankalchand Himatlal Sheth(1977):**

-Supreme Court rejected the idea that High Court judges can be transferred only with their consent. It reasoned that the transfer of power can be exercised only in the public interest.

-The President is under an obligation to consult the CJI which meant that all relevant facts must be placed before the CJI.

-The CJI had the right and duty to elicit and ascertain further facts from the judge concerned or others.

In **S.P. Gupta vs. President of India (1981)**, also known as the 'Judges' Transfer Case', the Supreme Court by the majority ruled that consultation with the Chief Justice did not mean 'concurrence' with respect to appointments.

-In effect, it emphasised the **primacy of the executive in the matter of appointments and transfers.**

However, this position was **overruled in the 'Second Judges Case' (1993)** where also the concept of a '**Collegium of Judges**' came into being. That is the opinion of the CJI ought to mean the views of a plurality of judges.

What is the current procedure for transfers?

In the collegium era, the proposal for **transferring** a High Court judge, including a Chief Justice, should be **initiated by the CJI**.

The **consent of the judge is not required**. “All transfers are to be made **in the public interest**, i.e., for promoting better administration of justice throughout the country.

For **transferring a judge other than the Chief Justice**, the CJI should take the views of the Chief Justices of the two High courts concerned.

The CJI should also take into account the views of one or more Supreme Court judges in the process of deciding whether a proposed transfer should take place.

-In the case of transfer of a Chief Justice, only the views of one or more knowledgeable Supreme Court judges need to be taken.

The views should all be **expressed in writing**, and they should be considered by the CJI and four

senior-most judges of the Supreme Court- **Collegium** of five.

The recommendation is sent to the Union Law Minister who should submit the relevant papers to the Prime Minister who then advises the President on approving the transfer.

What makes transfers controversial?

The accusation of the **Punitive element** in the transfer of judges makes the transfer controversial.

Not **disclosing the reason** for a transfer, as disclosure could impinge on the judge’s performance and independence in the court.

-On the other hand, the absence of a reason sometimes gives rise to speculation whether it was effected because of complaints against the judge, or if it was a sort of punishment for certain judgments.

67. Deeper trade ties will benefit both India and US

Source: This post is based on the article “**Deeper trade ties will benefit both India and US**” published in **Indian Express** on 22 November 2021.

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

Relevance: To understand the potential of Indo-US ties and pain points in the relation.

News: The first US-India Trade Policy Forum in over four years begins.

Over the past two decades, the partnership between India and US has strengthened tremendously. From strategic cooperation to our deepening people-to-people ties, the gains have been impressive.

However, the current stakes for a growing economic partnership are greater as we experience a volatile and uneven global economic recovery from the pandemic.

What is the significance of the US for India?

India is trying to move up its value chains and reach ambitious development targets. The aims are to grow to a **\$-5 trillion economy** by 2025, become a hub for **high-tech manufacturing**, and install 500 GW of **renewable** energy by 2030.

These goals can be achieved with **US capital and investment** and continued **access to the US market**.

What are the steps taken by India and challenges thereon to boost investment?

The recent moves to **raise FDI caps** in key sectors and the repeal of the retroactive **tax law** have boosted investor confidence.

However, the implementation of **unpredictable tariffs** and **regulatory regimes** targeting foreign firms should be avoided.

What should be the way forward for India and US?

Both governments can make real progress by pursuing negotiations on two parallel tracks:

One dedicated to removing and **resolving longstanding irritants** and disputes.

Second focused on building a 21st-century trade framework **starting with the key sectors** that are driving growth and innovation across the economic corridor. Some of them are:

– Healthcare sector

Governments should embrace market-based approaches to **innovative medical products**. It **must** ensure that public procurement policies do **not discriminate against foreign firms**, and speed up the approval of medical devices and pharmaceuticals so that critical and lifesaving therapies can get to the market faster.

–Digital sphere

we must address several foundational issues, such as the digital service tax, cross-border data flows, and common cellular standards.

It's important that on the **digital services tax**, India accords with emerging global agreements that will accelerate trade.

Similarly, it is important that India and the US come to a common ground on **5G standards** so that it can operate in an integrated telecommunications ecosystem.

New data regulations should also facilitate the flow of information and respect internationally recognised intellectual property rights that serve as the cornerstone for innovation worldwide.

What are the potential benefits of these actions if taken?

Progress on these fronts can facilitate the movement of the goods, services, technology, talent, and capital necessary to fortify the world against climate disruption, prepare it for future pandemics, and build an economy ready for the challenges of the 21st century.

68. [In Hyderabad, leadership of security forces must ensure that personnel follow court's directions, in letter and spirit](#)

Source: This post is based on the article **"In Hyderabad, leadership of security forces must ensure that personnel follow court's directions, in letter and spirit"** published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Fundamental Rights.

Relevance: Understanding the breach of Fundamental Rights behind the encounter.

News: Recently, army and police forces conducted an operation in Srinagar which led to the killing of three civilians along with a Pakistani militant has raised questions of the overuse of their powers.

What was the issue all about?

Army and police personals in the disturbed areas have the special power under **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** to fight against militants. But in some cases, the security personnel find it difficult to distinguish between militants and civilians, a distinction which has

blurred even further with the recent emergence of “OGW” (overground worker for militants) or “hybrid militant”.

What were the earlier instances?

A similar instance has happened last year in Amshipora in Shopian, where the Army captain and JCO (Junior Commissioned Officer) in association with two civilians wrongly portrayed three men as terrorists, in order to claim reward money and killed them. The Police had filed a charge sheet against the captain, and the two civilians.

The Army also acknowledged the breach of powers under the [Armed Forces Special Powers Act](#) by the officials. Army took over the case from the civil court. As of now, there is no update from either the Military Court or Civil Court.

What is the Supreme court’s view over misuse of power?

SC in 2019 order said that every encounter must be enquired and there must be material evidence before naming someone as a terrorist. The Army leadership must ensure the rule of law is followed and [Article 21](#) is respected.

Also read: [Rule of Law vs Rule by Law](#)

69. Shifting the pile: On inequity and Swachh citiest

Source: This post is based on the article “**Shifting the pile: On inequity and Swachh citiest**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the results of Swachh Survekshan 2021.

News: Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs has released the results of Swachh Survekshan 2021.

What are the key takeaways of the Swachh Survekshan 2021 awards?

Read here: [President of India Graces Swachh Amrit Mahotsav and Presents Swachh Survekshan Awards 2021](#)

Ganga Towns: Varanasi has been awarded the cleanest town award along the banks of river Ganga.

Prerak Daaur Samman: It is a new category of awards that starts from 2021 and judged states on its Solid waste management. It ranked Indore, Surat, Navi Mumbai, New Delhi Municipal Council and Tirupati as ‘Divya’ (platinum).

What is the purpose of such rankings?

1) Publicity boost 2) Motivation to do better

What are the questions raised by the Swachh Survekshan survey?

The award categories have expanded manifold e.g., Separate award for States Category based on number of ULBs in the State (Above 100 and below 100); ‘Ganga City’, ‘Prerak Daaur Samman’, and ‘Population’ wise category. The expanded categories mean that more cities get awards and consequently the award process resembles an appeasement exercise.

For the last six years, almost the same cities are topping the survey. This raises legitimate questions like (1) whether cities are actually getting motivated as intended; (2) whether some cities have better access to funds; (3) whether the States focus their funds in keeping some

cities clean to avail of a rank in any of the wide number of categories; (4) Can complex problems like sanitation be reduced to simple metrics?

Thus, there should be a better analysis of the scheme to understand whether the cities are getting cleaner or the numbers are hiding inequity?

70. Making Ayurveda a real science

Source: This post is based on the article “**Making Ayurveda a real science**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Achievements of Indians in science & technology.

Relevance: Understanding the need of revamping the Ayush system.

News: During the Pandemic, Ayurveda based self-medication was promoted. But no attempt was made to educate people with the correct ingredients like Giloy or Dalcheeni.

Many Ayurveda physicians claimed successful treatment of Covid, but none were recorded and researched. The coordination between [ICMR](#) and Ayush could have helped in better management of the pandemic.

Why the Ayurveda system is being questioned?

Recently, a group of scientists has started a social media campaign calling all Ayush systems “pseudoscience”. This is because of:

- Finding unwarranted constituents like antibiotics, heavy metals in many of the Ayush products.
- Unscientific and outdated content in the textbooks of Ayush graduate programmes.
- Various cases where adverse impacts were visible after exposure to Ayush interventions.

What should the policymakers/academicians do?

- Introspect all the flaws carefully and do the required changes.
- Adoption of uniform protocols for diagnosis and interventions of various diseases.
- Conduct longitudinal observation studies involving around 20 different clinical conditions that Ayush is confident of treating to establish the efficacy of Ayush medicines and systems.
- Establish a regulatory mechanism to check that classical formulations do not contain harmful substances like heavy metals before they are made available in markets.

71. Better co-ordination

Source: This post is based on the article “**Better co-ordination**” published in **Business Standard** on 22 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 2-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Relevance: To understand some areas of cooperation between India and the USA.

News: United States Trade Representative is in India to further the agenda of the US-India Trade Policy Forum to be held after the four-year interregnum.

While the bilateral relationship has shown considerable progress in the past years, the economic agenda has always been a stumbling block. In other cases like, US-China or US-EU relationship, there is a clear give and take across sectors.

What are Issues in India-US relations that are likely to be discussed?

India’s digital policies, including data localization and taxation of US-based tech multinational companies.

Trade-related regulatory barriers, tariffs, and recent export promotion policies from the Indian government, as well as the vexed interlinkage between environmental factors and trading relations.

How should Indian officials respond?

A **whole-of-government** approach has to be taken. Each official should be briefed on the entire set of outstanding issues and possible ways forward, not just related to their ministry or portfolio.

-Response of Indian officials should be based on feedback from other departments and updated input from relevant stakeholders in the corporate world and Parliament.

There should be **ongoing coordination** during the visit, and to build on the progress already made in previous meetings during the visit.

72. Why China is acquiring foreign military bases

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why China is acquiring foreign military bases**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and its neighborhood relations

Relevance: Understanding China’s growing military presence around the world

News: USA recently convinced UAE to stop China from secretly constructing a military facility at an Abu Dhabi port. China’s growing interest in acquiring foreign military bases has been reported for more than a decade.

Beijing opened its **first** foreign military base in **Djibouti** in the Horn of Africa in 2017. It is said to be building its **second** foreign military base at Ream, **Cambodia**.

Must Read: [Keeping a close eye on China’s nuclear capabilities](#)

Through acquiring foreign military bases, China is trying to assert its primacy in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region while pushing out the US and India. A permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean will profoundly alter India’s security environment.

Which countries is China targeting for its foreign military bases?

The recent US annual report on Chinese military power cites several countries that People’s Liberation Army is targeting for military bases.

In Bay of Bengal: Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka are candidates from the Bay of Bengal

To the West of India: Namibia, Seychelles, Tanzania, and the UAE.

Pakistan is likely to emerge as the most important vehicle for Chinese naval power projection in the Indian Ocean, with significant implications for India’s military planning.

What are the reasons behind China’s pursuit of acquiring foreign military bases?

Background: In the past, Communist China claimed that it had no interest in projecting power to distant seas or foreign military bases. China also actively campaigned against the foreign military presence in Asia. As a defensive power in the second half of the 20th century, China’s priority was to fight off external threats to its sovereignty and consolidate its communist revolution.

This policy changed as China rose rapidly to become a great power in the 21st century.

– Due to its vast globalized economy and growing reliance on foreign markets and resources, a need was felt within the Chinese security establishment to **secure its regional and global interests**.

– In the 1970s, China valued the US role in containing **Soviet social-imperialism** and **latent Japanese militarism**. Today, China wants to establish **primacy in Asia and its waters** by expanding its military reach and is trying to push America out of Asia once again. Hence, China started establishing foreign bases.

What are the features of the Chinese strategy of establishing foreign military bases?

Dual-use facilities: China’s focus was on building dual-use facilities rather than explicit military bases on foreign soil.

Construction of ports & BRI: China’s dual-use approach benefited immensely from its expansive foreign port construction and the more recent Belt and Road Initiative to build infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific.

Cultivating special relationships with the political elites, as well as strengthening ties with the military establishments in a potential host country.

Arms transfer, and military diplomacy, are also an integral part of China’s pursuit of foreign bases.

What are the similarities and differences b/w Chinese and Indian positions on foreign military bases?

Similarities	Differences
In the second half of the 20th century , India, like China, opposed foreign military bases in Asia and the Indian Ocean.	China opposed foreign bases due to their direct security implications. Its rejection was political and contextual. India’s opposition was based on an ideological principle of its non-aligned foreign policy
In the 21st century , like China, India also began to recognize the need for military access to strategic locations in the Indo-Pacific.	

Delhi’s efforts included negotiating arrangements with friendly states in the Indian Ocean, as well as developing deeper strategic partnerships with the US and its regional allies.

But India is still a long way from matching the speed and intensity of Chinese military diplomacy in its near and extended neighbourhood.

73. Database of unorganised workers is a welcome step towards creating a robust social security architecture

Source: This post is based on the article “**Database of unorganised workers is a welcome step towards creating a robust social security architecture**” published in **Indian express** on **23rd November 2021**.**Syllabus:** GS2 – Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors.

Relevance: Welfare measures for unorganized workers

News: Launching of e-Shram portal, a database of unorganized workers, is a welcome and long-overdue step towards creating a social security structure for this part of the labor force.

The absence of credible data on the migrant workforce, during the economic distress induced by COVID-19, resulted in problems in extending policy support for this section.

Moreover, there is a lack of credible data for the entire unorganized labor, which accounts for roughly 90% of the entire labor force in the country.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November, 2021

To address this gap, the government has launched the [e-Shram portal](#). The portal facilitates the identification and registration of the unorganized workers.

Reportedly, the database will also be linked to Unnati (*the proposed labor matching platform*).

What are the important findings revealed by the e-Shram portal data?

The e-Shram portal data gives vital information on the unorganized labor force, such as,

– **Number of registered unorganised workers:** a fifth of the estimated unorganised workers in the country are now registered on the database.

– **Caste based data on unorganised workers:** 40.5% of unorganised workers belong to the OBC category, 27.4% are from the general category, 23.7% are Scheduled Castes, while 8.3% are Scheduled Tribes.

– **Sector based data on unorganised workers:** Maximum registrations have been in the agriculture sector (53.6 per cent), followed by construction (12.2 per cent), and domestic and household workers (8.71 per cent).

What is the way forward?

Merely creating a database of workers is not enough, but identifying them, registering them, is a step towards including them in social security schemes. For this to happen, the following steps need to be taken:

First, the information gathered on workers, especially on migrants, will need to be regularly updated. The states of origin and destination will need to do this and keep track of circular migration.

Second, workers unwilling to register in e-Shram portal need to be incentivised.

Third, eligibility criteria for schemes that depend on information that is not collected by the e-Shram portal will also need to be integrated.

Fourth, the issue of portability of benefits, extended at both the central and state level, need to be addressed.

74. Dynamism in India US ties

Source: This post is based on the article "Dynamism in India US ties" published in **The Hindu** on **23rd November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding India-US relations.

News: Recently, a **congressional delegation (CODEL)** led by U.S. Senator John Cornyn visited Indo-Pacific Command countries which also included India in its list. It interacted with the Prime Minister, External Affairs Minister, and representatives of the Dalai Lama in India.

Both sides are committed to "**increasing convergence of strategic interests**" between India and the U.S. and to "further enhance cooperation on contemporary global issues such as **terrorism, climate change and to promote global peace and stability.**"

What was the outcome of the CODEL meet?

– It recognizes the importance of the Indo-Pacific and the increasing China's threat to these countries and to India.

-It favored India to get a presidential waiver under [Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act](#) for procuring [S400 missiles](#) from Russia.

Significance of CODEL visit for India

The statements of CODEL cannot be undermined. U.S. Congress plays an important role in determining the foreign policy of the US.

Read more: [The sanctions clouds over India US Ties](#)

What are the drawbacks in India-US relations?

India had 8 **Parliamentary Friendship Groups** including Japan, Russia, China, and the European Union, but the USA is absent from that group. There is **no institutional communication** or interaction between MPs in India and members of the U.S. Congress.

What is the way forward?

In the words of Dr. McDermott (former Congressman) “legislative interactions inject dynamism in bilateral relations”.

Given the robust India-US ties, There is a need for ministers on both sides to engage with each other. This was asserted when The joint statement at the end of the **2+2 dialogue** in 2019 called for the establishment of India USA parliamentary exchange to facilitate reciprocal visits.

Also read: [What is India-US 2+2 dialogue?](#)

75. [Sanitation workers' safety and welfare must be urgently addressed](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Sanitation workers' safety and welfare must be urgently addressed**” published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Relevance: Understanding the issue of manual scavengers.

News: Covid pandemic highlighted the urgency of addressing the issues related to manual scavengers.

Sanitation work in India is tied to caste-based occupational roles. It is majorly performed by people from scheduled caste and schedule Tribes.

What is the status of manual scavenging in India?

Presently, the government does not directly employ manual scavengers, but the work is outsourced to private providers. It is these private providers that employ manual scavengers.

The **sixth Economic Census**, 2013 reported around 1.7 lakh businesses underwater supply, sewerage, waste management, and 82% of these are in the private sector which reportedly employs manual scavengers.

A **manual scavenging survey** by the Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment found 66, 692 manual scavengers till October 2020.

Read here: [The Plight of Manual Scavengers in India](#)

What steps have been taken by the government?

The government enacted the [Prohibition of the Employment of Manual Scavengers Act 2013](#) which prohibited any form of employment of manual scavengers.

The [Swatch Bharat Mission](#) led to the construction of toilets with on-site sanitation systems like septic tanks and pits.

[Atal Mission for rejuvenation and urban transformation](#), which focuses on 500 cities has led to the development of infrastructure such as sewerage networks, sewerage treatment plants.

Latest, [National Sample Survey, 2019](#) showed that more than 65% of households in India have toilets with septic tanks.

Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment has taken up rehabilitation of sanitation workers under revised self-employment scheme for rehabilitation of manual scavengers.

National Safai Karamchari Finance and Development Corporation is building capacity at the local government level, providing mechanized desludging trucks and financial assistance to sanitation workers.

What is the way forward?

Given that so many plans have failed to yield results, there is a need for strict monitoring of the implementation of the act.

The government has proposed a new initiative of national action for the mechanized Sanitation ecosystem. The plan will provide monitoring of sanitation services, including the activities of private sanitation service organizations. These could pave the way for eradicating manual scavenging and ensuring the welfare of all consultation workers.

76. [JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill](#)

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

“**Platforms as publishers, penalties, checking electronic hardware may figure in draft data Bill**” published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd November 2021**.

“**JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd November 2021**.

“**Falling short**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the data protection bill.

News: Joint Committee of Parliament (JCP) on the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019 has submitted its report in the Parliament.

Also Read: [The draft personal data protection bill, 2018](#)

What are the key recommendations?

Inclusion of non-personal data: It proposed to include non-personal data along with personal data and also that **Data Protection Authority (DPA)** should handle this. Any further policy/legal framework on non-personal data in the future should be made part of this legislation and not separate legislation.

Data collection by electronic hardware: Hardware manufacturers that collect data through digital devices are not under scrutiny in the earlier legislation. JCP suggested incorporating new clauses and allowing DPA to frame regulations towards data handling by hardware manufacturers and related entities.

Stricter regulations for social media platforms: JCP recommended that all social media platforms, which did not act as intermediaries, should be treated as publishers and be held accountable for the content they host. It also recommended setting up a statutory media regulatory for the regulation of content on such platforms.

However, The committee grants some exceptions to data fiduciaries below a certain threshold, not to hamper the growth of firms that are classified under MSMEs.

Ringfencing data

Concluding its deliberations since 2019, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill adopted its report on Monday

Key recommendations

- Treat as publishers all social media platforms which do not act as intermediaries, and they be held accountable for the content they host
- Allow no social media platform to operate in India unless the parent company handling the technology sets up an office in India



- Develop an alternative indigenous financial system for cross-border payments
- Set up dedicated lab for certification of all digital devices
- In case of cross-border transfer of data, a mirror copy of sensitive and critical personal data be mandatorily brought to India

Source: The Hindu

Definition: JCP recommended that the definition of harm should also include psychological manipulation which impairs the autonomy of a person.

What are the controversies surrounding the Personal Data Protection Bill?

Under the bill **Clause 35**, it allowed exemption to any agency under the Union Government in the name of “**public order**”, “**sovereignty**”, “**friendly relations with foreign states**” and “**security of the state**” from all or any provisions of the law.

Many members argued for **removing public order as a ground for an exception** given under clause 35. This would create two parallel universes where the private sector is strictly regulated, and the government sector has a lot of exemptions.

Read here: [Issue of privacy and Personal Data Protection Bill 2019](#)

Members proposed many alternatives like:

- Having judicial or Parliamentary oversight for granting such exemptions
- Providing the order of exemption in writing
- Allowing only partial exemptions to select agencies

However, the report did not accept these recommendations. It called for a balance of privacy and national security. It cited the exemptions as reasonable and in conformity with **Article 19** and the **Puttaswamy (2017) judgement**.

What did the dissenting members propose?

They argued that the bill did not provide adequate safeguards to protect the right to privacy.

Read here: [Need for a robust Personal Data Protection Bill](#)

77. The significance of Supreme Court's recent POCSO decision

Source: This post is based on the article “**The significance of Supreme Court's recent POCSO decision**” published in **Indian Express** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Relevance: To understand the reason behind the recent Supreme Court Judgment on POCSO Act.

News: In the **Attorney General of India v. Satish case**, the Supreme Court has set aside the controversial judgment of the Bombay HC which held that ‘skin-to-skin’ contact is necessary for an act to be classified as sexual assault under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences(POCSO) Act.

About the Bombay HC judgment

Two judgments of the Bombay High Court provide an interpretation of “sexual assault” under Section 7 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act).

Note: Section 7 of POCSO Act mandates that “*whoever with sexual intent touches the vagina, penis, anus or breast of the child or makes the child touch the vagina, penis, anus or breast of such person or any other person, or does any other act with sexual intent which involves physical contact without penetration is said to commit sexual assault*”.

Satish v State of Maharashtra case: The Bombay HC cited “no direct physical contact, i.e. skin-to-skin contact, with sexual intent without penetration.” Thus Satish was acquitted for sexual assault and convicted instead for outraging a woman's modesty and wrongful confinement.

State of Maharashtra v. Libnus case: The accused was acquitted for aggravated penetrative sexual assault, and instead convicted for the lesser offences of sexual harassment under both the POCSO Act and the IPC.

Read here: [Sexual intent, not skin-to-skin contact, key: SC](#)

About the POCSO Act

The Act provides a **mandatory minimum punishment** of three years.

-For an act with sexual intent which involves physical contact without penetration, the punishment may extend to five years, and a fine.

-For Aggravated penetrative sexual assault, the minimum punishment is five years imprisonment, which may extend to seven years, and a fine.

Read here: [The POCSO Act and associated issues](#)

Why the Bombay High Court verdict is controversial?

Read here: [Error corrected: Regarding POCSO Act](#)

-The emphasis of Section 7 is to outlaw behaviour driven by sexual intent. So, the HC judgment legitimises “an entire range of unacceptable behaviour which undermines a child's dignity and autonomy, through unwanted intrusions.”

Why SC ruling is essential and how to move ahead?

Much needed interpretation of Section 7: Research studies based on judgments of special courts have revealed similar interpretations of Bombay High Court is prevalent in courts. For instance, taking children by force and tearing their clothes have been considered as falling outside the ambit of “physical contact” under Section 7.

So, the SC interpretation will serve as a precedent for the scores of cases before special courts involving physical contact with sexual intent.

Research on high minimum mandatory sentences: Both SC and HC noticed high minimum mandatory sentences under POCSO Act. There is a need for research on the impact of high minimum mandatory sentences on judicial appreciation of evidence and outcomes, as well as the participation of victims and their families during the trial.

78. The need for palliative care in India has never been greater

Source: This post is based on the article “**The need for palliative care in India has never been greater**” published in the **Indian Express** on **24th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the need for palliative care.

News: With the rise in non-communicable diseases, the requirement of palliative care is a must.

What is palliative care?

WHO defined palliative care as “the active total care of patients whose disease is not responsive to curative treatment. This type of care is focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family.”

What are the problems associated with palliative care?

- 1) Lack of trained staff and healthcare professionals.
- 2) Restricted access to opioids for pain control.
- 3) Refusal to accept that there comes a time when one needs to work with the process of dying rather than against it.

Why does the need for palliative care arise?

Non-communicable diseases like cancer are rising these days. Presently, in India, 30 lakh people are suffering from cancer. Of these, 75-80% are in the advanced stage and half of them die within a year. Yet, no more than 2% receive palliative care because of the paucity of service. With the corona pandemic, this count will further increase.

What should be done to improve the conditions of palliative care?

Trained professionals: Palliative care requires end-of-life conversations. So, there is a need for training professionals to work in a collaborative manner. People must also make a living will to designate a surrogate who can take decisions on their behalf when they are incapacitated.

Renaming: Rename palliative care and call it symptomatic care to make it more acceptable.

Treatment by specialists: There is a tendency to cut off relations once treatments fail. The treating specialist should continue to involve family members whose advice and support are needed by the patient.

Rehabilitation of family members: Apart from the patient, the survival and safety of members left behind is also a concern that should be addressed, especially in the case of India where it is missed.

79. [Wanted: An Indian Charlesworth](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**The need for palliative care in India has never been greater**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Role of civil services in a democracy.

Relevance: Understanding the need for transparency behind the selection of Indian candidates in international forums.

News: Recently, India nominated Bimal Patel, professor of international law to the UN [International Law Commission](#). Before him, the only instance of an Indian academic elected to the ILC was that of Radhabinod Pal in 1958, an iconic judge.

Why the nomination is noteworthy?

His appointment is notable as earlier India routinely nominated retired officials from the Legal and Treaties Division (L&T) of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), ignoring the talent that existed in international law in academia. According to **Syed Akbaruddin**, India’s former permanent representative to the UN, the L&T Division treated the ILC membership “as its preserve”.

The Indian habit of nominating retired government officials and bureaucrats to international forums is not restricted to ILC only, but also to other international forums like [World Trade Organization](#), [International Court of Justice](#) etc.

What are the practices adopted by other countries?

Other liberal democracies of the world do not nominate only retired officials, but they also nominate the leading academicians of international law. For e.g. Australian nominee, Hilary Charlesworth, recently elected to the ICJ, is a professor of international law and is globally known for her path-breaking work on feminist approaches to international law.

What are the drawbacks of the Indian process of nomination?

Lack of **transparency**: It gives rise to speculations of favouritism and nepotism.

What is the way forward?

Setting up an independent search-cum-selection committee: The committee should invite applications from qualified candidates, screen them based on their expertise and professional reputation in international law, and then make recommendations publicly.

Nominate the brightest talent: Ministry of External Affairs should make sure that the nominated candidate should have expertise in international law.

80. [Elephant vs Dragon](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Elephant vs Dragon**” published in **Times of India** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 –International relations and policies.

Relevance: Understanding Indian democracy versus Chinese authoritarianism.

News: The Chinese model has allowed it to make significant economic gains, as was revealed in the recent report that it had raced past the US in wealth gain over the last two decades. This is in contrast to the Indian democratic model, which faces many challenges.

What are the challenges facing the Indian democratic model?

The government was able to push through some controversial measures like [demonetization](#) and [GST bill](#).

But in the matter of the farmer's bill, though economically sound, it was forced to repeal those laws because of the democratic nature of Indian politics. Here, politics triumphed over the economy.

What are the strengths of the Chinese model?

China, guided by the single pursuit of economically overthrowing the USA, can take tough and strict measures. In China, opposition holds little or no power against the ruling segment.

81. [ASER 2021 has insights on how schools can respond to post-Covid world](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "[ASER 2021 has insights on how schools can respond to post-Covid world](#)" published in **The Indian Express** on **24th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

Relevance: To know how to build back education better.

News: Recently, the 16th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey 2021 has been released.

About the ASER Survey and its key findings

Read here: [ASER Survey and issues in school education – Explained, pointwise](#)

How education can be “build back better” in the post-pandemic world?

Children in today's Class 1 and Class 2 have never been to school. They have to be helped to get ready for schooling and learning.

Children above Class 3 will need help to settle in and reconnect with school education.

Retain children in government schools: Government schools have to demonstrate new ways to welcome children. Further, they need to build trust and faith through interaction between parents and teachers. So that, the shift to government schools can be long-lasting.

A shift in teaching-learning approach: The use of grade-level curriculum may not be useful immediately after the pandemic. Instead, meeting children at the level where they are and using the “teaching at the right level” approach is the need of the hour.

Investing time and effort now in rebuilding and strengthening children's ability to read with understanding, improving their problem-solving skills, and enabling them to help each other in the classroom may provide a big boost. It will bring the education system to where it was in pre-Covid times and will help to realize the goals of the [National Education Policy](#).

In conclusion, new methods of engaging with children and parents should emerge along with a proper Ground-level action plan that has appropriate teaching-learning goals and activities.

82. Lessons from past sanitation policies for future efforts

Source: This post is based on the article "[Lessons from past sanitation policies for future efforts](#)" published in **Livemint** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Relevance: To understand various sanitation programmes, their challenges and suggestions.

News: Despite decades of national sanitation policies, data from the [fifth National Family Health Survey \(NFHS-5\)](#) indicates that India is far from achieving it.

Why does SDG Goal 6 (on water and sanitation) is essential?

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 6 aims to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" by 2030. But, its importance extends beyond its objectives. It will help nations achieve other SDG goals. Such as SDG 1 (poverty eradication), SDG 2 (improving nutrition), SDG 3 (promotion of well-being), and SDG 5 (gender equality), among others.

About the Evolution of India's sanitation policies

Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP; 1986-1999): It offered financial assistance to below-poverty-line (BPL) homes to encourage the construction of 'individual household latrines' (IHHLs).

Challenges: Slow construction and lack of demand-led 'behaviour change communication' (BCC).

Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC; 1999-2011): It focused on driving up demand for toilet adoption. Around 15% of its budget was dedicated to educational activities, along with continued financial assistance to BPL households.

To inculcate behaviour change, the campaign focussed on achieving Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS).

Note: Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) is developed in Bangladesh. It is a multistep participatory process that acknowledges that the mere provision of toilets does not guarantee its usage. It uses audiovisual aids to arouse a sense of discomfort and disgust with Open Defecation (OD) and motivates local communities to end the practice collectively.

Challenges of TSC: 1. Officials running TSC lacked the training needed for educational activities, 2. Rather than demand-led, it is infrastructure-focused.

So, less than a 10% increase in toilet coverage was achieved under TSC according to the Census data (from 22% in 2001 to 31% in 2011).

Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA), 2012: The Abhiyan only ran for 18 months.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on 2 October 2014: Under it, the government aims to achieve an OD-free India within five years. The SBM was the first to include urban (along with rural) sanitation guidelines.

Under the SBM, India achieved the construction of around 100 million toilets and was declared an OD-free nation on 2 October 2019. However, many independent studies, along with NFHS-5 data, have raised questions over this claim.

Why do India's sanitation policies not yield desired results?

1. Policies have had a top-down approach with a focus on building toilets, this led to a higher number of toilets installed, but not used,
2. Ignored behaviour change communication' (BCC).

What should India do?

Proper community mobilization: India has to learn from Bangladesh. Using CLTS, Bangladesh reduced OD from 42% in 2003 to 1% in 2016. India should follow Bangladesh's steps such as 1. Recognize sanitation attitudes as crucial, 2. Form collaborations with state and local governments along with national and international NGOs, 3. Recognise the participation and leadership role of women in achieving ODF status, such as decisions on the location and type of toilets planned, 4. Explain the merits of using toilets and having clean surroundings.

Remould social norms: Social norms should be remoulded in such a manner that toilets begin to be associated with the household's dignity and social status.

Keep toilets structurally intact and suitably clean: This will ensure that there is no reversal to OD after some time.

Linking SDG 6 goal with the sanitation programmes at all levels: This will allow a unified approach towards that end.

83. Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021: How resistance to antibiotics develops

Source: This post is based on the articles “Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021: How resistance to antibiotics develops” and “Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021: How vaccines can help reduce India's AMR burden” published in *Down To Earth* on 24 Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Relevance: To understand the grave situation of antimicrobial resistance(AMR), their types, and actions taken.

News: The development of resistance to antimicrobial is a major public health problem all over the world.

Though the world is trying to develop new drugs, there are difficulties in treatment as a result of the rapid development of resistance to these drugs.

What is antimicrobial resistance(AMR)?

It occurs when microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites) evolve and stop responding to medicines, making even minor infections tough to treat, causing severe illnesses and deaths.

What are the reasons for AMR?

Poor prescription practices, inappropriate antibiotics in pharmacies, and self-medication practices are key determinants of AMR in India.

What are the different types of AMR?

Natural (intrinsic, structural) resistance: This kind of resistance is caused by the structural characteristics of microbes and is not associated with the use of antimicrobials. It has **no hereditary property**.

Acquired resistance: Due to changes in the genetic characteristics of microbes, acquired resistance occurs as it is now unaffected by the previous antimicrobial.

-This kind of resistance occurs mainly due to structures of chromosomes or extrachromosomal such as plasmid, transposon, and others.

Cross resistance: Some microorganisms are resistant to a certain drug that acts with a similar mechanism as some other drugs. However, sometimes it can also be seen in completely unrelated drug groups.

-This resistance is usually observed against antibiotics whose structures are similar. This may be the chromosomal or extrachromosomal origin.

Multi-drug resistance and pan-resistance: These are often bacteria resistant to the antibiotics used to treat them. This means that a particular drug is no longer able to kill or control the bacteria.

How vaccines can help reduce the AMR burden?

Vaccinations not only prevent diseases but also prevent the development of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

-Prevention of infections through vaccines results in reduced use of anti-microbials for treatment, reducing the emergence of resistance.

What are the steps taken in this regard?

The **Global Action Plan (GAP) on AMR** was launched in 2015 by WHO. Today, almost 80 countries have announced National Action Plans to address AMR at a national level.

In **India**, the recent announcement to **universalize PCV** across the country would protect children not only from pneumococcal disease, but also protect children and other populations from the emergence of drug-resistant pneumococcal disease.

84. We need a multi-pronged approach to end child marriage

Source: This post is based on the article “**We need a multi-pronged approach to end child marriage**” published in the **Indian Express** on **25th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the need of empowering girl children and stop child marriages.

News: There is an increase in Child marriages in India.

What is the status of child marriages in India?

NFHS 4 data shows that one in four girls in India was being married before 18. The first phase findings of **NFHS5** (2019-20) also show a similar result. Even according to other reports, more child marriages happened during the Covid pandemic.

What are the reasons behind the prevalence of child marriage?

- 1) Domestic work and care performed by women,
- 2) A belief that girls need to marry early for their safety and protection,
- 3) Apprehensions about the risk to family honour or economic burden.

Read here: [Major reasons for prevalence of child marriage in India](#)

What are the negatives of child marriages?

- 1) Violates girl human rights,
- 2) Lack of opportunities for women in society,
- 3) Impacts their overall personality from education to health,
- 4) Exposed to domestic abuse,
- 5) Women will have less decision-making powers.

There are several other outcomes that will also occur. Such as teenage pregnancy, population growth, child stunting, poor learning outcomes for children and the loss of women's participation in the workforce etc.

What are the government initiatives to stop child marriages?

-**Karnataka** amended the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2017** declaring every child marriage void, making it a cognizable offense and providing harsh punishment for those involved in child marriages.

Read here: [Incentives and Schemes provided by the Government of India to end child marriage](#)

What are the hurdles in stopping child marriages?

- 1) Patriarchal mindset
- 2) One size fits all approach: Although the government introduced various schemes like Conditional Cash Transfers, all failed to show the desired result.

What is the way forward?

Introduce various reforms: Like the expansion of secondary education, access to safe and affordable public transport, and support for young women to apply their education to earn a livelihood.

Education: Teachers should hold regular gender equality conversations with high school girls and boys to shape progressive attitudes that will sustain them into adulthood.

Community engagement: through programmes like Mahila Samakhya.

Involvement of various stakeholders: Bureaucrats across multiple departments, teachers, Anganwadi supervisors, panchayat and others interacting with rural communities, should be notified as **child marriage prohibition officers**.

Decentralized approach: Decentralising birth and marriage registration to gram panchayats will protect women and girls with essential age and marriage documents, thus better enabling them to claim their rights.

85. The pandemic is an opportunity to correct some historical wrongs

Source: This post is based on the article “**The pandemic is an opportunity to correct some historical wrongs**” published in the **PIB** on **24th November 2021**.

Subject: GS 2-health.

Relevance: Understanding the issue of COVID-19 vaccine waiver.

News: In the upcoming 12th ministerial conference of **WTO**, access to vaccine and vaccine viva will be the most contentious issue.

Read more: [Issues Associated with IPR Waiver to Covid Vaccine](#)

What has been India’s contribution towards Vaccine equity?

India gifted two lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccine for UN peacekeepers. India provided critical medicines, diagnostic kits, ventilators to more than 150 countries.

India and South Africa also moved a motion at the WTO. In that motion, they asked the WTO Council on TRIPS to provide a waiver of Intellectual Property Rights for vaccine production. This would enable all the countries to domestically manufacturer vaccines. The proposal now has the backing of more than a hundred countries.

Must Read: [Intellectual Property Rights\(IPR\) and Universal Vaccination – Explained, Pointwise](#)

Due to India’s pressure, global supply lines and raw materials have remained open. India has contributed to the COVAX initiative as well.

India’s vaccine **Maitri programme**, with the premise that no one is safe until everyone is safe, provided vaccines to many developing and least developed countries. India could supply more than 65 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to about a hundred countries.

Further, India is one of the initiators of the “**Political Declaration on Equitable Global Access to Covid 19 vaccines**”. The declaration treats vaccines as a **global public good (GOPG)**. At present, it has the support of more than 180 UN member states.

What should be the way forward?

It is time for the global community to work collectively and urgently to address the COVID-19 crisis. Implementation of TRIPS was in favour of developing and least developed countries can be a good start in this direction.

86. Economic heft and foreign policy posturing

Source: This post is based on the article “**Economic heft and foreign policy posturing**” published in **Business standard** on **26th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Limitation to India’s foreign policy

News: India’s foreign policy options are limited by its relatively inadequate economic size and technological capabilities.

How economic considerations of a nation can influence its foreign policy stance?

This can be easily understood by analyzing the difference in the West’s posture towards China and Russia.

For instance, with respect to Russia, the western journals repeatedly condemn Mr Putin’s violations of human rights within Russia, such as the targeting of Alexei Navalny.

By contrast, they overlook China’s oppression of millions of people living within its own borders, for example the Uighurs and Tibetans.

This contrast is because Western real and financial sector companies continue to profit enormously by having invested in mega-scale production of goods and services in China.

Further, China’s huge investments around the world, and being a huge exporter of a range of engineering products, provides them a significant power to influence international policies.

What is the way forward for India?

China’s economic heft has contributed to its **aggressive external posturing**, including armed intrusions into Indian territory, extravagant claims over all of Arunachal Pradesh.

Changes in the economic size, foreign direct investment-related numbers and military strength of neighboring and major powers, like China, should be **factored by India in its foreign policy framework**.

87. POCSO shocker

Source: This post is based on the article “**POCSO shocker**” published in **The Hindu** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Relevance: Interpretation of provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO Act)

News: Recently, the Allahabad High Court had ruled that a penetrative sexual assault on a 10-year-old boy did not fall under the stringent POCSO Act’s definition of aggravated penetrative sexual assault.

The Allahabad High Court lowered the sentence of a man who was convicted of forcing a 10-year-old boy to perform oral sex.

The ruling has been handed down without due regard to the laws and facts.

What was Allahabad High Court's view?

The Court agreed that it was a “penetrative sexual assault” as defined by the POCSO Act, as the accused had put his member into the victim’s mouth.

However, the court opined that, it did not amount to “aggravated penetrative sexual assault”, a crime punishable with a minimum prison term of 10 years that can go up to life.

Instead, it was punishable under Section 4 of POCSO, which prescribes a minimum 7 years. Accordingly, the court reduced the trial court sentence of 10 years in jail to 7 years.

Must Read: [POCSO Act and associated issues – Explained](#)

Why the High Court's judgement is erroneous?

The High Court failed to note that a sexual offence can take the character of aggravated form of sexual offence in certain circumstances under POCSO.

Following sections of POCSO Act, contain provisions regarding ‘aggravated penetrative sexual assault’,

Section 5

i). When the offender is a police officer, a member of the armed forces, a public servant or someone on the staff of a jail, remand home, hospital, educational or religious institution, or any place of custody or care and protection.

ii). When the crime involves a group of offenders, or is done repeatedly, or when it pertains to the use of deadly weapons or causes grievous harm or injury, or leads to physical or mental incapacitation, pregnancy, or disease.

Section 5(m)

iii). Whoever commits penetrative sexual assault on a child below 12 years.

Further, the court failed to consider the fact that the child was about 10 years old when the offence took place.

What is the way forward?

First, the verdict in **Sonu Kushwaha vs State of U.P.** is a fit case for review, as it seems to be based on an error of law.

Second, quashing Bombay HC’s judgement in [Satish v State of Maharashtra case](#), SC clearly stated that a narrow interpretation of POCSO provisions would defeat the very purpose of the act. This judgement cautioning against diluting the gravity of an offence against a child by ignoring the plain meaning of POCSO’s provisions needs to be adhered.

88. Why Non-Personal, What's Critical ... & Snooping?

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why Non-Personal, What's Critical ... & Snooping?**” published in the **Times of India** on **26th 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 JPC on PDP Bill.

News: Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019 has submitted its report in the Parliament.

What are the key recommendations of JPC?

First, It suggested renaming ‘Data Protection Bill’ by dropping the word ‘personal’.

Second, Committee recommended that the same regulator should govern both personal data (data about an individual) and non-personal data (anonymised data, business data).

Third, It suggested that government should set up certification labs for testing the integrity of all digital and IoT devices.

Fourth, Another suggestion is to store the sensitive and critical personal data in India only, as proposed in the 2019 bill.

Last, The committee suggested to did away with the penalty provision proposed in the 2019 bill.

Read here: [JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill](#)

What is non-personal data? Why is its inclusion worrying?

Non Personal data is not about any particular individual. For eg, data about traffic or congested routes picked up by a ride-share platform. Or data about soil trends or weather patterns that never relate to any person is considered as non-personal data.

The government argues that this data is useful for formulating any future policy, but businessman argues that such data is proprietary.

What are the concerns associated?

Read here: [What are the concerns associated with the draft bill?](#)

How the Data Protection Bill is effective in the current scenario?

– It has the potential to address long-standing concerns around our surveillance regime.

-Having strong checks and balances over government surveillance could also help India seek free flows of data from regions like Europe that restrict transfers to other countries unless they have sufficient protections.

Read here: [How the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 can be more effective than the current regulations in place?](#)

89. Chaos in Parliament a sign of India's strong democracy

Source: This post is based on the article “**Chaos in Parliament a sign of India's strong democracy**” published in **Times of India** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Relevance: Understanding the cause and impact of disruptions occur in the Parliament

News: There is an increase in the cases of disruptions in the house.

About disruptions in Parliament

Disruptions usually occurred when the opposition is against a government policy or a national issue. The amount of time lost due to disruptions in Parliament had steadily risen from 5% of working time in the truncated 11th Lok Sabha (1996-97) to 39% in the 15th LS (2009-14).

In 2010, the entire winter session was lost due to the uproar over the 2G scam. In 2011, 30% of the time was lost due to disruptions. 2016 was the least productive of the 16th Lok Sabha, when the opposition united against the government's decision of demonetization. 73% of the time was lost during that period.

Previous cases of disruptions in the past

Disruptions have a long history in the Indian Parliament. Soon after the first Lok Sabha convened in 1952, an amendment to the contentious **Preventive Detention Bill** was brought about, which led to chaos in the house. In the words of veteran journalist BG Verghese, it was an incident of “an unprecedented hullabaloo.”

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November, 2021

Another incident of disruption is from 3rd Lok Sabha in 1963 when **Official Languages Bill** was introduced, there were strong protests by some Opposition members, which this newspaper described as the first time that such “disorderly scenes” were witnessed in the house.

Many instances of disruptions have occurred after that and a similar trend follows to today date.

How has the trend changed over the years?

From the fourth Lok Sabha, the culture of parliamentary politics changed, and it was politics with the “masks and gloves off”.

The floor of the Lok Sabha was not the only site of protests. Members wanted permission to hold protests and even hunger strikes in the premises of parliament. For eg, The Communist MP AK Gopalan in 1964 held a one-day hunger strike in the lobby of Parliament to protest food shortage in his home state of Kerala. In 1966, Rameshwaranand led a mob protesting cow slaughter towards Parliament in an attempt to storm the complex.

What are the reasons behind the increase of disruption in the Parliament?

- The limited efficacy of the rules and disciplinary powers of speakers.
- More heterogeneous composition of Parliament compared to its first three decades of existence.
- Replacement of a dominant party system with a fragmented one where coalition government was the norm.
- The televising of parliamentary proceedings.
- Acceptance that disruptions were part of parliamentary and India’s political culture.

What should be the way forward?

Frequent disruptions reflect the nature of Indian democracy as being dysfunctional. Thus, there is a need to strengthen the working of the Indian parliament.

90. The case of Prince Jaibir Singh’s admission to IIT Bombay

Source: This post is based on the article ” **The case of Prince Jaibir Singh’s admission to IIT Bombay**” published in the **Indian Express** on **26th November 2021**.

Subject: GS2 – Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Relevance: Understanding affirmative action and substantive equality

News: Recently the Supreme Court, in pursuance of complete justice, directed IIT Bombay to allot a seat in the BTech program to Prince Jaibir Singh, a Dalit student from Ghaziabad.

What was the issue?

He was denied a seat because of late payment. The institution did not provide an alternative mechanism for fees payment like cash or cheque or other measures like allowing late payment without a fine. The supreme court ruled in favour of the student because Dalit students face many obstacles.

What are the obstacles faced by Dalit students?

They struggle in the initial stages to get good coaching. They also face humiliation in hostels, classrooms and playgrounds.

Considering these, more steps should be taken by the government to promote their welfare. One such measure was the recruitment drive for SC/ST/OBC/EWS through **Mission Mode Recruitment (MMR)**. But this also faces many challenges.

What are the challenges faced by MMR?

First, there is resistance by many IITs against this program. The recruitment process is rushed to adjust to the regular recruitment cycle. Due to this due diligence in the process, implementation is not followed.

Second, there is a lack of clear directions from state agencies, which brings discrepancies and variations in the process of recruitment. For example, illegitimate limits are set to the number of faculties to be recruited.

Third, Exceptionally good candidates are not recommended under the general category, which makes competition under the reserved category very difficult.

Fourth, Many candidates with high-quality publications hesitate to apply due to arbitrary numerical criteria like requiring 49 publications. Here, quantity dominates quality.

What should be the way forward?

As argued by Max Webber and Dr. BR Ambedkar substantive rationality and substantive equality should guide public policymaking to ensure the welfare of the marginalized.

91. Why the link between mental health and death penalty deserves greater attention

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why the link between mental health and death penalty deserves greater attention**” published in the **Indian Express** on **26th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding death penalty and mental health.

News: Recently **NLU Delhi’s project 39A** released its report **Deathworthy** in collaboration with NIMHANS. It studied the life and history of prisoners who have been given death punishment.

What were the findings of the report?

The report gave two important findings.

First, The origins of violent behaviour are determined by poor educational attainment and mental health issues of the prisoners. Early nurturing, disturbed childhood, exposure to abuse as children, disturbed family environment contributed to the poor mental and cognitive development of the child. For example, 73 prisoners experienced at least three adverse childhood experiences.

Second, two-third of the prisoners were diagnosed with current episodes of mental illness like depression and had suicidal tendencies. Prisoners also demonstrated evidence of cognitive impairment, head injuries, deficits in mental functioning.

All these factors should ideally be considered as part of the judicial process while awarding the death punishment.

What is the status of death punishment in India?

Since 2014 nine prisoners have been executed. Until the execution of Dhananjay Chatterjee in 2004 for the rape and murder of a minor girl, the country was a de facto abolitionist state. Now, Nearly 500 prisoners have been sentenced to death row.

Laws have provided for more crimes against which death punishment can be given, particularly of the nature of sexual violence.

What should be the way forward?

Evidence has shown that there is no link between death punishment and crime rate. In fact, murder rates have declined in 10 out of 11 countries that abolished capital punishment.

The Mental Health of the convict should be considered before giving capital punishment, as is the norm in international law.

92. On the path of Buddha and his followers

Source: This post is based on the article “**On the path of Buddha and his followers**” published in **Indian Express** on **27th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and neighbourhood relations

Relevance: Buddhism and its significance in international relation, Use of Soft power in foreign diplomacy

News: Recently, the Prime Minister inaugurated the Kushinagar International Airport in eastern Uttar Pradesh to facilitate Buddhist pilgrims to reach the important site of the Mahaparinirvana Temple.

The completion of the Kushinagar airport is a significant milestone in the Indian government’s 2016 plan to develop a “Buddhist Circuit”.

The ambitious tourism circuit, will help India to achieve regional objectives.

How the development of Buddhist circuit will help India to achieve regional objectives?

Facilitation of people-to-people diplomacy between the SCO members: Both India and the seven members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan) share a common Buddhist religious and cultural legacy.

Will counter ongoing Chinese attempts to distrust the Buddhist narrative in the maritime Belt & Road Initiative countries like Sri Lanka, in Himalayan border monasteries in Leh, Arunachal Pradesh, and also in India’s neighbours Nepal and Bhutan.

Neighborhood First policy: Bhutan has about 75 per cent Buddhist Lamaist population, while Nepal has 10 per cent. China had already started to leverage the soft power of Buddhism in these countries to achieve its strategic geopolitical goals. In this context, India’s Buddhist Circuit including Lumbini in Nepal as a pilgrimage site holds great potential in bringing greater ties between India’s neighbours.

Spread of India’s soft power: The spread of Buddhism also coincided with the transmission of secular knowledge from the Indian subcontinent – like traditional Indian medicine (Aayush), manufacturing (sugar) and the astro-sciences into these regions. Most monasteries along the Silk Route during the first millennium were often headed by Indian monks. They hosted merchants, travellers, and tended to the sick using traditional Indian medicine. Even today, amongst the Central Asian Republics (CARs) there is an interest in traditional Indian medicines. Exchanges (research and students) for studying this would be of great interest to these countries.

What steps were taken by India in this regard?

Recently, when India chaired SCO, India hosted the Shared Buddhist Heritage virtual exhibition in New Delhi, where it showcased Buddhist art, tapestry, ritual objects from across this vast Eurasian region.

What is the way forward?

First, Buddhist history, trade and student exchanges, should become truly impactful.

Second, tracing back Buddhism's living legacy and its archaeological remains in the SCO nations to its roots in India is essential for India's soft diplomacy.

93. Obesity is a social problem. Addressing it requires access to healthy food, not restrictions

Source: This post is based on the article "**Obesity is a social problem. Addressing it requires access to healthy food, not restrictions**" published in **Indian Express** on **27th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Health

Relevance: Obesity and health.

News: The council in the most obese area in Lancashire is planning to place restrictions on takeaway food to control the health menace. There is also talk of encouraging exercise and addressing mental health issues

Restricting fast-food isn't a bad idea, particularly for young people, amongst whom research indicates it is both a consequence of and cause for mental issues.

However, obesity control cannot be achieved just by restricting individual choice.

Why the solution to control obesity cannot be achieved just by restricting individual choice?

Obesity, like most public health issues, is a social problem: In the West, it is more expensive and difficult to procure healthy produce. Hence, much of the people belonging to lower-income groups prefer fast foods.

Like most addictive substances, fast food targets the poor and vulnerable, and the solution to it cannot just be restricting individual choice. We must find healthy replacement choices first.

What can be done?

It is important to ensure food habits and economies that do not make eating healthy a function of wealth.

Need to expand choices, especially, the ability to make healthy ones rather than restricting them.

94. It's time we produced champions

Source: This post is based on the article "**It's time we produced champions**" published in **Indian Express** on 27th 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 our suboptimal performance in major sporting events.

News: India won only seven medals in Olympics. Even small nations with fewer people have done better than India.

What are the issues plaguing our sports sector?

Access to infrastructure(like schools and stadiums)- In India, our pool of talent is limited to a few pockets. For example, the badminton team has been picked from an academy; the boxers and wrestlers are all from Haryana or the Northeast; and the shooters are all, with few exceptions, rich kids who don't need any state support.

No country has performed well in sports without taking care of the **basic needs of its people**, especially health and social security. India needs to take care of it.

On the lines of the Soviet Union, the US, South Korea, and China, the rise in the sporting world should be preceded by **widening the sporting pool** from which talented players can be tapped.

We need to **change our attitude** and not accept second-best anymore. Complacency could creep in when we celebrate bronze medals like gold.

Sports should be seen from the right perspective. It should help the community at large in becoming better by serving a social purpose.

We must create leaders in every field who can think and act, not leaders who think they act.

95. Opposition Dissent without Basis or Foundation: About the data protection bill

Source: This post is based on the article "**Opposition Dissent without Basis or Foundation**" published in **Times of India** on **27th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the JCP chairperson's viewpoint on the data protection bill.

News: The Joint Committee of Parliament chairperson PP Chaudhary clarifies the concerns raised by opposition on the data protection bill.

What are the concerns associated with the data protection bill?

Read here: [What are the concerns associated with the draft bill?](#)

What are the reasons provided by the JCP chairperson of the data protection bill?

On exemption of agencies: The claims that the government was given undue powers are without foundation. [Article 19](#) and [Article 21](#) have reasonable safeguards. Moreover, they are subject to judicial review.

The exemption clauses allow the government to intervene in matters of sovereignty or integrity of the country. In such matters, the reasons cannot be disclosed on the floor of the house. Moreover, sections 12, 13, and 14 provide that individual consent may not be required. The state is authorized by law to seek data for the provision of any services or benefits.

Also read: [Draft Personal Data Protection Bill – Explained, pointwise](#)

About inclusion of non-personal data: According to the chairperson, the reason behind including of non-personal data is that so much data is flowing, which makes it hard to differentiate between personal and non-personal data.

Inclusion of bringing hardware manufacturers under the purview of proposed legislation: Because of various news of breaches of data, this has been done. Under the process of Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC), both software and hardware will be examined.

About 72 hours to report a breach of data: According to him, this is the reasonable time for data fiduciaries to report for the breach of data.

On how the bill will impact India's digital economy: Committee is expecting a 22% increase in cloud storage in India due to the boost this law provides. India's digital infrastructure will become stronger and can benefit the economy.

96. What they own: NFHS on women property ownership isn't conclusive

Source: This post is based on the article "What they own: NFHS on women property ownership isn't conclusive" published in **The Times of India** on **27th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand the land ownership of women in India based on the findings of NFHS-5.

News: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) has released the 2019-21 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5).

NFHS-5 Findings of women's ownership of property

In the NFHS-4, 38.4% of women respondents reported owning a house/land alone or jointly, this has risen to 43.3% in NFHS-5. 45.7% of rural women claimed such ownership, against 38.3% in urban areas.

States like UP, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab reported a huge improvement in women ownership between the two surveys. But, Delhi, Odisha, Puducherry and Chandigarh surprisingly declined.

Read more: [NFHS-5 and its findings – Explained, pointwise](#)

Is the NFHS-5 data reliable?

NFHS doesn't reveal women owners as a percentage of total land/house owners. So, the experts warned relying upon NFHS data for land ownership.

A 2020 University of Manchester working paper examined other Indian surveys and found barely 16% of women in rural landowning households own land. Women constitute only 14% of all landowners, owning just 11% of the land.

What are the government steps to improve land ownership among women?

-**Hindu Succession Act:** The 2005 amendment to the Act gave daughters equal coparcenary rights in the undivided joint family property.

-Official schemes for homeless/landless offering property titles predominantly to women.

-Many states are lowering stamp duties for women to reduce gender gaps in property registration.

What needs to be done?

Kerala, which implemented the HSA amendments decades before 2005 reported only 27.3% of women claiming property ownership in NFHS against 55% in Bihar. So, India has to **fix the data gaps** to better reveal gender gaps.

Read more: [India must push for women's rights in land ownership](#)

Terms to Know:

- [Hindu Succession Act](#)

97. Shore in the lifeline – About MGNREGA

Source: This post is based on the article "Shore in the lifeline" published in **The Hindu** on **27th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the impact of delay of funds in MGNREGA.

News: Government has recently announced 10,000 crore additional funds to supplement the needs of the state under MGNREGA. However, 24 states and UT's still show a negative net balance.

Also read: [MGNREGA: Issues and Significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the reasons behind the fund crunch under MGNREGA?

-High demand because of the extended effects of pandemics in rural areas.

-Low budget allocation for the MGNREGA scheme. In the case of 2021-22, the total allocations were ₹73,000 crores, much lower than the ₹1,11,500 crore as revised estimates in expenditure in 2020-21.

Read here: [What are the reasons for the delayed payments of MGNREGA wages?](#)

What is the impact?

According to the activists, delayed payment led to increase in an unmet demand of 20% in Bihar, Telangana and Gujarat.

Also read: [What is the impact of low fund allocation to MGNREGA?](#)

What should be the way forward?

Considering MGNREGA as the lifeline of rural communities, Government should make up the shortfalls quickly.

98. Our constitution, A beacon of freedom

Source: This post is based on the article “**Our constitution, A beacon of freedom**” published in **Indian Express** on **27th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

Relevance: Understanding the importance of constitution day.

News: 26th November 2021, marked as India's 72nd Constitution Day.

Also read: [Constitution Day](#)

What are the challenges involved in drafting the constitution?

Multiple roles: Constituent assembly faced a difficult task. It sat as the parliament in the morning and the constituent assembly in the afternoon. It faced challenges of governing a new nation along with communal tensions, partition and refugees.

Constituency: Constituent body was supposed to have 296 members which were later reduced to 210 as members boycotted. But statesmen like Dr. Ambedkar still believed in creating an environment that would allow those members to come and participate.

Juristic concerns: Some constitutional experts like **Ivor Jennings** questioned why the constitution plays down communalism as the partition of India was the result of communalism.

Given all these challenges, our constitution makers framed the constitution delicately and culminated the constitution in who we would be — “**We the People**” **all citizens, not**

subjects. And what we will become –“a nation that would secure the liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, and ensure equality of status and opportunity”.

Read more: [Analysing the Constituent Assembly debates reveals of a vital process](#)

How India’s constitution is unique in comparison with other constitutions?

Reparation: India’s constitution made compensations for historical discrimination on grounds of caste that defines the present and future of so many Indians. By contrast, America’s Constitution makes no apology nor enables reparations for slavery.

Voice of all communities: India’s constitution is an instrument for silenced minorities to express themselves, to have injustices redressed and in turn owe their allegiance to their Constitution.

These are the main reasons that India’s constitution lives through along.

What should be the responsibility of Indian citizens?

Tom Ginsburg, after studying 935 different constitution systems of 200 nations commented on an average a constitution survives for 17 years. Yet, the Indian constitution is successfully entering in 72nd year. Indians should not take the endurance of the constitution as granted.

The endurance of the Indian constitution is deeply rooted in the commitment to expand each other’s freedom.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. Vote for continuity

Source: This post is based on the article “Vote for continuity” published in **Business Standard** on 1st November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3– Roles and responsibilities of RBI

Relevance: RBI’s response to Pandemic

Synopsis: RBI should focus more on inflation management.

Introduction

The Union government has given a three-year extension to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das. Many steps have been taken by RBI to tackle the effect of the Pandemic, during his tenure.

How was the central bank’s response to the pandemic?

Ensured adequate liquidity in the economy: It reduced interest rates and flooded the system with liquidity to avoid any friction in financial markets. For instance, RBI introduced targeted repo operations.

Ensured the proper functioning of financial markets: unlike several other large central banks, it did well to not directly intervene in the corporate debt market.

Eased regulations for common man: RBI extended forbearance at a critical time.

Accumulation of Forex reserves to strengthen India’s external sector: India’s reserves have gone up by over \$160 billion since April 2020. The RBI’s intervention is necessary to avoid undue appreciation in the rupee, which can not only affect India’s external competitiveness but also create financial stability risks.

What are the problems faced by RBI during the pandemic?

One area where the RBI has faced problems during the pandemic period is **inflation management**. The average inflation rate in the last fiscal year was above the tolerance band and risks continue to persist.

Should RBI follow IMF’s Suggestion?

The latest India report of the International Monetary Fund suggests that a further accumulation of reserves is not advisable and intervention should be limited to addressing crisis conditions.

However, RBI may not change its position on foreign exchange management. Lower than desired intervention in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, for instance, led to a near currency crisis in 2013.

What is the way forward?

RBI should ensure timely and non-disruptive unwinding of excessive policy accommodation along with bringing the inflation rate close to the 4% target on a durable basis.

This will also require coordination between the RBI and the government because of potential fiscal costs.

2. How to decarbonize: On decarbonization

Source: This post is based on the article “How to decarbonize” published in **Business Standard** on 1st November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3– issues related to Energy sector

Relevance: Decarbonization and decentralized planning

Synopsis: Central planning in decarbonization will impose excessive costs upon society.

Introduction

Fossil fuels are so deeply intermixed into the fabric of the modern economy that decarbonization has far-reaching impacts all across society.

In this context, a large-scale change in the mechanisms of production and consumption of energy is required.

This makes Governments an essential entity to the process of decarbonization. State coercion is required in order to reshape the incentives of the polluter.

However, the change will be achieved at the lowest cost to society if it is not centrally planned.

Why the state's role is essential?

Each person that emits CO₂ is imposing a negative externality upon every other person in the world. This is a market failure. If people are left to themselves, there will be excessive CO₂ in the air.

Hence, the state's role is essential in addressing this market failure.

What are the drawbacks of a centrally planned decarbonization process?

India has envisaged many initiatives towards decarbonization such as National Solar Mission, the National Hydrogen Mission, the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan, and others.

All the centrally planned programs are accompanied by physical targets established by the Union government, and then command-and-control systems which try to force implementation of the target. **The central control increases the cost of decarbonization.**

It has to be understood that, owners of energy-intensive factories will put their facilities in locations where energy is cheap. Hence, increasing costs due to centralized planning will **drive companies out of India.**

In addition, the central planners are not maximizing the objectives of the people, and are held back by **low state capacity.**

Why locally suitable mechanisms for decarbonization are best suited for India?

At every location in India, there are different efficient mechanisms for decarbonization. As an example, near Mumbai, the step function into the Western Ghats creates natural opportunities for energy storage by pumping water into natural and artificial reservoirs.

In Rajasthan, there is a lot of sunlight. All along the border with Nepal and Bhutan, there are natural opportunities to buy hydel power.

Hydrogen can be made, using solar electricity in the Middle East, and shipped to locations all along the Indian coast.

Why carbon tax is considered the right mechanism to induce local innovative thinking towards decarbonisation?

Carbon tax would drive up the price of fossil fuels. Once this is done, at every location, self-interested private people would look for the most efficient solutions.

This process of discovery will deliver the required decarbonization at the lowest cost to society.

What are the strengths in achieving decarbonization through the price system, backed by a carbon tax?

Firstly, it induces responses on supply as the economics of renewables producers would improve when compared with users of fossil fuels.

Secondly, it induces responses on demand e.g., data centres would move out of India into countries with a low cost of capital and high renewable energy opportunities.

Thirdly, it is a decentralised process i.e., the thinking and problem-solving at each location of the country would be done reflecting local conditions.

Fourthly, it involves constant adaptation based on technical change since both supply and demand will respond to the changing global technological frontier.

Finally, it avoids the difficulties of the state i.e., most of the work is done by private people, who are self-interested, as opposed to the state which has its own objectives and has low capabilities.

What is the way forward?

First, the job of the state is to establish present and future values of the carbon tax, and should decentralise decarbonisation process.

Second, state should review tax rates every five years, to ensure that the overall CO₂ emissions are on the desired path.

3. Our pandemic failures should inform climate-response talks

Source: This post is based on the article “Our pandemic failures should inform climate-response talks” published in **Livemint** on **1st November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Relevance: Lessons to be learnt from pandemic to combat climate change

Synopsis: The fight against COVID and climate change has suffered from misinformation. Both require strong measures and popular support.

Introduction

COVID-19 has affected the entire planet and many lives, global economies and hit the poorest disproportionately hard. Like the pandemic, limiting climate change will test governments’ ability to adapt and cooperate across borders.

How COVID has been a series of failures?

Failure of the Governments: Govts should have been better prepared to use their resources. The least wealthy 52 countries have 20% of the global population but just 4% of vaccinations. The Covax vaccine initiative has also fallen short of its promises.

Data deficiencies: Poor record-keeping and testing mean that in much of the developing world there is no data about how many people died of COVID.

What do these failures have to do with climate?

Increasing risk of pandemic: factors such as climate change, like deforestation raise the risk of pandemics.

The consequences of global warming: altered weather patterns and habitats, create opportunities for pathogens to find new hosts and for diseases to leap from animals to humans.

What are the lessons leaders and officials meeting in Glasgow should keep in mind?

Underplaying the problem and delaying action: In January 2020, as the first cases of covid were detected in the US, President declared coronavirus “very much under control.” British Prime Minister spoke of business as usual, even as Italy was already in crisis. This should not be repeated.

Multilateralism is the key to success: The limited role of the World Health Organization, and the unwillingness of states to share resources and information cannot be repeated with global warming. When it comes to organizing a global response to the pandemic, WHO should take the lead.

Private enterprise is vital to the solution: Investing in capacity to help countries adapt quickly. Governments need to step up, set climate targets, invest, and enable regulators to get tough on disclosure and green-washing.

What is the way forward?

First, talks in Glasgow must narrow the gap between countries’ commitments and deliver on promises of financial support for developing nations. The already-promised annual \$100 billion should have been reached in 2020.

Second, ensuring the burden of climate responses is spread and also capitalize on signs that frequent extreme weather is moving public opinion from alarm to action.

4. The Court’s order on Pegasus still falls short

Source: This post is based on the article “The Court’s order on Pegasus still falls short” published in The Hindu on 1st Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Cyber Security, challenges to internal security

Relevance: Pegasus spyware case

Synopsis: Instead of constituting a committee to inquire into the allegations made in the Pegasus case, SC could have made use of other prerogative powers available to it.

Introduction

On October 27, the Supreme Court of India appointed an independent committee to inquire into the Pegasus case. But the court’s order still falls short of delivering justice.

Must Read: [SC judgement on Pegasus spyware case – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should have the SC be done instead?

In place of constituting a committee, SC could have taken the following steps:

– **Frame a set of questions:** the **Court** could have framed a set of specific questions demanding answers from the state. These might have included the following: did the Government purchase Pegasus? Did it use the software on the phones of Indian citizens? If so, was such use backed by law? What were the reasons for which the use was authorised?

– **Issuing of the writ:** If answers to these questions were still not forthcoming, the Court could have drawn what is known as an “**adverse inference**”. A party that fails to answer questions put to it will only risk the Court drawing a conclusion of fact against it. The Court then can grant any number of remedies: it can make a declaration that the Government was wrong, and it can issue a writ compelling the Government to disclose all materials relevant to the purchase and use of Pegasus.

What is the way forward?

The cases are next scheduled to be listed in 8 weeks' time. If SC finds that the Government has been delaying or obstructing the committee, it must proceed to issue a mandatory order to the state compelling it to perform its constitutional duties.

Must Read: [Pegasus spyware case – Explained, pointwise](#)

5. COP26, Covid & our species

Source: This post is based on the article “COP26, Covid & our species” published in **Business Standard** on 1st Nov 2021.

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

Relevance: Climate change and increased incidence of zoonotic diseases

Synopsis: With a worsening trajectory of climate change parameters across the world, an increased incidence of zoonotic diseases is also being witnessed.

What are the key drivers of the increased incidence of zoonotic viruses?

Viruses account for almost 50% of new and emerging diseases. Since the mid-20th century, about 75% of all emerging viruses are zoonotic, they spill over into humans from wild animals. The key drivers of this process are **deforestation** and **climate change**.

The 20th century had three pandemics (Influenza 1918, 1957, and 1968) but the 21st century has already experienced two (Swine Flu 2009 and Covid-19) with a few narrow misses like SARS, Ebola, and Zika.

Why zoonotic disease incidence is increasing?

Though humans comprise only 0.01% of the Earth's biomass, we have changed this planet so much that we are in Anthropocene or the Age of Man since the mid-20th century.

Increasing livestock population, with genetic links to wild animals and proximity to humans, acts as a natural intermediary for the spillovers. South and Southeast Asia with high densities of human and livestock populations are particularly at risk.

Deforestation brings wild animals near both livestock and humans, increasing the risk. For example, Malaysia cleared about 5 million hectares of primary forests between 1983 and 2003 for industrial logging, palm oil plantations, etc.

Redistribution of species: Climate change is leading to increased global expansion and redistribution of the Aedes mosquito, which is the vector for several known human diseases such as yellow fever, dengue, chikungunya, rift valley fever, Zika, and lymphatic filariasis.

6. A Climate Power

Source: This post is based on the article “A Climate Power” published in “Times of India” on 31st October 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Relevance: To understand the need for a tech-driven climate solution.

Synopsis: There are multiple challenges in achieving a global consensus on climate goals. What are the solutions for India?

Introduction

Achieving climate goals require clean technology. However, India, a major economy that hopes to grow fast cannot simply just wait for tech transfers from the West.

What are the challenges in achieving climate goals?

World:

Consensus building– Nations don't agree even on the most important baselines like net-zero emissions or the when and how much of green financing is to be done. **For example**, the UK's proposal on phasing out coal in a short time looks to be un-doable for large coal-dependent economies like China and India.

Clean technology– The low-income group countries are unable to invest in clean technology research. This is worsened by the apathy of higher-income groups towards the transfer of technology.

India:

- **Economy vs Ecology**–For example, **India** has a large number of people dependent on the coal economy for jobs and 70% dependence on energy needs.
- **Political economy**– Industries like thermal power, cement, iron, and steel are major economic players in some states. The long transition from a coal economy can witness **stiff regional political pushbacks**.
- **Standard of living**– With higher incomes, people will buy more air-conditioners and cars in India. All this is potentially climate negative.

What steps should be taken by India?

Green hydrogen– A clean fuel that's well within India's technological capacity to produce in very large quantities, must be executed fast.

Separate fund and fiscal incentives– GoI should create a separate fund for incubating clean tech, and incentivise private players further via huge tax breaks.

The fund should be managed by professionals from industry and academia, free of bureaucratic interference.

7. Biden's billionaire levies must not cue bad ideas

Source: This post is based on the article "**Biden's billionaire levies must not cue bad ideas**" published in **Livemint** on **1st November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth

Relevance: To understand wealth inequality in the world and challenges in taxing them.

Synopsis: The US plan to impose a tax on the super-rich, will not work in India.

Introduction

US President Joe Biden has promised to finance the social-spending plan by taxing only the super-rich.

About the wealth inequality

Globally, wealth inequality is getting sharper. Easy-money policies and asset inflation have sharpened the divergence. For example, the number of billionaires in the US has risen from 614 to 745 since the Covid Pandemic. So, many economists like Thomas Piketty called for imposing wealth taxes on the Super rich.

Who are Super rich and How the US plans to tax them?

Super rich include persons having above \$1 billion in wealth or earning \$100 million as income for three years at a trot. The US tries to tax them in 2 ways. 1. Impose a levy on marked-to-market 'capital gains' made by them on their investment portfolios, even if nothing is traded or liquidated. 2. Imposing an inheritance tax.

Must read: [Oxfam Report Findings – Rising inequality in India](#)

Why does taxing the super-rich will not work in India?

1. **Inheritance tax** will tax the future heirs, not the past inheritors. This is against inter-generational equity.
2. Further, wealthy families might emigrate or stash money offshore and decrease tax compliance in the economy.
3. Unlike the US, few of our wealthiest made their fortunes themselves. So, a levy on marked-to-market ‘capital gains’ will lead to a sudden flight of capital to tax heavens.

Must Read: [Pandora Papers and Illegal offshore investments from India – Explained, pointwise](#)

8. Why India needs a Ministry of Energy

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why India needs a Ministry of Energy**” published in **Indian Express** on **1st November 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand the need for a dedicated energy ministry.

Synopsis: The current energy value chain works in silos. What India needs is an integrated point of reference.

Introduction

The recent coal shortage shows flaws in the entire energy production chain. There is no public body at the government level with executive oversight, responsibility, and accountability for the entire energy value chain.

What are the challenges leading to the energy crisis?

Structural issues: The cycle of blame game-

-The problem of the failure of ‘Coal India’ in managing the production process has roots in power generation companies, which in turn is related to the DISCOMs inability to pay back the dues.

-DISCOMs ultimately blame the politics for compelling them to sell electricity to residential and agricultural sector consumers at subsidized tariffs, whereby the cost of energy is not recovered. There is **no energy strategy** with the executive authority. NITI Aayog and planning commissions policies are mere recommendations without executive force.

What is the solution?

The government should pass an Act granting energy the ‘**constitutional sanctity**’ and frame for the formulation and execution of an integrated energy policy.

Laying out measurable metrics for **monitoring the progress** towards the achievement of energy independence, security, efficiency, and “green” energy.

Single ministry -‘Ministry of Energy’ should be created to oversee the currently siloed verticals of the ministries of petroleum, coal, renewables, and power.

– As it could be politically challenging, therefore an executive ‘department’ can be created under PMO. The objective would be to identify and handle all of the issues that currently challenge the value chain.

What are the potential benefits?

This would increase investments in the energy sector if the current fragmented and opaque regulatory, fiscal, and commercial systems and processes were replaced by a transparent and single-point executive decision-making body for energy.

9. Mixed signals on growth-inflation dynamics

Source: This post is based on the article “Mixed signals on growth-inflation dynamics” published in **Indian Express** on **2nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Relevance: To understand India’s growth–inflation dynamics.

Synopsis: The post pandemic trajectory of economy has some trends and facts which are both challenging as well as encouraging.

Introduction

The current economic cycle is a rare one, induced by a major public health shock.

To revive the economy, massive monetary stimulus was provided by various central banks by following loose monetary policy.

We are now at that point in the cycle where major central banks have begun to signal normalisation from the unprecedented loose monetary policy stimulus.

However, globally the data signals that the ‘**recovery momentum**’ in the first half of 2021 is **decelerating** in many countries.

What are the current trends and challenges w.r.t economic recovery?

–**China’s policy** and economy is the most salient risk for a sustained global recovery.

–**Inflation** in almost all major economies continues to remain high. **Crude oil prices** remain the biggest concern besides inflation in natural gas, metals, minerals, ores, and select foods.

–A risk of the global economy going into “**stagflation**(growth stagnation plus inflation)”.

In **India**, RBI notes that “*the external environment, which had been supportive of aggregate demand over the past few months, may lose momentum for a variety of reasons*” including exports, financial markets volatility and imported inflation.

What are some trends indicating continuation of economic recovery of India?

Demand for both consumer non-durables (**FMCG**) and durables is doing well. Owing to festive season demand for consumer loans is strong.

As the economy opens up, with risk of a third wave receding, **demand for “contact” services** in travel, tourism, entertainment, etc, is **evident**.

–**Rural demand** for FMCG has remained robust, post the rabi harvest, which are likely to continue with the largely normal ongoing kharif crop season.

–**Urban demand** is also reviving.

Real estate is reportedly doing well.

–**Residential real estate** is reportedly doing exceptionally well, with low-interest rates on home loans, cuts in stamp duty and registration charges, and behavioural shifts towards own home ownerships.

–**Commercial real estate** sector is reviving, with demand from IT, tech, data centres, and city centre warehousing for e-commerce companies.

Inflation-India's retail price inflation rate eased to 4.35 percent in September of 2021 mostly due to lower food prices.

10. The green issues of tomorrow

Source: This post is based on the article “**The green issues of tomorrow**” published in “**Times Of India**” on **02 November, 2021**. **Syllabus:** GS3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Relevance: To understand some potential environmental issues besides the ongoing ones.

Synopsis: While the world is gathered at Glasgow for COP26 meeting and finalizing the climate action roadmap for the coming years, new threats to environment have already come up. Countries need to start thinking about solutions to these issues right away. Otherwise, a decade down the line, they will find that they are in a worse mess than ever.

Introduction

The COP26 Climate Change Conference would debate over topics such as reducing the use of fossil fuels, cutting down greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing the world's carbon sinks. Even while these efforts are underway, **new threats to the environment are cropping up**. Some of these have not received the attention they should have gotten.

What are the new threats for the environment?

Giant data centres:

As the world gets increasingly digitised, data centres and server farms are proliferating, that consume energy and generate heat.

Millions of litres of water are often required to keep them cool, particularly if the data centres are not set up in extremely cold regions.

Many regions where big data centres are located are already water stressed and their problems could get worse.

The carbon footprint of solar:

The sharp fall in prices of solar panels has played a role in the popularity of solar power.

But, most of the world's cheap solar panels come from China where companies have largely depended on **thermal power for manufacturing solar panels**.

Producing solar panels using cleaner energy sources also increases their costs, thus creating a dilemma for policy makers.

The recycling problem:

The recycling issue of discarded solar panels, wind turbines and an increasing mountain of electronic waste is a major issue.

The average lifespan of a solar panel is 25 years, but their efficiency starts declining much earlier. Quite often they are replaced after a decade and a half. This was not a problem a decade ago when solar panels were not being installed at such a rapid pace. Over the next decade, it will become a major headache for all countries that have installed large solar power farms.

Earlier, rich countries would send their e-wastes to poorer countries but now increasingly the latter are declining to become dump yards for e-waste

11. The crypto conundrum

Source: This post is based on the article “**The crypto conundrum**” published in **The Hindu** on **1st Nov 2021**. **Syllabus:** GS3 – Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

Relevance: Cryptocurrencies and their future

Synopsis: Controlling money supply and issuing money are at the root of the power and influence that the governments of this world command. Leaving the limited use case and exchange value aside, if Cryptocurrencies pose any real challenge to the existing fiat currencies it may result in a stern policy action.

Introduction

Bitcoin and other private cryptocurrencies have been on a bull run recently. Unlike previous rallies, the current rally in bitcoin has witnessed the increasing participation of retail investors in India. Yet, the future of bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies is unlikely to be as bright as many believe it to be.

What attracts retail investors towards Cryptocurrency?

The key feature which has attracted many retail investors is the **limited supply** of Cryptocurrencies. With increased demand, scarcity of anything will push up its price. A similar thing is happening with Cryptocurrencies.

As more and more investors are buying them, their price is going up.

And as their price goes up, more and more investors are lining up to buy them.

Now, consider the case of fiat money whose supply is unlimited and depends upon the central bank of a country. A central bank can create any amount of it as per its will. This increased supply of money in the economy devalues it further. The more money a central bank prints, the lesser its value.

Hence, scarcity of Cryptocurrencies is a key reason behind their popularity.

But, is it enough for large scale adoption?

Why scarcity is not sufficient for large scale adoption of Cryptocurrency?

Scarcity alone is not sufficient to facilitate the adoption of cryptocurrencies as money.

– Any asset must have either **use value** or **exchange value** in order for it to possess any **fundamental value**. This fundamental value, in turn, is reflected in the price of these assets in the long run.

For instance:

– **Stocks and bonds**, for instance, possess exchange value that is based on the expected future cash flow from these assets.

– **Commodities such as oil and steel** possess use value because these assets are used to run vehicles and build real estate.

– **Gold and silver** have traditionally served as hedges against inflation because they possess fundamental value derived from their use as jewellery and money.

Cryptocurrencies may be scarce but its doubtful whether they possess any use value or exchange value. Presently, Bitcoin can buy very few real goods and services.

In short, cryptocurrencies possess no significant fundamental value to sustain their current high prices.

What are the benefits of private alternatives to fiat currencies?

Private alternatives to fiat currencies offer people greater choice in what currencies they choose to use as a medium of exchange. The benefits of free market competition in money were elaborated by *economist Friedrich Hayek* in *The Denationalization of Money*.

Most notably, competition between currencies to cater to the demands of customers would ensure that fiat currencies that are printed indiscriminately simply go out of use.

Why increased acceptance of Cryptocurrencies increases likelihood of a govt crackdown on them?

The monopoly that governments (and central banks) possess over the issuance of money is at the root of their power and influence.

If cryptocurrencies like bitcoin are going to challenge fiat currencies like the U.S. dollar as a medium of exchange, they would essentially be challenging the authority of the government to print and spend. This is not an assault that governments will tolerate for long. They will allow cryptocurrencies to exist only as long as these currencies remain a speculative asset and not a medium of exchange.

Hence, the more cryptocurrencies are accepted in exchange for goods and services, the greater the chances of governments cracking down on them.

12. COP26 | PM's Modi word: Net Zero 2070, clean & green 2030

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

'National Statement by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at COP26 Summit in Glasgow' published in PIB on 1st Nov 2021

'PM's Modi word: Net Zero 2070, clean & green 2030' published in *The Indian Express* on 2nd Nov 2021

'India sets net-zero climate goal by 2070' published in *The Livemint* on 2nd Nov 2021

'CoP26 summit | India will achieve net zero emissions by 2070, says PM Modi' published in *The Hindu* on 1st Nov 2021

'CoP26: Modi offers 'Panchamrita' concoction for climate conundrum at Glasgow' published in *Down to Earth* on 2nd Nov 2021

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

Relevance: The ongoing COP26 meeting at Glasgow

Synopsis: India has made significance announcements at the ongoing COP26 meeting, including a target year for reaching net zero. Now the ball is in the developed world's court wrt climate finance wherein India expects developed countries to provide \$1 trillion at the earliest.

What has been India's track record wrt its efforts on climate change?

Today India is at number four in the world in installed **renewable energy capacity**. India's non-fossil fuel energy has reached 40% of our energy mix.

India's railway system has set itself a target of making itself **'Net Zero' by 2030**. This initiative alone will lead to a reduction of 60 million tonnes of emissions annually.

Similarly, **India's massive LED bulb campaign** is reducing emissions by 40 million tonnes annually.

India has also given institutional solutions to cooperate with the world at the international level. It initiated the **International Solar Alliance**. It also created a **coalition for disaster resilient infrastructure (CDRI)** for climate adaptation.

What are the new announcements made by India at Glasgow?

India made five big-ticket announcements terming them as 'Panchamrit', at the climate change meeting in Glasgow:

First- India will reach its non-fossil energy capacity to 500GW (*India had earlier extended its target to 450GW out of which 100GW is already installed*) by 2030.

Second- India will meet 50% of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030.

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Third– India will reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now onwards till 2030. India’s emissions are rising, at about 4 to 5% every year. So the total emissions between now and 2030 is expected to be in the range of about 40 billion tonne. It is in this amount, that a one billion tonne reduction has been announced.

Fourth– By 2030, India will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by less than 45%.

Fifth– By the year 2070, India will achieve the target of Net Zero.

Note: ‘Panchamrita’ is a traditional method of mixing five natural foods — milk, ghee, curd, honey and jaggery. These are used in Hindu and Jain worship rituals. It is also used as a technique in Ayurveda.

What is LIFE?

India has also given the idea of LIFE at Glasgow.

LIFE is shorthand for **L**ifestyle **F**or **E**nvironment Today which entails the need for all of us to come together, together with collective participation, to take Lifestyle For Environment (LIFE) forward as a campaign.

Comparison of announcements made by India at Paris and Glasgow

Sector	Paris (COP21)	Glasgow (COP26)
Emission intensity of GDP	Reduction by 33%–35% by 2030 below 2005 levels	Reduction by less than 45% by 2030 below 2005 levels
Share of renewable energy in India’s total energy generation	Increasing the share of renewable energy to 40% by 2030.	Increasing the share of renewable energy to 50% by 2030.
Carbon sink	To create an additional (cumulative) carbon sink of 2.5–3 GtCO ₂ e through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.	No new announcement.

Why are the latest announcements by India at Glasgow important?

The latest announcements assume significance since this is the **first time India has taken any climate target in terms of absolute emissions.**

Before this, the closest reference to altering its emissions trajectory used to be in the form of emissions intensity.

This is because under the international climate change architecture, only developed countries are mandated, and expected, to make reductions in their absolute emissions.

13. Decarbonization mustn’t overlook the rich-poor divide

Source: This post is based on the article “**Decarbonization mustn’t overlook the rich-poor divide**” published in **Livemint** on **2nd November 2021.**

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

Relevance: Suggestions to achieve decarbonisation

Synopsis: Unless the world addresses the distributional and inequality-causing impact of highly carbon-intensive economic models, our job towards limiting temperature rise to 1.5°Celsius will remain unfinished

Introduction

With increased carbon emissions the global carbon budget is also decreasing. We need to make suitable changes to our lifestyles to make them less and less carbon intensive. At a global level we need to reduce the fossil-fuel subsidies as they contribute to global warming.

How much subsidies does India spend on fossil fuels?

As per an estimate of the **Council on Energy, Environment and Water**, India's subsidy bill on coal, gas and oil alone was roughly \$11 billion.

Another ₹800 billion annual subsidy goes into the transmission and distribution of electricity, which is mainly coal based, and hence an indirect fossil-fuel subsidy.

By comparison, our subsidies on renewable power and electric vehicles till 2018-19 were barely ₹99 billion, i.e., just about one-seventh of the direct subsidy on fossil fuels. With higher global oil prices, subsidies have also risen.

How much carbon space is available as of now?

The planet has a finite "carbon budget"; i.e., how much cumulative carbon dioxide concentration the atmosphere can tolerate and still keep the planet below 2° C of warming.

Already, our atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentration is 420 parts per million, which is 50% above pre-industrialization levels.

The world is fast running down its carbon budget at its current rate of CO₂ emission. Unless drastically cut, we will exhaust the budget in just seven or eight years.

Beyond 2° C, the world will suffer irreversible change, causing havoc with weather cycles, a rise in ocean levels, the submergence of island nations, as well as droughts, floods and food shortages. No amount of greening the economy or net-zero targets will help thereafter.

What is the way forward?

First, focus on solar energy, steep carbon taxes, and cut in carbon subsidies, will help to some extent.

Second, more than the poor, the rich, with their resource-intensive lifestyles, need to bear the burden of carbon taxes.

The rich world, including the small segment of high and middle-income earners in developing countries like India, needed to significantly alter their lifestyles. A reduction in consumption is imperative.

14. A good synthesis of climate and transport economics would help

Source: This post is based on the article "A good synthesis of climate and transport economics would help" published in **Livemint** on **2nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Relevance: Significance of Public transport, Transit cities

Synopsis: An analysis of urban India's need for sustainable mobility suggests that we must rely heavily on clean public transit systems.

Introduction

Road transport contributes about 10% of global emissions and is rising faster than any other sectors. Hence the emphasis of developed countries is towards shifting away from car possession.

Why slow transition towards zero-emission vehicles looks difficult for India?

Road-infrastructure: It majorly focuses on satisfying pressing traffic needs and creation of new transport infrastructure may result in decongestion for a temporary period.

Lack of motivation to use public transport: Transport policies and investment patterns in India's fast-evolving cities influence the country's mobility pattern. Almost all metropolitan cities are presently saturated with traffic. The development of new expressways in these cities favours automobiles as a dominant mode of urban mobility, with increased car ownership taken as a given.

Unauthorized street parking: it is another major cause of traffic congestion.

What are 'transit cities' & How India can develop transit cities?

Transit cities are characterized by a package of services so comprehensive, convenient and integrated that it acts as an alternative to car ownership.

Transit cities are developed in response to traffic-saturation crises, where cars are considered a luxury instead of necessity.

The need is to focus on public-transport investments which is oriented towards mass-transit planning. It needs greater emphasis on improving 'mobility' and 'accessibility'.

If road space for cars is reallocated, it may reduce congestion delays, increase traffic speed and reduce overall traffic levels by significant amounts.

What are the challenges in designing a transport system?

Dilemma: The conventional theory of roadway design argues that wider, straighter, flatter and more open streets ensure traffic safety.

However, climate-change economics argues for measures to improve the 'accessibility' and 'place' functions of any street to restrict private cars and improve public transport.

Trade-offs between development and values: the most prominent issue being displacement. As the stakeholders in development projects are varied, some sections may be more comfortable than others with private-vehicle usage.

What is the way forward?

First, Indian policy needs redesigning of street parking so that the most crowded places charge the highest parking fees. A rising trend in cities is for new shopping areas, buildings, etc, to have 'minimum parking requirements.

Second, we need street parking management with more effective and up-to-date enforcement and pricing practices

Third, public transport must combine accessibility to stops/stations, connectivity, frequency, span of coverage, speed, civility, fairness, simplicity, reliability and presentation.

Fourth, the integration of cycling pathways with public transit systems. It requires gentle track- bends and cyclist-friendly junctions, could attract car owners to use bicycles instead.

Fifth, there is need to redesign the timing, frequency and connectivity of bus and train services, etc, so as to synchronize the same with various other services such as Metro and monorail networks that are run by metropolitan and state governments.

Sixth, Implement transport-sector investments that favor environmental sustainability: for example, Delhi Metro, earned carbon credits from the United Nations under its Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

Expanded Metro networks by 2030 can go some distance towards attaining the sustainable development of safe, affordable and accessible transport systems for all, with improved road safety as an additional benefit.

15. Improved finances gives Centre leeway to slash fuel excise duties, but a renewed spending spree is avoidable

Source: This post is based on the article “**Improved finances gives Centre leeway to slash fuel excise duties, but a renewed spending spree is avoidable**” published in **Indian Express** on **2nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 –issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development.

Relevance: Resource mobilisation and Fiscal policy of centre

Synopsis: Reasons for the increase in Centre’s gross tax revenues during April-September 2021.

Introduction

The Centre’s gross tax revenues have grown 64.2% year-on-year during April-September. This has resulted in a reduced fiscal deficit for the first half of 2021-22 that is, just 35% of the budget estimate for the whole year.

According to the Swiss investment bank Credit Suisse, this is the lowest since 2007-08 and way below the 10-year-average of 74%.

What are the reasons?

There are two probable reasons for the above,

One, due to the increasing formalisation of the economy. Demonetisation, GST (goods and services tax) and the lockdown have led to organised sector firms gaining market share from informal enterprises.

Two, improved tax compliance. For instance, e-way bills and other systems now for tracking transactions and plugging leakages, has translated into overall improved tax compliance.

Three, increased corporation and income tax collections. For example, corporation and income tax collections during April-September 2021 was higher than their corresponding respective levels for April-September 2019.

Four, increased fiscal resource through petrol and diesel taxes. The Centre’s revenues from excise duties (mainly on fuels), have grown 79% over the same period two years ago.

What should be the way forward?

First, the Centre should start consolidating its fiscal gains. That is important in the current scenario where yields on its 10-year bonds have been increasing. With most central banks signalling their intent to suck out excess liquidity in response to inflation concerns, the pressure on yields may only go up.

Second, Improved finances gives the Centre enough space to slash fuel excise duties necessary to curb inflation expectations.

16. Small, medium issue: Economic recovery gaining steam. But low-income groups’ demand & MSMEs are concerns

Source: This post is based on the article “**Small, medium issue: Economic recovery gaining steam. But low-income groups’ demand & MSMEs are concerns**” published in **The Times of India** on **1st November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the recovery of the Indian economy post-Covid times.

Synopsis: Targeted support should be ensured to ensure desired growth of the sectors.

Introduction

Recent economic data shows that the Indian economy is bouncing back and is likely to exceed the pre-pandemic levels. RBI's October Bulletin also indicated a GDP growth of 9.6% in the July-September quarter. But still, there are some sectors that are lacking in growth.

What are the improvements recorded?

Employment: The total employment estimate was at 406.2 million in September, almost at the level of the pre-Covid estimate of 408.9 million in 2019-20.

Salaried jobs rose sharply in September to touch 84.1 million, once again almost at the pre-Covid level of 86.7 million.

Advance tax collection in April-September 2021 was 14.6% higher than the pre-Covid collection in 2019-20.

What are the matters of concern?

Poor availability of Informal Jobs: MGNREGA Demand in the April-September 2021 period was higher than the pre-Covid 2019. This reflects the poor availability of informal jobs in the market. This may translate to poor purchasing power in rural India and might impact the economic recovery.

Increase in Personal Loans: During the second quarter of the current financial year, outstanding personal loans overtook industrial credit for the first time. Personal loans now makeup about 27% of the total credit, propelled mainly by home loans.

Fund crunch for MSMEs: MSMEs contribute about 45% of manufacturing output. The decrease in industrial credit shows the inability of MSMEs to get institutional credit.

Thus, there is a need for targeted support to ensure that the current growth momentum is maintained.

17. Digitization could ease MSMEs' access to supply-chain finance

Source: This post is based on the article "Digitization could ease MSMEs' access to supply-chain finance" published in **Livemint** on **2nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources.**Relevance:** To understand the need to link the GST system and TReDS Platform.

Synopsis: Access to formal credit to MSMEs can be provided by linking the GST system and TReDS platform.

Introduction

Access to formal credit continues to be a challenge for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Lack of reliable financial information is one of the main reasons. This can be solved by linking India's **GST system** with the **TReDS (Trade Receivables Discounting System)** platform.

Why India should link the GST system and TReDS platform?

The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance**, while reviewing **The Factoring Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020**, recommended that the GST e-invoices above a certain threshold should flow directly to the TReDS platform.

How to link GST System and TReDS platform?

The creditworthiness of MSMEs can be judged from three data points on the GST system: 1) [Input tax credit \(ITC\)](#) being claimed by the MSME; 2) Trade volume as per the [e-way bills \(EWBs\)](#) created by it, and 3) Trade volume as per the electronic invoices raised by MSMEs.

But the ITC and EWBs may not be useful to link with the TReDS platform due to shortcomings like

-ITC does not provide the break-up of ITC seller-wise or invoice-wise.

-EWBs only applies to manufacturers/traders that supply physical goods and one EWB may correspond to multiple buyers.

In the e-invoicing system, a supplier generates a unique 64-character alphanumeric code called the IRN (invoice reference number) with details of its GSTIN, invoice date, internal invoice number. These invoices can be identified with their IRN and can be sent to the TReDS platform to be made available for factoring.

But, to link GST data with the TReDS **requires GST Council approval.**

Must Read: [Analysis of GST regime in India – Explained, Pointwise](#)

What are the benefits of linking the GST system and TReDS Platform?

An EWBs that is coupled with an e-invoice can act as a supporting document for a factoring unit, enhancing MSMEs authenticity.

Help digitize the supply chain of MSMEs, making their access to finance much easier.

Can provide for buyers' acceptance, which would serve as valid proof, like a goods receipt note.

The GST system can develop a rating system for all taxpayers based on their tax compliance.

This may prove valuable for factoring agencies on the TReDS.

18. Finding a way out of India's deepening water stress

Source: This post is based on the article "[Finding a way out of India's deepening water stress](#)" published in **The Hindu** on **2nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Relevance: To understand India's water crisis.

Synopsis: India's water crisis will increase in future, so the government, people, and all should come together to solve the issue.

Introduction

Recently, the [draft National Water Policy](#) has been submitted by the [Mihir Shah committee](#).

What are the reasons behind the water crisis in India?

Lack of sustainable urban planning: Many cities in India are developing by encroaching flood plains and reducing green cover. This will reduce the water retention capacity of the city. This is reflected exactly in Chennai. The city face floods during rainfall and droughts during the shortage of rainfall.

Continuous extraction of groundwater: In the rural areas, 80%-90% of the drinking water and 75% of the water used for agriculture is drawn from groundwater sources. In urban areas, 50%-60% of the water supply is drawn from groundwater sources.

A case of Punjab: The success of the green revolution and continuous cultivation of water-intensive crops in Punjab has turned the water into saline. The draft report of the Central Ground Water Board concluded that Punjab would be reduced to a desert in 25 years if the extraction of its groundwater resources continues unabated

Ever-increasing demand: The [composite water management index](#) of NITI Aayog, points out that by 2030, the demand for water is projected to be twice the available supply. The introduction of [Jal Jeevan Mission](#) will play a significant role in this.

What can be done to address water crisis?

Integrate the ongoing work of different Ministries and Departments: This will enhance coordination and protect water bodies, groundwater sources, wetlands and green cover. It will also enhance wastewater recycling and water recharge activities.

Note: In 2019, Ministries of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation were merged as the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Replenish groundwater: The government has to create a participatory groundwater management approach with a combination of water budgeting, aquifer recharging and community involvement.

Water governance and management plans with expert opinions: Increase interactions from the expertise of fields such as hydrology (watershed sustainability), hydrogeology (aquifer mapping and recharge) and agriculture sciences (water-sensitive crop choices and soil health). In conclusion, India needs to encourage conserving water resources and efficient usage of water.

Terms to know:

- [National Water Policy](#)

19. Leaders vow to protect forests, plug methane leaks at COP26

Source: This post is based on the article “**Leaders vow to protect forests, plug methane leaks at COP26**” & “**CoP26 summit | Leaders pledge to cut methane and save forests**” published in **ToI** and **The Hindu** on **3rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Relevance: CoP26 (Glasgow) , Paris agreement goals, Climate change

News: World leaders promised to protect Earth’s forests, cut methane emissions and help South Africa halt itself off coal at the U.N. climate summit.

What is Global methane Pledge?

The Global Methane Pledge, first announced in September, now covers emissions from two-thirds of the global economy

Nearly 90 countries have joined a U.S.-and EU-led effort to slash emissions of methane by 30% by 2030 from 2020 levels,

China, Russia, and India have not signed up, while Australia has said it will not back the pledge.

Why it is needed?

Methane is more short-lived in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide but 80 times more potent in warming the earth.

Methane is generated in cows’ digestive systems, in landfill waste, and in oil and gas production. It is estimated that Methane has accounted for 30% of global warming since pre-industrial times.

What commitments were made to reverse deforestation and land degradation?

More than 100 national leaders pledged to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by the end of the decade.

They also established \$19 billion in public and private funds to invest in protecting and restoring forests.

The private sector has also pledged to stop investing in activities linked to deforestation such as cattle, palm oil, and soybean farming and pulp production.

Effective role Indigenous communities in preventing deforestation have been acknowledged.

The agreement vastly expands a commitment made by 40 countries as part of the 2014 New York Declaration of Forests, and promises more resources.

What commitments were made to support South Africa towards renewable energy transition?

United States, Britain, France and Germany announce a plan to provide funds and expertise to help South Africa phase out coal, a major source of greenhouse gas emissions.

South Africa, which gets about 90% of its electricity from coal-fired plants, will receive about \$8.5 billion in loans and grants over five years to roll out more renewable energy.

20. Explained: When can PSU bank staff be probed for NPAs?

Source: This post is based on the following articles

- **“Banking accountability”** published in **Business Standard** on **3rd November 2021**.
- **“Explained: When can PSU bank staff be probed for NPAs?”** published in **Indian Express** on **3rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources.

Relevance: To understand new staff accountability guidelines.

News

Recently the Finance Ministry has issued a fresh set of norms to guide state-owned banks in adopting a uniform staff accountability framework for non-performing assets (NPAs) up to Rs 50 crore.

Must read: [PSBs to introduce common staff accountability guidelines for NPAs](#)

What are the reasons for the introduction of accountability guidelines for PSBs?

The extremely cautious and risk-averse approach of PSBs: The Punjab National Bank fraud in 2018 and a series of other unrelated frauds and tough action against bank officials led to a situation where PSBs stalling credit deployment and impacting **economic growth**.

Fear of 3Cs: In 2019, the Finance Minister mentions that Officials of the bank fear the scrutiny of “3Cs – CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation), CVC (Central Vigilance Commission) and CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General)” and holding banking decisions.

What can be done to improve PSBs performance further?

Solving the accountability issue of PSBs is a good step, but the government needs wider reforms to address the core issues,

1. Strengthen their credit-appraisal system: To sharpen PSBs credit-pricing skills and reduce loan write-offs, 2. Providing regulatory powers to RBI to regulate PSBs like they regulate private banks, 3. Guaranteed functional autonomy for PSBs and adequate opportunities to defend in case of investigations, 4. Alignment of job incentives with commercial outcomes.

All these will increase 1. The lending confidence of PSBs, 2. Instil discipline among PSBs, 3. Reduce NPAs and Frauds, 4. Improve the operational efficiency of PSBs and 5. Raise the valuations of banks put up for privatization.

Note: PSBs have written off loans worth more than Rs 8 trillion over the past seven years, which is more than twice the capital infused by the government during the same period. This is not a viable way to banking.

21. Ensuring that policy outcome matches the intent

Source: This post is based on the article “**Ensuring that policy outcome matches the intent**” published in **Indian Express** on **3rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Budget and resources.

Relevance: Understanding budgeting and state financing.

News

Structural limitations of the polity in India has led to a phrase that the government is spending a rupee to provide 50 paise of benefits.

States need to invent their own development models to escape the Financial mismanagement and the structural issues in budgeting and resource allocations.

What are the issues associated with State Funding?

The government in India provides public services at subsidized prices and at times is even willing to take losses. But Financial mismanagement in public services rise due to, 1) Policy differences between the centre and the states. 2) Differences between parties and coalitions. 3) Structural issues in the budget.

What are the structural issues in the Budget?

Accounts preparation: The Financial Accounts (FA) are presented to the legislature after 18 to 24 months of budget approval along with the Revised Estimates (RE) for the current year. This means that less attention is paid to the outcomes of the previous budget as the focus is more on the current budget.

Cash accounting: Governments sticks to outdated cash accounting as opposed to accrual(Accumulation) accounting. This leads to 1. A spending rush at the end of the year, 2. Funds marked as spent might be held in some off-balance account and hidden from the government’s finance department.

How did the Tamil Nadu government addressed the structural issues?

TN government adopted a set of 5 reforms, these include – (1) Collect and analysing data to develop a deeper understanding, (2) Data-centric governance, (3) public asset and risk management, (4) disseminating results into the public domain and generate a public debate, and (5) strengthening the role of the legislature and course correct with public feedback.

What is the outcome of TN government initiatives?

First, Approx Rs 2,000 crore of funds have been verified as “lapsed” and will be returned to the state treasury.

Second, procedures are being established to ensure that moving/parking of funds cannot happen outside the finance department’s oversight.

Third, Many discrepancies like ghost pension etc. have been identified which will translate to savings for the government.

All these steps, if executed diligently by the Centre and State governments, can overcome the issues of financial mismanagement and provide enough fiscal space to the government to meet its desired outcomes.

22. Charting a trade route after the MC12

Source: This post is based on the article “Charting a trade route after the MC12” published in **The Hindu** on **6th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3- Effects of Liberalization on the Economy

Relevance: Issues with WTO

News: An improvement in global trade scenario provides an ideal setting for Trade Ministers to revisit trade rules which can help maintain the momentum in trade growth.

The World Trade Organization (WTO)’s 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) is being convened in Geneva, Switzerland at the end of this month. The MC12 is being held at an important juncture when the global trade scenario is quite upbeat.

What is the current outlook on global trade?

Expansion: Recent WTO estimates show that global trade volumes could expand by almost 11% in 2021, and by nearly 5% in 2022, and could stabilise at a level higher than the pre-COVID-19 trend.

Buoyancy: It has played an important role in supporting growth in economies such as India where domestic demand has not yet picked up sufficiently.

What are the key points which MC12 should consider?

Securing a share in the growth for economically weaker countries is mandated by the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization. There is also need to discuss adoption of WTO rules on electronic commerce, investment facilitation, and fisheries subsidies.

Issue of IPRs: there is demand that technologies necessary for producing vaccines, medicines, and other medical products for COVID-19 treatment should be available without the restrictions imposed by intellectual property rights (IPRs).

Equitable access to vaccines: Pharmaceutical companies controlling the global markets have used their IPRs to deny developing countries access to technologies and know-how, thus undermining the possibility of production of vaccines in these countries.

Proposal of India and South Africa: both countries had tabled a proposal in the WTO in October 2020, for waiving enforcement of several forms of IPRs. This proposal, supported by nearly two-thirds of the organisation’s membership but it was opposed by the developed countries batting for their corporates.

Fisheries, e-commerce: the current drafts on this issue are completely unbalanced as they do not provide the funds to rein in large-scale commercial fishing that are depleting fish stocks the world over, and at the same time, are threatening the livelihoods of small fishermen in countries such as India.

Discussion on e-commerce firms: the proposal by the members of the OECD and the G-20 members to introduce global minimum taxes on digital companies has made headlines. But in the WTO, discussions on e-commerce are being held in the WTO since 1998.

The more substantive outcome was the decision to “establish a comprehensive work programme” taking into “account the economic, financial, and development needs of developing countries”.

Objective of the negotiations on e-commerce is to facilitate expansion of e-commerce firms: In 2021, the issues on negotiating table are relating to the liberalisation of the goods and services trade and guarantee for free flow of data across international boundaries, all aimed at facilitating expansion of businesses of e-commerce firms.

Divisions over investment: the current focus of the WTO is to promote the global interests of oligopolies. For example, investment facilitation agreement.

In 2001, the Doha Ministerial Declaration had included a work programme on investment, but it was soon taken off the table as developing countries were opposed to its continuation. The opposition was due to the fact that the discussions were geared to expanding the rights of foreign investors through a multilateral agreement on investment.

One-sided negotiations: The negotiations on e-commerce and investment facilitation owe their origins to the so-called “Joint Statement Initiatives” (JSI) in which a section of the membership has developed the agenda with a view to producing agreements in the WTO. This will then be offered to the rest of the membership on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis. India and South Africa have forcefully argued in a submission against the JSIs early this year.

23. How to define a farmer

Source: This post is based on the article “How to define a farmer” published in **Indian Express** on **6th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Agriculture

Relevance: Problems of small and marginalised farmers.

News: Categorising farmers based on dependence on farm income, land ownership is inappropriate.

Harish Damodaran and Samridhi Agarwal argue that India’s farming population is much smaller than is usually estimated. They used the 2019 **Situation Assessment of Agricultural Households** (SAAH) survey to establish their argument.

They claim that while the official estimate of the number of agricultural households in India was 93.09 million in 2019, the number of “serious”, “full-time” or “regular” agricultural households was only 36 million.

They categorise only farmers that earn at least half of their total household income from crop cultivation as serious/regular.

The authors go on to suggest that the agricultural policy should target only serious/regular farming households as they “genuinely depend on farming”.

However, their argument is flawed on several counts. Some of the key problems with the Damodaran-Agarwal argument is highlighted in this article.

What are the key problems with the Damodaran-Agarwal argument?

Firstly, the categorisation of farmers as serious/regular based on a single ratio of farm income dependence and an arbitrary threshold of 50% is a non-serious exercise. Such identification completely ignores the varied historical trajectory of development and livelihood diversification in diverse regions of India.

For example, in a poor yet mineral-rich state like Jharkhand, livelihood diversification may have been driven by poverty and local conditions of both farm and non-farm work, which may have intensified such coping mechanisms over time. Such a situation does not make the poor farmers who use their land for subsistence, and pursue other occupations in the lean season, any less dependent on farming.

Secondly, Using the term “Kisan” to identify farmers complicates the social and economic relations, including exploitative ones, that exists within agriculture. Farmers are not a homogenous category. They are differentiated into classes and castes. More realistic and useful categories of rich/middle/poor farmers or capitalist/petty-producer/agricultural labour is needed to identify those engaged in agriculture.

Thirdly, it does not take in to account the contribution made by the remaining 70%, that is, marginal farmers possessing less than 1 hectare of land. According to Damodaran-Agarwal, their 50% “serious farmer” threshold is crossed at the all-India level by farmers with more than 1 hectare of land. This is possessed by only 30% of agricultural households.

Fourthly, the recommendations by Damodaran and Agarwal also have serious ramifications for socially disadvantaged communities. The historical and contemporary practices of caste-based exclusion and the failure of the state to undertake meaningful redistributive land reforms means that a large majority of the Dalit community remains landless.

Withdrawing state support to smallholders will have a disproportionate impact on the socially marginalised groups and would further push them into **asset poverty**.

Fifthly, the land and natural resource question was not addressed. If 70% of agricultural households are identified as non-serious farmers who should be moved out of agriculture, what happens to their land resources!

Moving non-serious farmers out of agriculture will lay the foundation for agri-business monopolies. Also, it is unlikely that agro-based industries will be able to create enough jobs to absorb the millions displaced from their lands.

Finally, the authors seem to be unaware of the function of agriculture as a social safety net in providing a source of sustenance to millions.

Damodaran and Agarwal do not discuss that the SAAH data also shows a fall in real average crop incomes between 2013 and 2019. The fall in returns from cultivation is driven by rising input prices and dwindling output prices.

Marginal and small farmers face disproportionate hardships in acquiring subsidised inputs or getting remunerative prices from public procurement. Smallholders also rely more on informal sources of moneylending, which adds to indebtedness.

What is the way forward?

For several decades now, successive governments have pursued policies that have led to worsening agrarian distress.

This has pushed millions into low-paying petty jobs and continues to plague those who are compelled to depend (even partially) on agriculture for survival.

The solution to the problem of Indian farmers needs a serious rethink of the economic policies and surely cannot lie in simply excluding them by redefinition.

24. How inflation could rescue the govt’s fiscal deficit act in FY22

Source: This post is based on the article “How inflation could rescue the govt’s fiscal deficit act” published on 6th November 2021 in Indian express

Syllabus: GS Paper 3, Indian Economy – Inflation and fiscal consolidation

News: Inflation is increasing, which is going to be helpful for the government in achieving the fiscal deficit target for FY22.

According to the finance ministry data, government is likely to achieve 6.8 per cent fiscal deficit target for FY22. It is due to following factors:

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November, 2021

1. The aggregate borrowing of the states is 10 per cent less than their projections.
2. The average cost of borrowing of the center is within the acceptable limit.
3. Sale of BPCL and the listing of LIC may bring in the projected Rs 1.75 trillion to the government receipts.
4. A higher inflation (consumer price index or wholesale price index).
5. A higher-than-expected tax revenue.

How a higher inflation affects fiscal deficit?

A fiscal deficit is a difference between total expenditure and total receipts of the government. It is calculated as a percentage of the nominal GDP. The Nominal GDP is calculated on the current prices, which includes the inflation component. Higher inflation thus shrinks the fiscal deficit.

However, in the long run, high inflation will have a negative impact on the fiscal deficit, due to the consequent rise in the interest rates.

What are the challenges in the way of fiscal consolidation?

Fiscal consolidation, which includes rationalizing the government expenditure, attracts foreign borrowers. However, it will not be an easy task due to following factors. 1) Increasing food and fertilizer subsidies on social sector schemes like PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. 2) The bar on Government's expenditures on salary and office expenses has been lifted. 3) States and centers will have to cut their capital expenditures, which may halt the boost to the economy.

25. The right time for India to have its own climate law

Source: This article is based on “**The right time for India to have its own climate law**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3- Environment – Climate Change

News: India has announced its environmental targets at Glasgow. To achieve those targets efficiently, India needs a climate law.

Our Prime Minister has recently a '**Panchamrit solution**' which aims at reducing fossil fuel dependence and carbon intensity (reduce one billion tonnes of total projected carbon emissions by 2030). But before adopting new energy pathways, we must also consider the question of climate hazard, nature-based solutions, and national accountability.

Thus, India should frame a climate law to achieve its goals of climate justice, carbon space, and environmental protection.

Why do we need a climate law?

Inadequacy in present laws: Our existing laws like Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), are not adequate to deal with climate change. For example, Clause 24 of EPA says that if an offence is committed under the EPA or any other law, the person will be punished under the other law (for example, Code of Criminal Procedure). It means the EPA is subordinate to every other law.

To ensure comprehensive climate action: There is a need to integrate climate action — adaptation and mitigation — and monitor progress. Comprehensive climate action is not just technological i.e. changing energy sources or carbon intensity, but also nature-based i.e. restoration of ecosystems, reducing natural hazards, and increasing carbon sinks.

To avoid inequality: Climate actions need to ensure that our stated renewable energy goals like 500 Gigawatts by 2030 goal do not increase inequality or poverty.

Ensuring compliance: environmental interventions are not followed properly at present. For example, NGT order to NTPC to cover coal wagons with tarpaulin on railways is not followed. It not only increases emission from coal, but also results in presence of respirable coal dust in the air.

What steps can be taken?

Setting up a 'Commission on Climate Change' that monitors action plans for climate change with the power and the authority to issue directions. The Commission could have quasi-judicial powers with powers of a civil court to ensure that its directions are followed in letter and spirit. It will ensure compliance with the environmental guidelines.

A legally enforceable National Climate Change Plan to ensure liability and accountability at short-, medium- and long-term levels.

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. 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.

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.

29. 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)

30. 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

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.

31. 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.

32. 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.

33. [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.

34. 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.

35. 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.

36. 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 **specialised 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.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. 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.

40. 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.

41. 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.

42. 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.

43. 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.

44. 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.

45. 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.

46. 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.

47. 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.

48. 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](#)

49. Creating safe digital spaces

Source: This post is based on the article “Creating safe digital spaces” published in [The Hindu](#) on 15th Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – issues related to the safety and protection of the child.

Relevance: Impact of online violence and cyberbullying on the children.

News: It is imperative that digital and social media platforms are free of cyberbullying. Govt must step up its efforts to counter this menace.

Recently, UNESCO Member States declared the first Thursday of November as the **International Day against Violence and Bullying at School**, including cyberbullying.

It has recognized that school-related violence is an infringement of children’s right to education and to health and well-being.

The aim is to raise awareness among students, parents, members of the school community, education authorities, and others about the problem of online violence and cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is defined as intentionally harassing someone with rude, mean and hurtful messages.

Why we must ensure safe digital spaces for children in India?

An increasing number of Child internet users: India’s active Internet user base is over 500 million. Out of this, an estimated 14% are children aged 5-11 years who access the internet on the devices of their family members.

Increased incidence of cyberbullying and online child sexual exploitation by adults: School closures as a response to the COVID-19 lockdowns led to an unprecedented rise in unsupervised screen time for children and young people. This in turn exposed them to a greater risk of online violence.

Published in 2019 and drawing on data from 144 countries, UNESCO’s report ‘Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying’ highlighted the extent of the problem, with almost one in three students worldwide reporting being bullied at least once in the preceding month.

Negative consequences of Cyberbullying: There is growing scientific evidence that suggests that cyberbullying has negative consequences on the education, health, and well-being of children and young people. For instance, children who are frequently bullied are more likely to miss out on school. They have a higher tendency to leave formal education after finishing secondary school.

How can we ensure safe digital space for children?

Effective interventions: This requires gender-sensitive and targeted approaches that respond to the needs of learners who are most likely to be the victims of online violence.

Role of the education system: Concerted efforts must be made to provide children and young people with the knowledge and skills to identify online violence. This will allow them to protect themselves from its different forms.

Role of teachers: Teachers play a critical role by teaching students about online safety, and thus supporting parental involvement.

Grievance redressal: Confidential reporting and redress services must be established.

What steps have been taken so far?

UNESCO in partnership with NCERT has brought out an information booklet on Safe Online Learning in Times of COVID-19.

The Department of School Education and Literacy has circulated exhaustive guidelines to raise children and parental awareness to prevent the adverse effect of online gaming and the psycho-emotional stress that children could be undergoing.

50. Nuclear fusion could be close enough to start blue-sky gazing

Source: This post is based on the article “**Nuclear fusion could be close enough to start blue-sky gazing**” published in **Livemint** on **15th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to the energy sector

Relevance: Clean energy and its benefits to the global economy

News: The nuclear-fusion startup, Helion, recently announced that it has developed new technologies that may make nuclear fusion viable.

Nuclear fusion could be used to produce relatively clean energy (hydrogen fuel), which could then be deployed in a number of ways, unleashing a chain reaction across the global economy.

How cheap and clean energy could benefit the global economy?

Development of remote places: It would facilitate faster transportation and a consequent faster transformation of remote places.

Greening of Deserts: Desalinating water would become cheap and easy and irrigation would become less expensive, enabling the transformation of many landscapes. For instance, the Middle East would become much greener.

Facilitate more control over the Environment: It might be possible to manipulate temperatures outdoors, so Denmark in January and Dubai in August would no longer be so unbearable.

Rise in wages: Increased tourism will increase the demand for labor, thereby resulting in higher wages.

Technological developments: Cheap energy would also make supercomputing more available, crypto more convenient, and nanotechnology more likely.

Social change: People might invest more resources in status-seeking due to the increased availability of material goods.

Impact on climate change: nuclear fusion could replace coal plants around the world. Further, protective technologies to remove methane and carbon from the air, are also likely to be more feasible and affordable.

What are some potential negative consequences?

Though clean energy will mostly be beneficial, but it can have some negative consequences too. Like,

In the short run, **fossil-fuel-rich nations** such as Saudi Arabia and Russia would face difficulties.

In the long term, **commodity-exporting nations** like Brazil and Argentina might face difficulties too as with cheaper irrigation, countries relying on their exports might start growing their own crops.

Increased methane emissions: As water desalination became more feasible and irrigation would become less expensive, many areas would be far greener, and people might raise more cows and eat more beef. Those cows, in turn, might release far more methane into the air.

Must Read: [Energy security: Nuclear power – Explained, pointwise](#)

51. An RBI public interface that can recast banking

Source: This post is based on the article “**An RBI public interface that can recast banking**” published in **Livemint** on **15th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to the banking sector

Relevance: Roles and responsibilities of RBI

News: RBI has opened a retail window for bonds. Along with this, the launch of its digital rupee next could enable RBI to take over the bank depository function.

Recently, RBI launched the Retail Direct scheme. Under this scheme, people can invest directly in government bonds. As these are virtually risk-free, people would be attracted to use this window for access to market for gilts.

But this is not a welcome move, because the RBI’s outreach could set the stage for other financial relationships with the public resulting in **disintermediation** (*removal of intermediaries from a supply chain. In this case, the banks*).

What are the concerns/issues with RBI’s latest move?

Firstly, it might result in taking away the depository role played by banks. For instance, consider the following situation. If RBI launches the central bank digital currency (CBDC), its public interface will expand to cover the country.

Since money kept with the RBI would be fully safe, such a facility will reduce the relative appeal of classic bank deposits.

This raises the question of the need for banks to keep depositor funds when a central bank could do the same.

Secondly, legacy banks are already under threat due to the disruptive potential of technology. For example,

From cryptocurrencies to decentralized finance (‘DeFi’), blockchain innovations have advanced at a great speed.

Digital advancements in banking allow the new online services to operate cheaply compared to legacy banks. As a result, it makes legacy banks uncompetitive.

Such a move could result in changing the core structure of the banking industry of the brick-and-mortar age.

What are the potential advantages of RBI taking over the depository role of banks?

The shift could act as a restraint on reckless Credit lending. Because It allows Banks to focus on assessing credit risk and price it profitably.

RBI will have **more control over its monetary policy**. A central bank with wide access to the cost-of-funds will make interest-rate settings easier to transmit.

It allows the central bank **to execute fiscal transfers** such as a universal basic income or an agenda of state-directed credit.

52. Shielding farm sector from climate change

Source: This post is based on the article “**Shielding farm sector from climate change**” published in **Business Standard** on **15th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues/Challenges related to the Agriculture sector

Relevance: Climate change and its impact on Agriculture

News: Climatic anomalies affect agriculture directly. Hence, there is a need for effective strategy to protect agriculture from its ill effects.

Changes in the intensity, frequency, and seasonality of climate patterns, extreme weather events, rainfall pattern and river flows etc. are likely to impact agriculture sector.

How would climate change affect the farm sector?

The findings of various studies and the projections made by UNFCCC present a mixed picture.

Impact on rainfall: Monsoon rain might increase as a consequence of heat-induced acceleration in the hydrological cycle.

Unpredicted weather pattern: The incidence of severe and extended dry spells, interspersed with heavy downpour, might also increase.

Decrease in farm productivity: According to the vulnerability assessment done by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the overall productivity of paddy, irrigated paddy, wheat, maize might decrease between 2050 and 2080.

Benefit to few crops: Some crops might benefit from climate change. For instance, Chickpea (gram or chana).

Drop-in farm income. The government’s **Economic Survey 2018** reports that every one-degree Celsius rise in temperature could reduce agricultural income by 6.2% in kharif and 6% in the rabi season in non-irrigated areas.

Other challenges: Reduces water availability, variations in the incidence of pests and pathogens (crop diseases).

What are the steps taken to address the issue?

India, nearly a decade ago launched the countrywide project on **National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA)**.

Objectives of NICRA: **1)** Identify vulnerable areas, **2)** Assess the potential impact of temperature rise on crop farming, livestock, and fisheries, **3)** Evolve crop varieties and agronomic practices adaptable to the emerging weather patterns.

How has NICRA helped farmers to cope up with Climate change?

Many water-harvesting structures have been created under the NICRA project to facilitate **crop irrigation** at critical stages of plant growth. These have resulted in **yield gains in some low-rainfall areas**.

Situation-specific advanced technologies for imparting climate-resilience to farming have also been evolved and successfully transferred to farmers in 151 climatically vulnerable districts.

Several **climate-resistant crop varieties** have also been developed.

More importantly, **contingency plans to cope with climate anomalies** have been drawn up for as many as 650 districts.

Almost all agricultural activities such as crop farming, horticulture, livestock rearing, and fisheries have continued to scale new highs, regardless of the increase in the frequency of weather-induced natural disasters.

53. Manipur flashpoint: Its insurgency and a volatile border continue to impose a toll on security forces and local people

Source: This post is based on the article “**Manipur flashpoint: Its insurgency and a volatile border continue to impose a toll on security forces and local people**” published in **The Times of India** on **14th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Linkages between development and spread of extremism.

Relevance: To understand the reason behind the recent Manipur insurgency.

News: The ambush on an Assam Rifles convoy by Manipur insurgents in Churachandpur district killing five soldiers breaches the fragile calm prevailing in the border state.

About the insurgency in Manipur

Manipur insurgency has lost much steam from a decade or so ago, the state remains troubled by insurgent groups operating from Myanmar’s Chin state and staying out of peace talks while propping up a parallel economy run through extortion and narcotics.

Read more: [Karbi Agreement – another milestone in PM’s vision](#)

What forced this attack?

1. **Effective curbing the narcotics trade**, 2. **A political shift of Myanmar towards China** after Military rule, 3. **Complicated peace efforts:** This is due to Manipur’s diverse ethnic mix comprising social groups like Meitei, Naga and Kuki-Zo with separate and overlapping geographical areas of influence alongside many insurgent groups, 4. An **overstretched Indian army** slowed down in battling insurgencies.

The twin challenges of talking peace without any quarter for illegal activities is hard to achieve for security forces. But, a breakthrough here will help India better focus its resources on the LAC fight.

54. A lost cause: On the Gadchiroli encounter and Maoists

Source: This post is based on the article “**A lost cause: On the Gadchiroli encounter and Maoists**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Linkages between development and spread of extremism.

Relevance: To understand the present situation of Left-Wing Extremism in India.

News: At least 26 Naxals were killed recently in an encounter with the Maharashtra police in Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra.

Must read: [Left Wing Extremism in India – Explained, Pointwise](#)

About Gadchiroli district

Gadchiroli is a largely forested and tribal-dominated district. The district is among Maharashtra’s poorest and “severely affected” by left-wing extremism.

The present situation of Left-Wing Extremists in India

Over time, the Maoists have managed their own strikes against security forces, but such attacks have not yielded an increase in support base or increase in the red corridor. This is because,

1. **Contribution of the Indian government:** The government improved both the security establishment’s work and development schemes in LWE areas, 2. **Issues with Indian Maoists’ programme:** The programme has issues such as **Replicating the Chinese Revolution** of the previous century, using armed struggle as the means to achieve its aims, India’s condition at present is not similar to China in the 1920s etc., 3. **Change in people and peasants mindset,**

4. Maoists' **refusal to acknowledge the diverse industrial base** and liberal democratic instruments in the country.

Read more: [Union Minister of Home Affairs chairs review meeting in New Delhi on Left Wing Extremism](#)

So, to curb LWE areas, the government must act continually in winning over the support of tribals, peasants and other sections of people in the region and retaining people's faith in the liberal democratic institutions.

55. What is RBI's stand on the use of cryptocurrency

Source: This post is based on the article "What is RBI's stand on the use of cryptocurrency" posted in **Livemint** on **15th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Indian economy.

Relevance: Understanding the concerns associated with cryptocurrency.

News: RBI governor has raised his concern over the cryptocurrency investment in India.

How the RBI has responded to the crypto business so far?

Read here: [Cryptocurrency in India – Lessons from other Countries](#)

The RBI has raised its concerns over the usage of a cryptocurrency over macroeconomic and financial stability points. It wants to explore the possibility of **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)**.

Also read: [Future of Cryptocurrencies in India](#)

How many Indians invest in cryptos and whether the amount is taxed?



Source: Livemint

According to a newspaper ad, Indians have invested ₹6 trillion in cryptocurrency. According to the Chief Executive Officer of Wazir X, India has around 15-20 million crypto investors, while it has 25 million mutual fund investors.

Investors are liable to pay tax if they are making gains on cryptocurrency. In the case of active traders, this will be considered as business income and tax will be charged according to the slab rate. In the case of investors, the tax will be charged according to the short-term and long term capital gain.

What are the concerns associated with cryptocurrency?

- 1) Limit the government to tax the amount as it is difficult to trace.
- 2) Can be used against various criminal activities like money laundering.
- 3) Can harm the investors as they will be vulnerable to hacks, scams etc

4) Can harm the lending capacity of banks as more people will invest in cryptocurrency and less in banks.

56. How the economy gets a boost from efficient logistics

Source: This post is based on the article “How the economy gets a boost from efficient logistics” published in **Livemint** on **16th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to the Logistic sector

Relevance: Efficient logistic sector and its subsequent benefits to the Indian economy

News: Recently, the government released the annual Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) report for 2021.

LEADS report ranks states and Union territories (UTs) on the efficiency of their logistics ecosystem. It aims to induce stakeholders to make necessary improvements.

Must read: [Gujarat retains pole position in logistics index: Commerce ministry report](#)

How will efficient logistics help?

With the country aspiring to be a manufacturing destination, an improved logistics environment will benefit in the following manner:

- Generating better economies of scale,
- Minimizing cost per unit, leading to lower prices for the consumer.
- Improved supply chain efficiencies will help bring down logistics costs
- Enhances industry competitiveness.

What are the initiatives taken by the government in this regard?

Policy target: Centre’s aim is to bring down logistics costs in India by 4-5% of GDP over the next five years to approximately 8% of GDP.

Developmental initiatives taken at the international level-The [Supply Chain Resilience Initiative \(SCRI\)](#)

Developmental initiatives taken at Domestic front: Infrastructure development initiatives such as [Sagarmala](#), [Bharatmala](#), Dedicated Freight Corridors, paperless EXIM trade process through E-Sanchit, mandatory electronic toll collection system ([FASTag](#)), etc.

57. Why stubble burning is so hard to fix

Source: This post is based on the article “Why stubble burning is so hard to fix” published in **Livemint** on **16th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Relevance: Stubble burning and pollution in the Indo-Gangetic region

News: Post Diwali, Delhi and the entire Gangetic plains have been covered in a thick blanket of smog.

Stubble burning by farmers in states such as Punjab, Haryana, and parts of Uttar Pradesh is just one of many causes for declining air quality in Delhi.

Recently, the Supreme Court too acknowledged this fact while directing the government to consider a temporary lockdown.

In this context, there is an immediate need to resolve issues related to stubble burning coupled with other mitigation strategies that can improve air quality in Delhi.

Why do farmers prefer to burn stubble?

There are multiple reasons behind stubble burning.

Long term causes

– **Policy issues:** In 2009 the Punjab government made a law that barred farmers from planting paddy before the dates notified. This was done to time plantings to the arrival of the annual monsoon.

This enforced delay in planting pushed the date of harvest to November, which meant farmers had to quickly clear their fields to plant wheat. A delay means lower yields. Due to this short window, farmers took to burning the crop residue in larger numbers.

Contribution of climate: Wind direction changes in late October-mid November, which carries the smoke all over the northern Gangetic plains.

Lack of trust on crop residue management machinery: Farmers fear a decline in productivity if crop residue management machines (happy seeder and super seeder) are used.

The lack of supply chain constituents like biomass aggregators, processors, and storage facilities have made the existing ex-situ ecosystem a failure.

Must read: Read more about stubble burning in these articles: [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#), [Article 3](#)

Immediate causes

– **Cost-related issues:** Rising prices of diesel pushed up the operational cost of using these machines. Fuel accounts for a quarter of the cost of operating these machines.

– **Farmer protest:** Some farmers seem to be putting their fields on fire as a mark of protest.

What are some potential solutions?

Firstly, using machines to incorporate crop residues into the soil, using straw as boiler fuel or for manufacturing packaging materials.

Secondly, finding an alternative to the paddy-wheat cycle. Such as growing pulses or oilseeds, instead of paddy.

What are the associated challenges?

Firstly, incorporating crop residues back into the soil is facing a severe challenge due to the **rising cost of diesel** and **rent** for the necessary machines.

Also, the machine-led solution is **only benefitting manufacturers** who have raised the prices (of crop management machines) to corner government subsidies.

Secondly, farmers are unwilling to move away from paddy since they can sell their entire production to the government at assured support prices, while growing pulses or oilseeds entails significant price risks.

What is the way forward?

– **Scaling up biomass-based power generation** to 1,000MW in a year, the problem of stubble burning in northern India can be remedied significantly.

– **Discoms should pay a bit extra** for biomass-based renewable energy for the sake of clean air.

– **Assured government purchase** at support prices for pulses like masoor and oilseeds like groundnut

– State government-run cooperative MARKFED can stop the procurement of food grains for central agencies. It must focus on its original mandate of marketing farmers' produce. It could enter into contract farming with farmers for oilseeds to improve supplies where India is deficient.

58. Charting India's path to a 'Digital Rupee'

Source: This post is based on the article "Charting India's path to a 'Digital Rupee'" published in **Indian Express** on **16th November 2021**.

Syllabus– GS3- issues related to development of digital currencies

Relevance: Challenges associated with CBDCs

News: Recently, Nigeria launched its non-interest-yielding central bank digital currency (CBDC) — the eNaira.

Along the similar lines, CBDC pilot projects are underway in at least 17 other countries. The primary drivers for central banks of EMDEs (emerging market and developing economies) to study CBDCs are domestic payments efficiency, financial inclusion, and payments safety.

In this context, it should be noted that CBDC's design and implementation should be as per the domestic priorities.

What are the ways in which CBDCs can be designed?

A particular CBDC could be designed in the following ways:

- Account-based or tokenised
- Distributed directly by the central bank or through intermediaries
- Interest-bearing CBDC's
- Can be programmed to offer limited pseudonymity (*the state of using or being published under a pseudonym*) to its holders

How is eNaira designed to achieve the intended benefits?

Unique identification of beneficiaries: It has been designed as an account-based CBDC with know your customer (KYC) norms linked to the unique identity indicators under Nigeria's National Financial Inclusion Strategy.

Eliminating the need for intermediaries: It enables targeted welfare payments into the wallets of citizens directly.

Increases the efficiency of the Payment system

Must Read: [Private partners could help RBI run a digital currency](#)

What are the issues with introduction of a CBDC by the RBI?

– **Threat to the banking system:** Adopting an interest-bearing Indian CBDC could pose an existential threat to the banking system by eroding its critical role as intermediaries in the economy according to Former RBI Governor D Subbarao.

If CBDCs compete with bank deposits and facilitate a reduction of bank-held deposits, banks stand to lose out on an important and stable source of funding.

Banks may respond by increasing deposit rates, but this would result in higher lending rates and decreased lending activities. Also, banks may be incentivized to engage in riskier lending and hold relatively riskier, less-liquid assets. This could have long-term effects on financial stability.

– **The introduction of CBDCs would require central banks to maintain much larger balance sheets**, even in non-crisis times. They would need to replace the lost funding by lending potentially huge sums to financial institutions, while purchasing correspondingly huge amounts of government and possibly private securities.

– **CBDCs could also have implications for the state from seigniorage** (*profit made by a government by issuing currency*) as the cost of printing, storing, transporting and distributing currency can be reduced.

Must Read: [The merits of an RBI digital currency outweigh risks](#)

59. The debacle of demonetisation

Source: This post is based on the article “**The debacle of demonetisation**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance – Demonetisation and its outcomes.

News: Not a single one of the claims made for demonetisation has been materialised.

Read more here: <https://blog.forumias.com/the-case-of-demonetisation-in-india/>

Physical cash remains the dominant mode of exchange: The ratio of currency with the public to national income has, at 11.5%, remarkably remained the same from 2015-16 onwards. Money seems to remain a chosen medium of exchange for Indians, even if purchases are increasingly being made online.

No real increase in direct tax payments: The ratio of direct tax collections to the national income rose marginally in 2016-17. But this cannot be attributed to demonetisation alone. The Goods and Services Tax introduced in 2017 may have nudged potential income tax assesses to comply with the laws.

Reversed a growth acceleration: India’s economy did register a slight increase in the rate of growth. But it was mainly due to the growth of the agricultural sector. As agricultural yield is weather-related, it is independent of economic conditions in the short term. Whereas the other sectors of the economy, production suffered from the cash crunch engineered by demonetisation. For instance, data on the manufacturing sector shows growth slowing by about a third immediately.

60. A traffic lockdown may be what Delhi requires

Source: This post is based on the article “**A traffic lockdown may be what Delhi requires**” published in **Livemint** on **16th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Relevance: Tackling Delhi’s pollution problem

News: Supreme Court described air pollution in and around Delhi city as a “crisis” and asked the Centre and Delhi administration to take action.

SC has asked authorities to consider a lockdown, among other measures

It has also advised the Centre to call an emergency meeting and work out specific ways to tackle the identified “culprits”: construction activity, industry, transport, power and vehicular traffic, apart from stubble burning.

What steps have been taken to curb pollution in NCR?

- Curbs on building projects, firecrackers, and diesel gen-sets
- Momentary restrictions on industrial exhaust
- Deals for farmers to stop setting their post-harvest waste on fire
- [Smog towers](#) and water spraying
- Even odd scheme, where only vehicles with odd number-plates were allowed on streets one day and even numbers the next. It did not prove helpful enough to justify the disruption caused.

A full traffic lockdown of the NCR might not be a bad idea to alleviate the harmful effect of pollution.

Why a full traffic lockdown can be a potential solution for Delhi's pollution problem?

Will lower street emissions from vehicular exhaust: By the analysis of the Centre for Science and Environment, vehicular exhaust accounts for about half the seasonal rise in the capital's levels of pollutant particles. A full traffic lockdown for about a week or so, depending on the smoke dispersal of winds, should cause a notable reduction.

61. [Deep-sea mining for building EV batteries: A sustainable approach or an invitation to another catastrophe?](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Deep-sea mining for building EV batteries: A sustainable approach or an invitation to another catastrophe?**” published in **DTE** on **15th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

Relevance: Understanding whether we need to pursue deep sea mining or not.

News: Almost 70% of our planet is an ocean and of that, 90% is the deep sea. It houses countless species, ranging from tiny zooplankton to the heaviest whales. This combination supports in maintaining the ecological cycle of our planet.

Mining investors are eyeing metals they can extract from the sea bed to build electric vehicle (EV) batteries. These talks are at an early stage but slowly making headlines.

Transition to electric mobility is welcome, but it should happen without undervaluing the importance of living in the deep waters.

Why deep sea mining is necessary?

– **Need for alternative sources of minerals:** Building EV batteries requires minerals such as cobalt, lithium, nickel, copper, vanadium and indium. Demand for these minerals will shoot up with the rising demand for EVs. It will put pressure on the existing land mineral ores, so there is a need to identify alternative sources to extract these minerals.

– **Potential to reduce child labor:** It is a greener option than land-based mining and can significantly reduce child labour in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where abundant mineral mining sites are present.

What are the factors that may discourage deep-sea mining?

– **First,** the projected rise is subject to multiple factors such as technological advancements in battery chemistry, capability to recycle minerals from used batteries, and investment in public transport infrastructure.

– **Second,** Many projections assume the use of current lithium-ion battery technology (incorporating cobalt and nickel) will continue. But, while some alternatives of cobalt-free lithium-ion batteries are in-development such as lithium-iron-phosphate batteries, some alternatives are already available. **For example,** Tesla's EV battery requires neither cobalt nor phosphate.

– **Third,** The automobile sector is gearing up to invest in battery mineral recycling. This will further reduce the future mineral demand. Battery recycling could reduce lithium demand by 25%, cobalt by 35% as well as nickel and copper by 55% by 2040, according to the Institute of Sustainable Futures.

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- **Fourth**, In countries where governments bring down private motorised vehicle share by improving existing public transportation as well as implementing vehicle restraint measures, the demand for EV batteries will also be less.
- **Fifth, Irreversible damage to aquatic life:** During [deep-sea mining](#), the unwanted sediments containing heavy metals are pumped back into the sea. This creates sea pollution and can choke jellyfish and other species that transfer a significant amount of carbon back to the sea bed. There is also a possibility that species that have not yet been discovered are lost.

What is the way forward?

We should plan our cities in such a way that trips are more local in nature and can be made by walking and cycling so that there is little need to use a private electric car. This will result in a lower demand for EV batteries.

62. It may prove costlier to combat than adapt to climate change

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

‘CoP26: A ‘net nothing’ summit that the UN termed a global compromise’ published in **DTE** on **15th Nov 2021**.

‘The Glasgow Pact: Does it make climate finance available to us?’ & ‘It may prove costlier to combat than adapt to climate change’ published in **Livemint** on **16th Nov 2021**.

‘Four ticklish questions on India’s climate pathway’ published in **Times of India** on **15th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Conservation, Environmental pollution and degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

Relevance: Climate finance and Glasgow Climate pact

News: Now that the Glasgow Climate Pact has finally been agreed upon, it is time to figure out one of the critical components of climate change action – Climate Finance.

How finance can be worked out for the climate targets under Glasgow pact?

– A large part of climate finance will have to come domestically from both **public** and **private sources**. Some could come from **international private flows** (both equity and debt) and a third component could come from **bilateral** and **multilateral public flows**.

For instance: The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, which was active in CoP-26, includes over 450 firms controlling about \$130 trillion in private assets. A small proportion of these assets, re-directed to green energy projects, would provide significant support for mitigation efforts. For this, the risk perceptions about investment in developing countries would have to be taken care of.

– **Special Drawing Rights:** It may also be possible to use the substantial [special drawing rights](#) given recently by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to developed countries.

– **Differentiated carbon tax** is proposed by the IMF to be levied at \$75 per tonne of CO₂ for the US and EU, \$50 for China, and \$25 for India. Different levies would **protect India’s competitiveness** while raising much-needed resources for climate adaptation. Petrol and diesel are already heavily taxed, and the proposed carbon tax would be subsumed within these taxes. India can also increase the environmental tax on coal (from \$3.5 per tonne of CO₂ to \$15) to generate resources that could be used for climate adaptation.

Must Read: [Glasgow Climate Pact – Explained, pointwise](#)

- A **coordinated effort by India, Indonesia and Brazil** should push for commitments on climate finance at G-20, where critical decisions on financing are actually taken (*Indonesia will chair the G-20 in 2022, India in 2023 and Brazil in 2024*)
- **Domestic action by India:** India needs to fix the financial weakness of its **electricity distribution companies** so that private investors can invest in electricity generation. Domestic policy action is also needed for the **removal of fuel subsidies**.

What are some potential side-effects of the climate change policies?

In the latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) by International Monetary Fund (IMF) mentions the following:

- **High demand for metals** like copper, nickel, lithium and cobalt. These metals would reach historical peak prices for an unprecedented sustained period under a 'net zero by 2050' emissions scenario. The total value of metals production is estimated to rise to \$13 trillion by 2040, equalling the value of crude oil output that year. This will result in significant gains for producers, and resource constraints for consuming nations. Significant investment in mines will be needed to extract those metals. Further, the available supplies of rare metals will get cornered, leaving many nations faced with a choice between high carbon emissions and financial ruin.
- **Impact of the green economy on the labor market.** Jobs have become greener in the last decade. But people with higher education are likely to get them, as green jobs tend to require higher skills and pay more. Hence, decarbonization would also result in concentrated education, skills, income and wealth in fewer hands.

63. Good crypto and bad: Defining, regulating and taxing this world

Source: This post is based on the article “**Good crypto and bad: Defining, regulating and taxing this world**” published in **Business Standard** on **17th Nov 2021**.

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

News: The government and regulatory authorities are considering a legislative and regulatory framework for cryptocurrencies.

As enforcing a ban on cryptocurrencies is not advisable, hence, the current policy approach is a step in the right direction.

Must Read: [Managing cryptocurrencies](#)

What parameters must be considered for regulating cryptocurrencies?

Define a tax structure: This must outline the incidence of long-term and short-term capital gains for crypto investors.

Define a good crypto: The regulatory framework should include a definition of what makes a good crypto. It must include some reference to the **most common use cases** for crypto, like remittances.

Incentivizing good crypto: Bitcoin and many other cryptocurrencies have very energy-intensive verification systems. More energy-efficient cryptos are desirable. There could be tax structured incentives to design more energy-efficient verification systems.

What is a good crypto?

A good cryptocurrency includes

- a secure peer-to-peer verification system
- an assurance of some anonymity

– a method of mining that allows for predictable growth in money supply, which cannot be manipulated, and so on.

What are some use cases of good crypto?

– **Remittances:** A remittance of, say, dirhams to rupees, involves bank charges and delays while the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) processes payments. Instead, one can buy cryptocurrency with dirhams and hand over the relevant codes to somebody who can sell the crypto in rupees. This process will be much faster and not involve bank charges if the parties are comfortable with price volatility.

– **Currency swaps:** A swap is a deal where two entities exchange two currencies, say USD and INR, at an agreed rate. They commit to the reverse exchange of exactly the same amounts of USD and INR after an agreed time, at the agreed rate, even if the exchange rate has gone up or down. The RBI itself has done swaps, most notably during the global financial crisis. It is easier to do swaps by using cryptocurrency trades rather than via banks.

– **Purchasing assets:** Crypto can be used to purchase assets or services. But a clear accounting process must be framed for such transactions. For example, El Salvador adopted bitcoin as an alternative currency. Although this experiment has revealed several challenges, it's worth studying.

– **Trustless contract enabled by blockchain:** This could prove quite useful in the Indian context. In such a contract, money is put into an escrow account. Instructions are put in blockchain that if certain conditions are fulfilled, the money is to be transferred automatically to a given account. This is much cheaper and less cumbersome than conventional bank escrow.

Escrow is a legal arrangement in which a third party temporarily holds large sums of money or property until a particular condition has been met (such as the fulfillment of a purchase agreement). It is used in real estate transactions to protect both the buyer and the seller throughout the home buying process.

For example, a municipality hands out a garbage disposal contract. It may create a blockchain where the residents can vote whether they are satisfied with the garbage disposal service. Such contracts cut down on corruption and accelerate government payment processes.

64. India needs time and money before it can dump coal

Source: This post is based on the article “**India needs time and money before it can dump coal**” published in the **Times of India** on **17th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the debate around phasing out of coal

News: India is being criticized for its last-minute call affecting changes to the Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP) wherein the expression ‘Phase out’ was changed to ‘Phase down’ of coal-based power in its final version.

India’s per capita energy consumption is a third of the global average. Hence, as per the IEA, India will need to add a power system the size of the European Union, to meet expected growth in electricity demand in the next 20 years.

Must Read: [Glasgow Climate Pact \(GCP\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

The world must understand that this cannot happen by solely relying on alternative sources of power. India will have to continue with coal, as it is the cheapest fuel available in abundance

domestically. It can fuel the level of economic growth required to lift hundreds of millions out of poverty.

Can renewables fuel India's future energy requirements?

India cannot depend entirely on renewable sources of energy due to the following reasons:

- **Intermittency or irregularity remains a major issue with renewables**, which are also vulnerable to weather.
- Unlike the West, India has **comparatively smaller gas-fired and nuclear generation capacities**. Power from such small plants is unaffordable.
- **Hydel projects are costly** and involve large displacement of forests and habitats. They also remain susceptible to weather patterns. Storage technology is still evolving and remains a costly option.

The power demand recently surged in double digits in India. This was caused due to lower power generation from solar, wind and hydel sources, which happened due to seasonal factors. Coal-fired plants had to step in to meet the demand.

Hence, the only dependable option is coal.

What are some other issues with phasing out coal?

At the **mining** level, the government enjoys dividend payments from Coal India Limited

The **railways**, which dominate transportation of coal, receive an existential level of cross-subsidy from coal.

There are large revenues from taxes, royalties, and mining fees, which are amongst the highest in the world

Read more about this issue in the following articles: [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#), [Article 3](#)

65. An estimate of a big formal shift that stretches credulity too far

Source: This post is based on the article "**An estimate of a big formal shift that stretches credulity too far**" published in Live mint on **17th November** 2021.

Syllabus: **GS paper 3**- Indian Economy and issues relating to formalisation of workforce

Relevance: Formalisation of India's economy

News: SBI Research in a recent report said that the size of India's informal economy had shrunk from 52% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017-18 to around a current maximum of 15-20%. However, the report is inaccurate in many accounts.

Read more here: <https://blog.forumias.com/the-high-cost-of-indias-illusiv-quest-for-formalization/>

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

Firstly, the report believes that E-Shram is a big step towards the formalization of employment because it facilitates the extension of social-sector scheme benefits to informal workers. However, it is silent on, whether all the 57 million workers, who have registered on the portal, getting the benefits of these schemes.

Secondly, the report points out that the average amount outstanding per Kisan Credit Card (KCC) has grown in 2021-22 and this has led to the formalization of ₹4.6 lakh crore. However, the Report of the Internal Working Group to Review Agricultural Credit (2019) pointed out that, approximately 30 percent of agricultural households still avail credit from non-institutional sources.

Thirdly, much of SBI Research's analysis relies on data during a period in which the country was hit by the second covid wave. During this period, businesses in the informal sector have been destroyed by pandemic disruptions. So, the informal activity would remain low, and the data obtained would be inaccurate. As the economy recovers, informal enterprises will start increasing.

Fourth, also, formalisation itself doesn't mean decreasing informalisation. Formal enterprises can employ informal workers. **For example**, a listed real estate company outsources a job to a contractor, which then informally hires daily wage workers.

Finally, considering gig workers a part of the formal economy is also not a correct measure, because their incomes aren't protected if the business is negatively impacted.

66. Unnecessary intervention – RBI's Proposal of tax benefits for retail investors

Source: This post is based on the article "Unnecessary intervention" published in **Business standard** on 17th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Issues related to bond markets

Relevance: Retail Direct Scheme, risks associated with bond market investing.

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is thinking to approach the Union government to ask for tax benefits for retail investors investing in government bonds through its platform.

The idea behind the RBI's Retail Direct Scheme, to increase the ease of investment in government bonds for individual investors and widen the pool of investors over time, is appropriate.

However, the idea of extending tax benefits to encourage retail participation in the government bond market is unnecessary and must be avoided.

Then, tax benefits to retail investors is not a good idea?

The new retail bond platform will not necessarily increase household financial savings, it may just lead to a shift in the household debt portfolio. It may lead to a revenue loss for the government, as it will reduce the existing household investor base.

Also, Investors entering the market at this stage are likely to suffer a capital loss if they decide to sell bonds over the next few years, as interest rates are likely to go up from the present level.

RBI's policies are making debt investment unattractive. RBI is maintaining the policy interest rate below the inflation rate, with a high liquidity level.

What needs to be done?

First, RBI should spread awareness and sensitise investors about potential risks associated with bond market investing.

Second, RBI should try to bring the policy interest rate on par with the inflation rate. Low-interest rates have made debt investment unattractive.

Third, all debt instruments can be brought to par by removing tax benefits. It will not only simplify the tax structure but also drive individual investors to evaluate products on their merit.

67. India needs a coordinated approach for decarbonisation of economy

Source: This post is based on the article "India needs a coordinated approach for decarbonisation of economy" published in **Indian Express** on 17th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3-Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Relevance: To understand the actions taken for climate crisis and issues related to the same.

News: PM announced enhanced targets for climate action by India, particularly for achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.

What is the need for policy changes in Renewable Energy(RE) sector?

By 2070, there will be many **changes** in technology, environmental conditions, and the economy. Therefore, shorter period planning is needed, so that new knowledge about emerging technologies can be incorporated into plans.

The **shorter-term targets** to be reached by 2030 refer mostly to the power sector. This is needed because it is the biggest source of GHG emissions and also the easiest one to decarbonise.

There is an abundance of **separate targets** for almost every resource used to generate electricity. It reduces flexibility of distribution companies to select resources to meet their loads, resulting in a non-optimal resource mix, and a higher cost of electricity.

What is needed to be done?

Interim targets and monitoring progress-For this, an agency led by experts should be set up to cover climate change issues for all sectors. It would also monitor progress and annually report and suggest mid-course corrections.

Overarching objective-Reducing 'emission intensity' is a good overarching objective, instead of multiple objectives, like increased use of RE or non-fossil-fuel generation, which are just means to that end.

68. Why Punjab's short-duration paddy varieties have not solved stubble burning

Source: This post is based on the articles "**Why Punjab's short-duration paddy varieties have not solved stubble burning**" published in **Down To Earth** on 16th November 2021 and "**Our airpocrisies: For air quality crisis take aim at farm residue burning, land desertification, not lockdowns**" published in **Times Of India** on 16th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3-Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Relevance: To understand the issue of stubble burning and consequent environmental pollution.

News: Supreme Court's suggested a two-day lockdown amid sharp deterioration in the National Capital Region's air quality.

The government's efforts in the past decade provided positive results, and the ratio of land under short-duration varieties to the total land under paddy has more than doubled—from 32.6 percent in 2012 to 67.7 percent in 2021.

What are the issues in stubble burning?

Damage to public health from severe air quality has produced few ideas, that too, suffer from poor implementation.

Despite **heavy subsidies** on straw management equipment, farmers keep protesting that these remain economically unviable.

The government failed to recognise that burning **coal, biomass, and farm residue** alongside land desertification contribute to 85% of air pollution.

Missing inter-governmental action— The proximate link to poverty, energy needs, waste management, and land degradation demand concerted inter-governmental actions.

Contrastingly, the districts where short-term crop varieties witnessed an increase, have seen a rise in straw burning incidents.

Reasons for the increased straw burning incidents:

The primary reason behind it is the low yield, due to which farmers cultivate an additional set of crops, such as potato, peas, green lentil, between kharif and rabi.

Even those farmers who have grown short-duration varieties, that fetched great prices, have used the time between rabi and kharif to grow a third crop and thereby increased income.

What actions are taken to tackle the crisis?

New crop variety-The old long-term variety used to leave just 10 days for sowing between kharif paddy to rabi wheat. Farmers started using short-duration varieties, especially PR 126, which give a window of over 35 days to farmers.

-It incentivizes farmers to not use the crop burning methods.

69. Central banks and climate change: How they can play a role in managing the fallout

Source: This post is based on the article “**Central banks and climate change: How they can play a role in managing the fallout**” published in **Down To Earth** on **16th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3-Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Relevance: To understand the role of different institutions in managing climate change.

News: In a recent webinar central bankers, economists and lawyers explored the role and responsibilities of central banks in addressing the challenge of climate change.

Must read: [RBI must come clean where it stands on climate change](#)

How central banks can tackle climate change?

Central banks **set interest rates** and determine the prices of the goods and services people buy. This, in turn, **influences** the climate impacts of their **consumption patterns**.

Interest rates influence the **credit** in the economy and thus how much the country and its financial sector can allocate to **dealing with climate change** and on what terms.

Extreme weather events have several impacts on food prices and, thus, inflation. This in turn can influence employment, the ability of debtors to meet their financial obligations and financial stability.

What are the challenges faced by central banks in climate financing?

Central banks authority is not unlimited. They are guided by their legal mandates. They are also constrained by the fact that they are led by skilled, but unelected, technocrats with **limited public accountability**.

The unelected technical experts making decisions about how credit is allocated has an issue. However, decisions by elected authorities can lead to political interference in decision-making.

What are the associated challenges?

Roles and responsibilities: The Central bank’s ability to respond to climate change depends on the powers and responsibilities stipulated in the laws that create them.

These laws vary across countries, the statutory language has been interpreted differently in different countries.

The carbon neutrality issue: Financial markets are not carbon-neutral. In fact, the allocation of credit is more in favour of more carbon-intensive companies and activities.

What is needed to be done?

The lessons from the webinar have special importance for **African central banks**. The continent faces acute climate-related risks with limited capacity to manage the risks.

-African central banks must develop the capacity to understand and assess two things: 1. The possible impacts of climate change on monetary and financial stability and vice-versa, and 2. The ability of their societies to deal with the Climate challenges.

Central banks must speak the truth and **educate their stakeholders** about the monetary and financial stability implications of their policies, activities and conduct.

They also should use their international networks to educate external stakeholders on how global responses to climate change impact their own situations.

70. Green and secure: Char Dham Highway project must see government and environmentalists work together

Source: This post is based on the following articles

- “**The low road**” published in **Business Standard** on **16th November 2021**.
- “**Green and secure: Char Dham Highway project must see government and environmentalists work together**” published in **Times of India** on **16th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand the issues surrounding the Char Dham Highway Development project.

News: The Supreme Court has reserved its judgment on an appeal by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) regarding the Char Dham Highway Development project.

About the Char Dham Highway Development project

Must Read: [What is the “Char Dham Project”?](#)

About the case

The whole project has turned into a defence versus environment debate. The Supreme court has also asked the Environment Ministry to form a high-powered committee to look into environmental concerns. But the committee provided two sets of recommendations.

In September 2020, the court upheld the recommendations in the minority report of a high-powered committee and recommended to limit the flagship project’s carriageway to 5.5 meter.

Note: But the majority report of the same committee had agreed to a 12-meter widening (of that 7 m will be carriageway). This would involve additional deforestation, slope cutting and tunnelling.

Why the MoD is demanding the widening of roads?

1. The MoD demanded a double-lane road which is more suitable for the army, 2. Recent India-China border tensions leave India no choice but to improve its border infrastructure in the eco-sensitive Himalayan zone.

For these reasons, the ministry of road transport and highways actually amended its previous guidelines for mountainous roads to support the government’s widening plans.

Note: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) earlier recommended 5.5-metre width for mountain roads.

Read more: [Supreme Court orders committee to review ecological aspects of Chardham project](#)

What are the consequences associated with the Char Dham project?

1. Widening the road in an eco-sensitive zone will have severe consequences for Uttarakhand, which has been grappling with major landslides and environmental degradation. Dangers of widening road were underlined twice this year, a) destruction of the Tapovan Hydro-Electric Power Dam, b) Recent floods and landslides in the state.

Read more: [Tapovan Vishnugad Hydropower Project](#)

2. **Uttarakhand's ecological decline** is a direct result of its increasing reliance on revenues from religious tourism. So, building road to boost tourism will definitely impact its ecology more.

3. **Challenges faced by Border Roads Organisation:** The four-lane highways that have been built in the upper reaches of the Himalayas already eat up large parts of the BRO's annual budget in clearing frequent landslides.

4. **India's climate change targets:** India at the recent COP26 meet in Glasgow announced ambitious climate targets. Implementation of the project might create consequences in achieving that.

Read more: [Glasgow Climate Pact – Explained, pointwise](#)

What can be done?

Work together: Government and environmentalists should work together to find a middle path, instead of standing on opposite sides.

Adopt a fresh approach for all border infrastructure: The environmental impact of projects should be included in the approach in a transparent manner.

Better conceptualise National security: The government should not see National security in terms of military needs alone. The government should see the faster environmental degradation, massive flooding and landslides and huge loss of property and lives also as national security.

Not rely on road and work on airlift: The government cannot rely on the Himalayan area for unhindered movements of troops and heavy material, such as the BrahMos. Instead, it can just be airlifted.

71. Green hydrogen makes a debut

Source: This post is based on the article “**Green hydrogen makes a debut**” published in **Business Standard** on **16th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand hydrogen extraction methods and other initiatives to produce green hydrogen.

News: Recently India has initiated many green hydrogen initiatives like [National Hydrogen Mission](#) and aims to make India a global hub for green hydrogen production and export.

Must read: [Green Hydrogen: Potential, Issues and Solutions – Explained, pointwise](#)

How to produce Hydrogen?

Hydrogen is one of the most abundant elements, but it cannot be sourced from the atmosphere, since it is lighter than air. So, it has to be separated from other compounds like water. There are two most common ways to do that.

1. **Steam Methane Reforming (SMR):** It is less expensive, the process produces greenhouse gas emissions that defeat the main purpose of opting for hydrogen in the first place. Currently, 90% of global hydrogen production uses SMR.

2. **Electrolysis or water-splitting:** It involves passing electricity through water to separate it into basic elements, hydrogen and oxygen.

Electrolysis is an energy-intensive process. About 50 units of electricity is required to produce a kilogram of hydrogen, not counting the energy costs of the total plant system as well as for storage and transportation.

So, using fossil fuels to produce electricity will not make it “renewable”. But if electricity is produced from renewable sources, then it is called as Green Hydrogen.

Note: *Hydrogen gas has a chameleon-like character depending on its method of production.*

For instance,

Grey Hydrogen – If produced using fossil fuels,

Blue Hydrogen – If produced using fossil fuels but with carbon capture,

Green Hydrogen – If produced using renewable energy,

Pink Hydrogen – If produced using electrolysis powered by nuclear energy,

More niche definitions go on to add brown, black, turquoise, and yellow variants of hydrogen.

What are the other initiatives to boost Green Hydrogen?

1. Reliance industries announced that they would set up fuel-cell and electrolyser factories to produce green hydrogen. 2. Recently, the Adani group announced its intention to set up one of the largest green hydrogen projects in the world, 3. Indian Oil announced the setting up of the country’s first green hydrogen plant at its Mathura refinery, 4. NTPC announced plans for a green hydrogen fuelling station in Ladakh.

Must read: [Green Energy Initiatives in Budget 2021- Explained](#)

Globally, 120 mt (million tonnes) of hydrogen is produced annually. Only 1 per cent is green. The current annual demand for hydrogen in India is about 6 mt. It needs to go up ten times if net-zero targets are to be met. It promises to be a game-changer across industry, power and mobility; and of course, to meet the country’s decarbonisation goals.

72. The role of state policy in our acute smog crisis

Source: This post is based on the articles “**Cleaning the NCR’s air will require a far greater sense of purpose and political will**” published in **Indian Express** on 18th November 2021 and

“**The role of state policy in our acute smog crisis**” published in **Livemint** on 18th November 2021.

“**End the blame game**” published in **The Hindu** on 18th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3-Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Relevance: To understand the issue of stubble burning and consequent environmental pollution.

News: Supreme Court expressed disappointment over the air pollution in National Capital Region.

According to official data, Delhi has recorded less than 20 good air days (AQI less than 51) since 2015. This year also capital is facing the same issue.

Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has given directions to close all educational institutions till further notice, ban all construction work, and work from home for 50 percent of government staff till November 21.

What are the reasons behind constant air pollution in Delhi?

Government policies–

The **crop timetable** was set by Punjab in 2009 to match with the monsoon season. It was aimed at groundwater conservation by getting paddy to be fed by as much monsoon rain as possible. This pushed all further sowing seasons into a tight common band, leaving little time to harvest and sow rabi crops.

As part of our **‘mixed economy’**, we adopted a **system of mass procurement** for the sake of food security, which led to frequent gluts of rice and consequent excess of straw.

Work-in-silos– In the past, the problem got compounded because the Central Pollution Control Board, EPCA, transport departments, and state-level pollution management agencies worked in silos, and often at cross-purposes.

Technological issues

Mechanical harvesters– These are widely used and are faster than manual labour. However, they leave a residue of straw that farmers would rather burn than pay for eco-friendly but expensive field-clearance options. Incentive plans to cheapen the eco-friendly options have achieved little so far.

Other sources of Pollution

Particulate matter from personal vehicles, industrial and construction activities are the major source of pollution in the region.

Road dust is the dominant source of particulate matter and the most significant impediment to clean air, but unfortunately, is not taken care of.

Bursting of crackers– Deepavali, social gatherings such as weddings see a **demand for crackers** around Oct-Nov. It is further compounded by **less availability of green crackers** leads to additional smoke from all of these.

What are some steps taken to resolve the issue?

Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, in the past.

The new agency, instituted by the [Commission for Air Quality Management](#) in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act in August, is mandated to frame a “holistic approach” to the NCR’s perennial problem.

What are the solutions?

Market-driven demand for food grain would adjust the price and thereby helping output reach an optimal level. This would lead to optimal production of paddy and thereby less straw generation.

Farms could **diversify** into pulses, oilseeds, or other crops that we’re actually short of.

Resolving distrust– A plan for a gradual shift towards a market system accompanied by strong antitrust provisions designed to shield cultivator interests would allay their anxiety.

-The state could play chief procurer until a robust market for their produce takes shape, after which it should offer a fallback cushion mandated by law.

The way forward is to view winter air pollution as a natural disaster and target root causes.

73. How Indian startups are powering the metaverse

Source: This post is based on the article **“HOW INDIAN STARTUPS ARE POWERING THE METAVERSE”** published in **Livemint** on **18th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding various dimensions of metaverse and associated concerns

News: Metaverse has opened a whole new world in front of us. With a range of technologies like AR, VR and MR that it offers, we also need simultaneous policies to prevent misuse of data and protect privacy. Until then, the risks will continue to outweigh the immense benefits that metaverses can offer us.

What is AR, VR & Mixed Reality (MR)?

Virtual Reality (VR) is all about a world created solely inside computers or online.

Augmented Reality (AR) deals with the real world and has elements of the virtual world built atop it, like layers of information.

Mixed reality or MR, as the name suggests, mixes both realities in a bid to capture the best of both worlds. MR is what powers the metaverse to a very great extent.

MR is a metaverse for enterprises where –

- The employees can go in groups for training.
- The machines can be upgraded or replaced
- Existing and new employees can be trained on new machines quickly, safely, and at lower costs.

In this metaverse, the team members can even connect with an instructor by dialing in, following which the instructor can appear as a 3D hologram.

Must Read: [What is Metaverse – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are some associated concerns with the metaverse?

Products and services that come out from the metaverse will use data collection and AI-powered data analytics. This can lead to gross misuse if there are no checks and balances.

What is the way forward?

AI-powered algorithms **need to be transparent**.

AI training models should be **able to address bias** in the training data or simply be able to detect a human-induced bias.

Humans should have a **right to appeal** against the decision of an AI-based algorithm.

74. India saved itself from dubious demands at the Glasgow climate change meet

Source: This post is based on the article “**India saved itself from dubious demands at the Glasgow climate change meet**” published in **Livemint** on **18th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the last-minute changes regarding coal power, effected by India and China in the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#).

News: At the recently concluded COP26, India not only made new climate commitments, but also stood up to argue for its right to continue burning coal in the short to medium run.

The Indian delegation of negotiators eventually won the right for India to keep using coal for a while longer than richer countries.

We have already covered the entire issue in our previous articles. [Click here](#) to know about the entire issue in detail

75. Understanding why the informal sector really shrank during the pandemic

Source: This post is based on the article “Understanding why the informal sector really shrank during the pandemic” published in Indian Express on 18th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 3 -issues related to formalisation of workforce

Relevance: Formalisation of workforce

News: Increase in formalisation is not a consequence of micro and small informal firms transitioning to formality.

A recent study by SBI estimates that the share of the informal economy has fallen to a mere one-fifth of GDP — a figure comparable to many advanced economies.

However, the supposed formalisation that happened during the pandemic is mainly an outcome of shrinkage of the informal sector under extreme duress.

Understanding the basic difference between formalisation and infomalisation and the objectives of formalisation will help us to understand this issue better

What are the basic differences between formalisation and infomalisation?

As per ILO, the **Informal sector includes** those industries that are;

-Private unincorporated enterprises owned by individuals (or households) that are not constituted as separate legal entities independently of their owners.

– For which no complete accounts are available.

– Not registered under specific national legislation (such as Factories’ or Commercial Acts).

Formal workers in India are defined as those having access to at least one social security benefit such as a provident fund or healthcare benefits.

What are the basic objectives of formalisation?

Transitioning to formality requires a reduction in dualism in production and an improvement in employment quality.

Formalisation is not simply about legal considerations. Importantly, it is about increasing their productivity.

The final objective of formalisation is to improve the working and living conditions of those in the informal economy.

Hence, formalisation does not simply mean registration on a portal(E-shram), it includes a development strategy that requires stepping up investment in physical and human capital to boost productivity and the extension of social security benefits for all workers.

Why the formalisation during the pandemic cannot be counted as a transition to formality?

Firstly, a decline in the share of informal sectors GDP cannot be accounted for as formalisation. Because the informal sector, which was badly affected by the economic contraction during 2020-21, didn’t receive much policy support. Most of the supply-side measures were mainly focused on firms in the formal sector.

Secondly, a decline in the informal sector’s share in GDP has not been accompanied by an expected reduction in its employment share. For instance, the PLFS survey shows, the employment share in non-agricultural informal enterprises has increased from 68 percent in 2017-18 to 69.5 percent in 2019-20.

Lastly, just registering firms cannot be counted as formalization.

76. Digital divide in education can't be bridged by laptops and smartphones alone

Source: This post is based on the article “Digital divide in education can't be bridged by laptops and smartphones alone” published in Indian express on 18th November 2021.

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

Relevance: Understanding education divide and economic inequality.

News: Digital divide is not the only reason behind the educational divide, there are socio-economic reasons also.

The covid-induced online education system has highlighted the divide between the digital haves and have-nots, which is a reflection of economic inequality.

The distribution of smartphones and laptops to children to bridge the digital divide will not solve the problem. The lasting solution would be in addressing the root causes like education commercialisation by taking all-encompassing policy decisions.

What are the root causes of the increasing education divide?

Commercialisation of education is the main cause. Knowledge has become a commodity with a thriving market. Commodification leads to commercialisation.

The growth in entrepreneurship-led economic growth requires innovation and technology. Also, it has increased the knowledge intensity of production, which keeps the knowledge economy booming.

Further, Parents and students consider education as an assured instrument of mobility. This has further increased the demand for education.

Consequently, modern education has become costly.

What are the negative consequences?

Exclusion of poor from education: The digital revolution, with its emphasis on robotics, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing, will bypass the “capability of poor”

What are the solutions to address these challenges?

Guaranteeing economic security: Providing assured basic income through provision of universal property rights.

Expanding the ambit of Right to education: Article 21A now guarantees the right to education for children in the six-14 age group. This progressive step should be extended to all sectors and levels of education.

Fiscal measures: Enhancing budget allocation to education by reordering fiscal priorities, and applying methods like zero-based/ outcome budgeting etc.

Ideological change: put education at the centre of economic/ development policy formulation.

Involve private sector: Involve the corporate sector in meeting the demand for publicly funded education, not just through CSR, but as part of academic social responsibility, in return for special concessions and incentives.

Resource mobilisation: institute endowments and enhance diaspora contributions.

77. Why We Must Trade Freely

Source: This post is based on the article “Why We Must Trade Freely” published in ToI on 18th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 3- Effects of Liberalization on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

Relevance: Free trade vs import substitution and protection

News: Economists view trade openness as one of the most critical elements in a country's development policy.

Why India should review its trade protectionist policies?

The principle of comparative advantage: Freeing up trade moves a country towards specialization in products. This encourages the country to move towards products with low output costs and move away from comparatively costly products.

Benefits of economies of scale: Open Trade allows each country to specialize in a handful of products. In doing so, it allows each country to take advantage of scale economies and lower the costs of production of products it continues to produce.

Trade serves as a medium to access the most productive technology worldwide: For instance, the technology embodied in imported machines or imported products can be accessed by reverse engineering.

Exposes a country's entrepreneurs to compete against the best in the world: Such intense competition keeps them competitive and offers an opportunity to learn from their peers.

Free trade benchmarks the economy against the best in the world: Exposure to the best in the world is an effective instrument of exposing domestic-policy distortions and poor infrastructure. It can help to identify the changes needed in its domestic policies, regulations, and infrastructure when the country is non-competitive.

Access to the global supply chain: Due to advances in transportation and communication technologies, and technological advances, product innovation, product design, and production and assembly can all take place in different locations based on cost advantage.

For example, a country that is rich in human capital is can focus on innovation and design, leaving manufacturing of components and assembly to countries that have a cost advantage in those activities.

78. Wide fault lines within the Global Climate Risk Index

Source: This post is based on the article "**Wide fault lines within the Global Climate Risk Index**" published in **The Hindu** on **18th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3- Disaster and Disaster Management

Relevance: Global Climate Risk Index,

News: Global Climate Risk Index has many fault lines hence, effective methods to manage climate change are needed.

Global Climate Risk Index" (GCRI), published annually by GermanWatch, ranks 180 countries based on the impact of extreme weather events and associated socio-economic data from 2000-2019.

It aims to forewarn countries about the possibility of more frequent and/or severe climate-related events in the future.

However, recommendations based on this index should be used with caution due to deep fault lines in its methodology and interpretation of the country rankings.

What is climate risk?

IPCC, defines climate risk as the likelihood of unfavorable impacts occurring as a result of severe climate events interacting with vulnerable environmental, social, economic, political, or cultural conditions.

Quantitatively, it is the product of the probability of a climate event occurring and its adverse consequences.

What are the issues in Global Climate Risk Index?

First, the GCRI report does not provide a rationale for the selection of macro indicators.

Out of the four key indicators (The number of deaths, number of deaths per 1,00,000 inhabitants sum of losses in Purchasing Power Parity, and losses per unit of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)) two are absolute while the other two are relative.

Second, the index suffers from exclusion errors and selection bias. It excludes a number of key micro indicators such as the total number of people injured, loss of livestock, loss of public and private infrastructure, crop loss, and others that are better suited for assessing the composite loss resulting from climate change events.

Third, the index omits geological incidents like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or tsunamis, which may be potentially triggered by climate change and can have an economic and humanitarian impact.

Fourth, data not validated at ground level: The ranking under the GCRI is done based on data collected by Munich Re's NatCatService, which is not validated at the ground-level. They are at best approximate values of economic losses.

What is the way forward?

Climate change can at best be managed within a comprehensive risk assessment framework, which uses climate information to better cope with the impact of climate change.

In this context, India's latest module on the National Disaster Management Information System (NDMIS) extensively captures damages and losses caused by disasters. The data captured by the NDMIS includes all major climatic events.

It is necessary that India should use its own comprehensive risk assessment framework to identify climate risks.

79. Time to harvest the tailwind in exports

Source: This post is based on the article "Time to harvest the tailwind in exports" published in **Business standard** on **19th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Exports and Economic growth

News: The current increase in global trade offers an opportunity for India to get its exports' strategy in order before growth dips again.

What are the factors that have contributed to the growth in exports?

Factors that have given thrust to exports are,

- Revival of global growth
- Inventory restocking in early 2021 as economies opened.
- Pandemic-induced shift towards consumption of goods.

How does India stand to gain from this trend?

India's merchandise exports could continue to benefit from a rise in external demand in the short run due to the following reasons:

One, merchandise exports highly elastic to global growth are driving the post-pandemic surge. **India has a high share of these items** in its export's basket. Such items include chemicals engineering goods, petroleum products, and gems and jewelry.

Elasticity is calculated as the ratio of growth in exports to growth in world GDP, and a measure higher than 1 indicates high sensitivity to global growth.

Two, value of exports has grown faster than volume this fiscal, compared with the pre-pandemic levels. High global commodity prices have provided a disproportionate lift to the value of exports.

Three, despite higher commodity prices, the terms of trade (*the ratio of export prices to import prices*) remain favorable to exporters, but the gap has narrowed. This suggests prices of imports are growing faster than those of exports, and it could reduce the net earnings of exporters.

What are the risks that can offset exports trade?

The risks include,

- Supply-chain disruptions and material shortages
- Uncertainties around the impact of the delta variant
- Medium-term cut in global potential output.
- UNCTAD report cautions that the momentum in global trade in 2021 may be short-lived, as it partially reflects inventory restocking cycle.

What India should do to consolidate the benefits arising out of exports?

First, enhancing domestic production capacity will open avenues for exports in import-dependent sectors. In this context, PLI scheme can be a crucial bridge between short-term opportunities and longer-lasting growth.

Second, improving India's competitiveness through focused reduction in trade costs (tariff and non-tariff barriers, transportation, and other costs) is critical.

80. The government should prepare for a sustained spell of inflation

Source: This post is based on the article **"The government should prepare for a sustained spell of inflation"** published in **Live Mint** on **19th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Inflation and its effects on the economy

News: Inflation data based on the consumer price index (CPI) released this week suggest that, inflation has decreased compared to the previous months.

This may be good news for the Reserve Bank of India, but any complacency would not only be premature, it could also create challenges for an economic recovery.

Why India should not get complacent wrt inflation?

Inflation based on the wholesale price index (WPI) is still high: It was at 12.5% in October. This is the seventh month that this measure has been in double digits. Unlike CPI inflation, it hasn't shown any pattern of reduction. Moreover, wholesale food inflation has declined much slower than the retail.

Prices of cereals and edible oils have started rising: The FAO index has reported faster inflation for cereals and edible oils. It is due to increase in oil prices. Increasing oil prices result in higher demand for grains that can be used for ethanol production. The spill-over effect of these is felt on other food grains.

Supply shocks in the global market: Supply bottlenecks and adverse weather concerns have also prompted countries to hoard grain stocks, causing supply issues in the global market.

Increasing domestic demand: economic activity returning to normal would drive inflation.

Likelihood of Food inflation due to increase in input costs in the agricultural sector. Diesel and electricity prices have increased sharply, while a rise in fertilizer prices along with increasing wages has further pushed up the cost of cultivation.

What challenges/issues this type of inflation presents?

The nature and persistence of this type of inflation is what makes it worrisome. Because there are very few options of controlling it.

– **Monetary policy is unlikely to be of any help.** Global price movements may be beyond the control of domestic policy. Moreover, any attempt to control inflation for consumers would likely hurt the agrarian economy, which has been in distress for the past five years

– Also, on the other hand, falling casual wages, lack of employment opportunities and dearer essentials have worsened many human development indicators, nutritional outcomes included. This poses multiple challenges for the government.

Government has to control inflationary pressures while protecting the real incomes of the poor, at the same time it has to ensure that the cost of this exercise is not borne by farmers.

What is the way forward?

First, Government has to use public expenditure to protect the profitability of farming by enhancing subsidies and access to essential inputs.

Second, Government can expand the public distribution system (PDS) through universalization and an expansion of entitlements, such as the addition of pulses and edible oils to the PDS basket.

Third, the above strategies should be supplemented with the reopening of schools and anganwadis everywhere and enlarged access for children and pregnant women to food schemes.

81. [An SOS call from the Indian micro-irrigation industry](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**An SOS call from the Indian micro-irrigation industry**” published in **Live Mint** on **19th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Agriculture sector in India

Relevance: Critical role of micro irrigation in the sustainability of Indian agriculture

News: Despite the demonstrated benefits of micro irrigation in the sustainability of Indian agriculture, the industry that provides the resources for it is currently struggling to survive.

What are the benefits of micro irrigation system?

- water savings in comparison with flood irrigation.
- decrease in electricity consumption.
- the adoption of micro irrigation results in savings on fertilizers.
- results in the increase of the average productivity of fruits and vegetables.
- increase in farmers’ income.

What are the issues faced by the manufacturers & suppliers of drip irrigation systems?

Issue of prolonging the selection process and extending delays: In most Indian states, despite the availability of funds, scheme applications are processed only at the end of a financial year. This is done typically to achieve pre-set targets in what is famously known as the ‘March rush’. This tends to discourage farmers from availing the benefits offered under this scheme.

Delays in the reimbursement of subsidies to industries: Unlike other subsidies that are directly transferred to beneficiaries, those for installing drip irrigation systems are transferred to vendors only after due diligence. Further, there is no fixed timeline for the inspection and testing of an installed system. This results in a long pendency of disbursement against bills.

Governments continue to dishonor their commitments to support industries: For instance, under the scheme, the prices of equipment and installation services are fixed by the government. These have not been revised in the past five years. However, raw material costs, however, have risen by at least 50%.

What reforms are needed?

- set a timeline for each stage, from an application by a farmer to the execution and payment disbursement.
- strengthen the Centre’s monitoring mechanism by insisting on a periodic review of applications, approvals, work orders and actual installations.
- establish a central information system to monitor the scheme’s progress.
- deploy direct benefit transfers for subsidy sums to go straight into the bank accounts of farmers.
- ask state administrations to operate the scheme throughout the year on a first- come-first-serve basis.
- link equipment prices to either inflation or underlying input costs.

82. Strengthening financial sector

Source: This post is based on the article “**Strengthening financial sector**” published in Business Standard on **18th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Improving governance in banking sector

News: For a swift economic recovery of India, the central bank would need to guide the economy towards normalcy. In terms of monetary policy management, the central bank has started the unwinding process.

In the context of financial sector oversight, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das touched upon several interdependent issues in his remarks at an event recently, and these require more attention.

What is the present situation of the financial sector?

The impact of the pandemic on asset quality in the banking sector has been far lower than initially anticipated.

Asset quality and capital levels improved for the banking system in the September quarter compared to the previous one.

Various banks have reported better than expected profits.

What are some issues with the financial sector that merit attention?

Improved parameters are partly a result of regulatory relief provided by the central bank along with the support extended by the government. As **regulatory support is withdrawn**, some of the accounts that have been restructured may not remain solvent, and the banking system will have to get those resolved.

The RBI, however, does not have adequate powers to regulate PSBs, which often function with vacancies in the board and top management.

The government has been encouraging PSBs to push lending, including through outreach programmes. The idea is that pushing credit through PSBs will help increase consumption and investment demand. But it is important to recognise that overall economic growth depends on a variety of factors and pushing demand through the extension of credit may not be sustainable.

What steps are being taken?

RBI has started taking a closer look at the business models of banks as some are following a high risk-high return strategy with the objective of serving the interests of shareholders. Closely following the functioning of banks as will help RBI intervene in time to avoid any build-up of risk and ensure stability in the banking system

What is the way forward?

The RBI will need to ensure that lenders don't delay the resolution of restructured accounts, as has been the case in the past.

Since the condition of PSBs is significant for the flow of credit in the Indian economy, it makes sense to bring them at level with private banks in terms of regulation. This will help improve the overall health of the banking system in the long run.

In the short to medium term, the RBI should ensure that banks and NBFCs deal with the overall impact of the pandemic transparently, and have adequate capital to facilitate economic recovery.

Good governance is also necessary for a well-functioning and resilient financial institution.

83. The monetary, fiscal challenges of cryptocurrency

Source: This post is based on the article “**The monetary, fiscal challenges of cryptocurrency**” published in **The Indian Express** on **19th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding issues involved if Cryptocurrencies gain traction over the fiat currency as a medium of exchange

News: Digital money in the form of cryptocurrencies is gaining widespread popularity, esp with countries like El Salvador adopting Bitcoin as a legal tender. The debate around Cryptocurrencies frequently refer to their speculative nature as a cause of concern.

But, what happens if, over time, cryptos evolve from speculative assets to become viable mediums of exchange? What would this imply for the conduct of monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies?

Must Read: [Managing Cryptocurrencies](#)

Are cryptocurrencies viable as a medium of exchange?

Anything in excess supply is cheap. So whenever a central bank prints more and more currency, its value erodes over time.

The global financial crisis of 2008 resulted in a similar unprecedented expansion of G3 central bank balance sheets. This sparked fears of debasement (*lowering of value*) of currency.

To prevent a similar thing from happening to Bitcoin, the founders **fixed its supply** to a set number. One unintended side effect of this was that, like a usual currency, the supply of

Bitcoin could not be modified as per demand. This often causes price volatility, i.e. huge upward or downward movement of price.

This in turn means that Bitcoin or any other Cryptocurrency is not suitable as a medium of exchange.

Instead, it is a speculative asset.

How do stable coins solve the problem of price volatility?

To get around this issue, **Stablecoins**, like USDT (Tether), have been introduced, whose value is pegged to a fiat currency by maintaining equivalent reserves.

By **providing much greater price stability**, these Stablecoins hope to serve as viable mediums of exchange, and have proliferated rapidly in recent years.

Still, the risk to the monetary policy will depend on the degree of currency substitution.

What are the challenges if cryptocurrencies are adopted as medium of exchange?

Impact on monetary policy: If a privately-issued cryptocurrency begins to compete with fiat currency, something similar to Dollarisation would happen. **For instance:** In various Latin American countries, as citizens lost faith in domestic currency, they began transacting more and more in Dollars. This rendered domestic monetary policy ineffective, because domestic central banks cannot set interest rates and inject liquidity in a foreign currency.

Widespread adoption of privately issued digital currencies as a medium of exchange will have the same impact. The domestic monetary policy will not be able to respond to business cycle needs and external shocks.

Mega tech companies may start running global e-commerce or social networking platforms, issuing their own digital currencies to their global customer base. These digital currencies will serve both as a unit of account and a medium of exchange on their platforms.

Reorganisation of global economic activity into **digital currency areas (DCAs)** that run across national boundaries. These DCAs will be characterised by their own digital currency and unit of account issued by the network owner. The size of these DCAs might become larger than various national economies.

What are the implications of widespread adoption of Cryptos as mediums of exchange?

Threat to the monetary policy: If the privately issued Global Stablecoins gain credibility and acceptance over time, there will be every incentive for network owners to break free from fiat currencies pegs to generate monetary discretion. Once that happens, the fate of economies to respond to shocks, at least in part, would be in the hands of the network owner or private firms. This would present an existential threat to monetary policy.

Loss of seigniorage revenues to governments from the monopoly issuance of fiat currency

Fiscal revenues can also be adversely impacted by the increased tax evasion opportunities that crypto-currencies can facilitate.

In the light of an ineffective monetary policy, the **burden on fiscal policy to respond to economic shocks** will commensurately rise. This could create challenges in a post-Covid world.

Impact on rupee:

– **Capital account volatility:** If cryptos begin to get mined inside the Indian territory, they will induce capital inflows. It can increase capital account volatility. And if these cross-border flows circumvent capital flow measures, they also increase capital account convertibility.

What is the way forward?

The implications of widespread crypto adoption are complex and interlinked. But, the true challenge will be if the unbacked private digital currencies are seen as viable mediums of exchange. That's what policy must anticipate and prepare for.

84. Why India's pro-rich, anti-poor taxation policies must change

Source: This post is based on the article "Why India's pro-rich, anti-poor taxation policies must change" published in **Indian Express** on **20th November** 2021.

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

Relevance: Inequality, progressive taxation, inclusive growth

News: The government's fiscal policy is pro-rich and anti-poor. It is depriving the exchequer of some of the resources it needs to handle issues such as climate change.

Why it is said that the government's taxation policy is anti-poor and pro-rich?

Pro-rich policies:

Replacing the wealth tax with an income tax for households that earned more than 10 million rupees annually.

Reduction in the corporate tax rate for companies from 30 percent to 22 percent.

Corporate tax for manufacturing firms incorporated after October 1, 2019, was reduced from 25 to 15 percent.

Increasing the income tax exemption limit from Rs 2,00,000 to 2,50,000. The tax rate for incomes up to Rs 5 lakh was also reduced from 10 to 5 percent.

Increased indirect taxes: Pro-rich taxation policy has deprived the state of important resources. To compensate for the decline of direct taxes, the government has increased indirect taxes. Indirect taxes affect all Indians, irrespective of their income. For instance, taxes on petroleum products

Why the government should resort to a progressive taxation policy?

Reduce inequality: A 2018 Oxfam report revealed that 10 percent of the richest Indians hold 77.4 percent of the nation's wealth.

To mobilise funding for welfare schemes: According to The IIFL Wealth Hurun India Rich List of 2019, a tax rate of four percent on the nation's 953 richest families would give the government the equivalent of one percent of India's GDP.

In addition to that, the country has one of the world's fastest-growing populations of millionaires. The average wealth of these millionaires has increased by 74 percent over this period

85. Forced evolution

Source: This post is based on the article "Forced evolution" published in **Business Standard** on **17th November** 2021.

Syllabus: GS 3- issues related to Conservation of species.

Relevance: Evolution of species

News: Human's exploitation has led to forced evolutionary changes in other species. There is a need to minimise this risk.

How human's exploitation has led to forced evolutionary changes in other species?

Loss of useful traits:

In Mozambique, Past hunting pressure has led to an increase of naturally tuskless elephants. According to researchers, decades of poaching have made tusklessness relatively advantageous from an evolutionary standpoint in Gorongosa. This has resulted in the proliferation of tuskless females with mutations in two tooth genes.

Similarly, a rapid decrease in horn size of bighorn sheep, a prime target for trophy hunting in North America, has been noticed.

Decrease in body size of species:

High harvesting rates of larger fish have resulted in significant decreases in body size and earlier age of maturation in several species like Atlantic cod, Atlantic salmon

In the case of the red kangaroo, hunters target the larger individuals in a group, and there is evidence that the average size has declined.

What are the negative consequences of it?

In the short term, exploitative selection may appear to be an escape from extinction, but there are multiple drawbacks.

Extinction and loss of genetic variation: Humans target animals with certain desirable physical properties or phenotypes. It results in increased mortality among animals with desirable phenotypes. Consequently, those features start to decrease in frequency.

Difficulty in carrying routine activities to animals: For example, Tusks are not just ornamental. They serve a purpose”, elephants use tusks to dig for water and strip tree bark for food. With the loss of useful traits, they might be unable to perform their basic needs.

Increase in drug-resistant superbugs: Antibiotics impose extreme selection pressure on microbes, fungus and parasites. As a consequence, the microbes evolve to resist any drugs. For example, DDT-resistant mosquitoes. When the use of DDT as an insecticide started in the 1940s, the DDT -resistant ability of Mosquitoes increased. Now mosquitoes are largely immune to the chemical.

What is the way forward?

The application of genomic technology can minimise the risk of harmful genetic changes caused by the exploitation of wild species to some extent.

Until then, humans must avoid levels of exploitation that require several years of evolutionary recovery.

86. A stimulating alliance

Source: This post is based on the article “A stimulating alliance” published in **The Hindu** on 19th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 –Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Relevance: To understand the issue and need for sharing revenue with states.

News: Finance Minister announced that the Centre will release over ₹95,000 crores in one stroke to States this month.

The decision came after meeting with Chief Ministers and State Finance Ministers to discuss the state of the economy and to sustain the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why was it required?

The central policy fixes will not suffice to revive the country's **stagnant investment cycle** until States works along.

An **economy-focused dialogue**, independent of Budget consultations and GST Council meetings, with the states, is the need of the hour.

It seeks to **strengthen** the trust of states by its acceptance of States' request to expedite the sharing of taxable revenues — as in the case of GST compensation for this year.

The cash flow could also help several States **catch up on their CAPEX targets**, on which hinges an additional borrowing limit of 0.5% of their GSDP.

Public investments need to initially lift the economy for several more quarters before the private sector can be expected to spur the economy's growth.

The Centre and States need to jointly provide **easier and swifter clearances** to potential investors. More states are needed to join the single window system.

87. The story of an arrest, a 'resolution' and retribution

Source: This post is based on the article "**The story of an arrest, a 'resolution' and retribution**" published in **The Hindu** on 20th Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS3-Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development, and employment.

Relevance: To understand issues related to the debt recovery system and its performance.

News: The recent arrest of a former SBI chairman in a case related to a hotel project in Jaisalmer, that was financed by the bank, got mixed reactions.

Background-The hotel availed a loan of ₹25 crores from the SBI in 2007. It became a non-performing asset in June 2010. The bank later assigned the loan, which was valued at ₹40 crores, to the Asset Reconstruction Company(ARC) which pursued the matter in the DRT (Debt Recovery Tribunal) and under the SARFAESI Act.

It also approached the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Why do banks settle for less payment?

The bank recovered ₹25 crores out of dues of ₹40 crores. Recovering over 60% is excellent, when globally, such sales yield only around 30% or less. In India, recoveries average only 23.2% across various channels.

Firstly, it depends on a banker's judgment that recovering an even smaller amount today is better

then recovering an uncertain amount in the distant future, given the **time value of money and delays in our judicial processes**.

Secondly, investing people and money in messy recovery processes distracts a bank from its core business.

What are the steps taken to strengthen recovery and its failures?

In 1962, after the Palai Central Bank failed, an amended RBI Act provided for a **credit information bureau** that would have strengthened information sharing among bankers soon became dysfunctional.

In 1971, a study group recommended setting up a Credit Information Trust. The entire system was discontinued in 1995.

The **Debt Recovery Tribunal** was introduced in 1993 following the **Narasimham Committee** recommendations of 1991.

The **SARFAESI Act** was passed later, intended to speed up recovery and strengthen the hands of bankers. But, the system, over the years, became compromised in different ways.

-This included the non-appointment of judges, failed auctions, delayed payments, and so on.

The IBC is the most effective system to date to secure the interests of the lender.

88. Air pollution impacts productivity. Mitigations generate economic gains

Source: This post is based on the article “**Air pollution impacts productivity. Mitigations generate economic gains**” published in **ToI** on **20th November** 2021.

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

Relevance: Impacts of air pollution

News: Researcher from Columbia University outlines the economic costs of human exposure to air pollution.

What are the impacts of air pollution on human well-being?

It includes both health outcomes and non-health outcomes

Impact on health outcomes:

PM 2.5 can affect the respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

Children, when exposed to air pollution during sensitive periods in their lives, it impacts their cognitive performance.

Non-health outcomes:

Impact on worker productivity: for instance, if a farmer, is exposed to high levels of air pollution, it could lead to laboured breathing or changes in the heart rate which can impact the ability to work.

Sizable economic damages: Decreased worker productivity when valued in terms of money, it gets translated to millions of dollars being lost. In India, which has much greater air pollution levels, the economic damages are likely to be much higher.

Impact on living organisms:

Impact on butterflies: Increased Nitrogen deposits in soil due to air pollution creates acidic conditions. This reduces the nutrients caterpillars need to grow.

Impact on Koalas: air pollution via carbon dioxide in the atmosphere gradually destroys the nutrients from the eucalyptus leaves which koalas eat. Further, Carbon dioxide in eucalyptus builds up toxic ‘anti-nutrients’ like tannin which cannot be digested by koalas. As a consequence, koalas could significantly decline due to a loss in these leaves.

Impact on small birds: Studies in the US have found that Ozone pollution damages the respiratory systems and reduces the food sources of small birds like sparrows, warblers and finches.

What are the recommendations for air pollution mitigations in India?

First, mitigations can either reduce the use of fossil fuels or capture the emissions from the fossil fuel by including measures like catalytic converters for cars.

Second, transitioning to clean energy like solar or wind power is another mitigation strategy.

Third, for immediate impacts, there could be a driving restriction to reduce the number of vehicles on the road

However, certain factors are key to the success of such mitigations. These include how costly the technology is in terms of application and the impacts on jobs as well as the enforcement and compliance levels which governments can achieve for these.

89. Reforming the fertilizer sector

Source: This post is based on the article “Reforming the fertilizer sector” published in **The Hindu** on 23 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 3-Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices.

Relevance: To understand the fertilizer subsidies given in India, its issues, and the way forward.

News: A heavy increase in fertilizer subsidy bill is seen.

A brief background of fertilizer policy since 1991 reforms:

After years of unchanged prices, the **budget of 1991** raised the issue prices of fertilizers by 40% on average. This rise was rolled down to 30% in a few months, with exemption to small and marginal farmers from the price increase. Due to opposition, the **increase in Urea price was further rolled back** to 17% over the pre-reform price.

-It resulted in a big shift in the composition of fertilizers used in the country in favor of urea and thus Nitrogen(N).

The government started **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS)** in 2010 to address the growing imbalance in fertilizer use, which was skewed towards urea (N). However, only non-nitrogenous fertilizers P and K (phosphorus and potassium) were included in NBS; urea was left out.

What is the need for reforms in the fertilizer sector?

Firstly, It is putting a huge and unsustainable burden of rising fertilizer subsidy bills on the government exchequer. Fertilizer subsidy has doubled in a short period of three years between 2017-18 to 2021-22. At present, taxpayers bear 78% of the cost of urea and farmers pay only 22%.

Secondly, to promote the **efficient use** of fertilizers through the balanced use of N, P, and K (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium).

Thirdly, to reduce water and air **pollution** caused by the overuse of urea.

What are the challenges faced in reforming the sector?

A huge amount of fertilizer is imported into India due to limited domestic production capacity. Further, the **international prices of fertilizers are volatile** due to:

-Sharp upsurge in **international energy prices**, with which fertilizer prices are directly related.

-**Supply constraints** in major producing countries due to robust domestic demand, production cuts, and export restrictions.

-**Cartels** of major global energy producers have a strong influence on prices.

What is the way forward?

In order to address the multiple goals of fertilizer policy, we need to simultaneously work on four key policy areas.

Firstly, we need to be **self-reliant** and not depend on the import of fertilizers.

Secondly, we need to **extend the NBS model to urea** and allow for price rationalization of urea compared to non-nitrogenous fertilizers and prices of crops.

-Distribution of price change over both price and subsidy based on some rational formula rather than just on subsidy.

Thirdly, We need to shift towards **non-chemical fertilizers** like organic and biofertilizers and bring parity in prices and subsidies given to chemical fertilizers with organic and biofertilizers.

-This also provides the scope to use large biomass of crop that goes waste and enhance the value of livestock by-products.

Finally, India should pay attention to improving **fertilizer efficiency** through **need-based use** rather than using excess fertilizer in the field.

What are the steps already taken by the government?

For being self-reliant, five urea plants are being revived in the public sector. To increase the efficiency of fertilizer use, the recently developed Nano urea by IFFCO shows promising results in reducing the usage of urea.

90. Time to rethink Indian levies on motor vehicles

Source: This post is based on the article “**Time to rethink Indian levies on motor vehicles**” published in **Livemint** on 23 November 2021.

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

Relevance: To understand the system of differential taxation based on car length and its impact.

News:

How different cars are taxed in India?

GST is levied at 28%, the top slab, with an add-on cess of 1% on small cars (less than 4m length) and 17-22% extra on those longer than 4 meters. While the exhaust-free Electric Vehicles attract a GST rate of just 5%.

What is the rationale behind such a differential taxation system?

The majority of the cars attracting a higher rate of GST are ‘luxury’ cars.

A low tax rate makes it possible for EV-makers to reduce prices enough to compete with fossil-fuel-based cars. It will also hasten the process of transition to EVs.

What are the issues associated with this differential taxation system?

Excessive protection to EVs will not help in becoming globally competitive. ‘Made in India’ EVs need to be cost-competitive on their own by innovation and competition, then only will have a good chance at global success.

As low tax on smaller cars led to more demand for smaller cars, and therefore larger vehicles, that make up the bulk of foreign markets, are unable to find economies of scale.

What is needed to be done?

A similar level of the lower burden of tax on all cars will push automakers to work harder on all cost-heads under their control.

It may also be time to explore the idea of **road pricing for arterial routes** (important routes in a system of roads) in big cities to decongest traffic. **Satellite-linked technology** can enable this system to implement differential rates.

-Charges could generally **vary by traffic density**, with vehicles in a hurry billed extra for the use of a speedy express lane and EVs can be given these facilities for free to encourage their use.

91. Another Supply Chain Crisis?

Source: This post is based on the article “**Another Supply Chain Crisis?**” published in **Times Of India** on 22 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Relevance: To understand the potential supply chain crisis due to covid-19 impact in china.

News: US Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell recently said that Americans should be prepared for the global supply chain to remain in crisis through 2022.

Covid-induced supply chain disruption highlighted the loopholes of total dependence on one country for vital products, and diversification will take a few years to implement.

What is the risk to the global supply chain?

If China’s ‘**zero- Covid strategy**’ **fails** after the Winter Olympics in February, there is going to be a major crisis. **Delta variant** could further the crisis.

-if it experiences a devastating Covid wave, the Chinese government will be forced to clamp down on exports of critical products, to fulfill the demand of its own population.

Lean manufacturing processes and just-in-time delivery mean a factory closure in one Asian country can unleash a global crisis.

How much is the dependence of the world on China for products?

According to the United Nations, China accounts for 28.7% of global manufacturing output. China is India’s largest trading partner; bilateral trade was at \$92.68 billion in 2019.

A major chunk of **electronic components, auto parts, consumer durables**, active pharmaceutical ingredients (**APIs**), and key starting materials (**KSM**) required to manufacture lifesaving drugs are imported from China.

In case of any disruption, global healthcare would be severely affected. For example, 80% of heparin(used to prevent blood clotting) comes from China. Without heparin, critical care will suffer, virtually paralyzing the entire global healthcare delivery system.

What needs to be done by India?

It is important for every Indian industrial body to create a checklist of vulnerable items and secure supply till the end of 2022.

Most countries cannot be self-reliant due to small aging populations, which means a small consumer base or a lack of a talented workforce. It is time for India to enhance its status by becoming a global manufacturing hub.

92. Climate justice must drive climate action

Source: This post is based on the article “**Climate justice must drive climate action**” published in **Business Standard** on **22nd Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the shortcomings of the present climate process and ways to improve it.

News: Big emitters must reconsider their stated net-zero date and specify a credible action plan.

Important elements of a disaster response

There are four elements in the response to any disaster that are important —

- The credibility of the warning
- A shared sense of emergency
- A social and political norm of joint responsibility
- A higher authority capable of enforcing restraint and liability on those most responsible for the risk

The biggest natural disaster of our times is – climate change.

How have UNFCCC & IPCC fared in terms of the four elements of response wrt climate change?

Credibility of warning: Each of the five assessments by IPCC and early indications of the sixth assessment have strengthened the scientific consensus on the facts and the projections. The IPCC reports have certainly raised awareness not just in scientific circles, but also among the public, particularly young people. Doubts about their reliability are now limited to fringe groups.

Shared sense of emergency: As most drastic consequences of the climate change will be witnessed in the future, so decision-making at global scale is still limited to short-term considerations. This absence of a sense of emergency can be seen in the casual and indifferent declarations of net-zero emissions decades ahead.

Must Read: [Glasgow Climate Pact – Explained, pointwise](#)

Joint responsibility: This is reflected in the principle of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR). But here also the problem is that the principles of climate justice that should govern the differentiation of responsibility have never been framed. **Differentiation by capacity** (*as per a nation's capacity*) is now more widely accepted even in rich countries. However, unless the issue of **differentiation by culpability** (*as per a nation's responsibility/liability*) is adequately resolved, countries will hold back on their commitments.

Higher authority: This is entirely missing in the global climate response process. Presently, we rely on the voluntary acceptance of liability by those responsible for the greater part of the accumulation of greenhouse gases.

What are the implications?

The climate process is now driven largely by narrow national interests. The past is ignored altogether in the process.

Emergence of a three-part power structure in the climate negotiations:

- **The first part** includes the two big emitters, **China** and the **US**, whose participation is a pre-condition for an effective agreement. This G-2 dimension is now clearly evident in the separate agreement that these two countries presented before and during the 2015 Paris COP meeting and the 2021 Glasgow COP meeting.
- **The second part** consists of **18-20 countries**, each one of which accounts for 1% or more of the global carbon emissions

– **The third part** consists of about **180 countries** that are at the receiving end of what the big players decide.

What is the way forward?

As per *Nitin Desai (Business Standard)*,

– **Climate dharma**: A consensus on the principles of climate justice that would define each country's and each individual's duty is needed

– **Carbon-saving technologies** may also help

– Most big emitters should **bring forward their net-zero target dates** and specify a credible action plan from now onwards at the 2022 COP meeting.

– An **independent national mechanism** in every country for ensuring credibility and accountability

93. Explained: In perspective, farm distress and the demand for guaranteed MSP

Source: This post is based on the article “**Explained: In perspective, farm distress and the demand for guaranteed MSP**” published in **The Indian Express** and “**Modi's farm misadventure is a huge setback for urbanization**” published in **Live mint** on **23rd November 2021**. **Syllabus:** GS3 – issues related to agriculture sector

Relevance: Agri reforms

News: Despite the announcement by the PM to repeal the three farm laws, farmers have said their protest will continue. They have written to the PM with their six remaining demands.

One of the main demands by farmers is that, **MSP should be made a legal entitlement** of all farmers for all agricultural produce. However, a legally mandated MSP regime is likely to be neither feasible nor sustainable in the long run. A guaranteed MSP can have a few unintended consequences.

Hence, a balanced approach would be to address the issues hampering the growth of agriculture and doubling the incomes of farmers in India.

What is the status of MSP in India?

MSPs are the prices at which, the government promises to procure agricultural produce from farmers.

At present, the government announces MSPs for 23 crops, but procurement happens only for a few among them. Also, procurement varies quite a lot across states.

Till now, the Government is not legally mandated by law to procure under MSP. The government can by its discretion choose, not to procure.

Must Read: [What is MSP?](#)

What are the issues/challenges in a legally mandated MSP regime?

A legal mandate for MSP would force the government to purchase all the produce that any farmer wants to sell at the declared MSP. It would also have to procure from all states, and all crops for which MSPs are announced. This will have the following unintended outcomes:

– High cost to the exchequer

– Loss of food grains due to rotting in mandis.

– Increase food inflation.

– Encouragement to unsustainable cultivation of water intensive crops, rice and wheat. This will indirectly contribute to stubble burning.

– It will increase the capacity of buffer stocks. Already, grain stocks lying with the government are more than twice its buffer requirement.

What are the issues that are hampering the growth of agriculture in India?

- Holdings are fragmented and have become uneconomical.
- Lack of focus towards crop diversification
- Public investments compared to subsidies are very less.
- Declining productivity.
- Disguised labor force
- Low income (Farmers earns an average of ₹27 a day)
- Lack of growth in non-farm sector jobs, limiting diversification of agriculture.

What is the way forward?

Instead of bypassing the market by using MSPs, the government should make efforts to enable farmers to participate in the market.

Ramp up investment in the agriculture sector: Provide better irrigation facilities, easier access to credit, timely access to power, and ramping up warehouse capacity and extension services, including post-harvest marketing. This will increase farmers’ bargaining ability and choices before them.

Boosting India’s industrial and services sectors: Agriculture accounts for just 17% of India’s GDP while employing 55% of its population. Industry and service sectors can potentially take up the excess labor that is presently engaged in unremunerative farm activities. Rapid growth of industries and services for the next couple of decades could help alleviate India’s farm distress.

Direct cash transfers to the rural poor: In the short term, providing direct cash transfers to the rural poor can alleviate distress. \$100 billion in annual subsidies for food, farming and village unemployment should be slowly replaced by a basic income.

Replicating the success of AMUL in agriculture: Supporting producers’ organizations that capture more of the farm-to-fork value chain would mean better prices for farmers.

94. Non-farm jobs and social mores hold India’s key to farm reforms

Source: This post is based on the article “**Non-farm jobs and social mores hold India’s key to farm reforms**” published in **Live mint** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Agriculture sector

Relevance: Necessary pre-conditions for success of Agri reforms.

News: Recently, government repealed three farm laws.

Agri reforms in India are necessary to unlock the true potential of agriculture and the agro-processing industry, and for the efficient allocation of private and government resources.

However, the success of any attempt to reform the agriculture sector in India would depend to a large extent on the state of its economy’s non-farm sectors, as well as societal culture.

Further, other preconditions for successful farm reforms, such as improved irrigation and an agriculture insurance market that functions better, are also needed.

What has been the impact of High agri income in Punjab and Haryana?

Decline in employment of adults and women: Data shows that, in Punjab and Haryana, due to high agricultural incomes, there is a drastic decline in agricultural employment among adults and women.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November, 2021

- Because of high agricultural incomes, young men (aged 20-29 years) could afford to remain unemployed or in education in Punjab and Haryana.
- Similarly, as per data, the number of women employed in agriculture have declined over the years. Meanwhile, there has been no increase in women participation in non-farm work. This means with high agri incomes, more women have retreated to their homes, i.e. they are no longer working.

Why decent employment opportunities in non-farm sector are necessary for successful Agri reforms?

Now, in the above context, if price guarantees for rice and wheat are rolled back, this would make a price decline of rice and wheat inevitable due to their excess supply in the market. If this were to happen, farmers would be unable to sustain their current income levels and lifestyle.

This will force farmers in these states to find alternative sources of income that includes, women and younger adults in farmer families taking up paid work.

But with decline of non-farm sectors, avenue to absorb youth is very less. Further, women returning to paid work will be seen as a decrease in societal status.

This is why rich farmers in Haryana and Punjab are forced to maintain the status quo with respect to agri reforms.

Hence, reviving high-paying jobs in non-farm sectors becomes an important precondition for Agri reforms in India.

95. 'Andaman & Nicobar Is Key To Act East Policy'

Source: This post is based on the article “**Andaman & Nicobar Is Key To Act East Policy**” published in **Times of India** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Security challenges and their management in border areas.

Relevance: To understand the strategic significance of Andaman & Nicobar and Andaman & Nicobar Command.

News: Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) is the country's only integrated military command till now in India. So, It is crucial for India's military outpost to counter China's expanding footprint in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

About Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC)

The ANC was set up in 2001. Over 20 years, the ANC evolved into

- A Quad-service integrated theatre command of the army, navy, air force and coast guard.
- Better integration, training, and a common approach to operations, logistics and sustenance.
- Enhanced ANC's communications, networking and maritime domain awareness along with huge infrastructure development.
- The creation of the office of the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** has greatly empowered ANC and the HQ Integrated Defence Staff with better control, continuity and clarity in multiservice and multi-domain operations.

All these made the A&N Islands from the initial outpost a so-called springboard to a veritable hub of activities in the region.

Why Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) is significant?

India's central role and peninsular orientation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) lends itself to supporting net maritime security in the region.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of November, 2021

Over the years, the efforts of development have been towards [Security And Growth for All in the Region \(SAGAR\)](#). The IOR offer tremendous scope for cooperation by everyone.

IOR region is witnessing more regular transit movements to and from the Gulfs of Aden and Oman.

So the A&N Islands **provide an additional strategic outreach** towards India's interests in the IOR. The ANC's infrastructure and military assets provide for the defence of India's islands and the protection of Indian interests in the IOR. So, the ANC has been a **pivot in India's 'Act East' and 'Neighbourhood First' policies**.

Recent initiatives in the A&N Region

The Niti Aayog, as well as the [Island Development Agency](#), have announced numerous initiatives for further development of the A&N Islands.

In 2020, the government launched [submarine optical fibre cable project in A&N](#) Islands to provide digital connectivity.

The airport at Port Blair will also become an international airport with regional connectivity by 2022.

All these will give a fillip to tourism at the islands and in future make the island an important transshipment hub for Indian mainland.

What the country should learn from ANC?

The establishment of ANC saved precious government resources and operational benefits in the form of shorter decision cycles. The same approach of ANC should be followed by government in establishing other integrated theatre commands for the nation.

Must Read: [Integrated Theatre commands in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

96. Use of facial recognition technology by police is dangerous

Source: This post is based on the article **"Use of facial recognition technology by police is dangerous"** published in **The Indian Express** on 24th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS-3 – Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Relevance: To understand the dilemma of security and privacy.

News: Hyderabad city police is deploying lakhs of cameras connected in a real-time network managed by Hyderabad's Command and Control Centre and can be used for facial recognition technology.

In Hyderabad, an Integrated Police Command Control Centre has been set up, with a cost of Rs 800 crore. The center will allow the police to access real-time surveillance footage from the network of cameras that monitor the city.

Numerous reports have emerged from Hyderabad about illegal search operations and police taking photographs of people on the road without any reason.

What is Facial Recognition Technology(FRT)?

Facial recognition technology identifies the distinctive features of a person's face, and it creates a biometric map using these features. Then an algorithm matches these features with possible individuals. The system searches across databases of millions of images and information gathered without knowledge or consent.

What are the issues with FRT?

Surveillance practices like data analytics, social media analysis capabilities and facial recognition are alleged to be an attempt to **control citizens' lives through technology**.

International experience – The EU is in the process of banning this technology. Belgium, Luxembourg and multiple cities in the US have already banned this technology.

Specific concerns linked to India:

-Supreme Court in its judgment has already recognized the Right to Privacy as the fundamental right. However, there is yet **no privacy law in India** to regulate data collection and to act as an oversight mechanism. The proposed 'Personal Data Protection Bill 2019' is still stuck in Parliament.

– Without a law on privacy, public spaces will turn into sites of technological experimentation, where human rights are sidelined for profit and control.

-In the name of the protection of women and children, public money is being spent on these technologies. However, there is yet no evidence of their effectiveness, further **wasting public funds**.

-This Hyderabad model will **motivate other** state police departments and intelligence agencies to adopt similar measures throughout the country.

97. EVs for last-mile delivery could boost India's e-commerce sector

Source: This post is based on the article “**EVs for last-mile delivery could boost India's e-commerce sector**” published in **Live mint** on 24 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 –Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Relevance: To understand the new demand for EV's for environment-friendly last-mile delivery.

News: Recently, NITI Aayog and around 30 companies, including many e-commerce and logistics firms, launched their **Shoonya campaign** that calls for accelerated electrification of last-mile delivery.

Why big private companies are adopting electric vehicles?

A **rapid digital adoption** across India during the **covid** pandemic has pressured companies to expand their last-mile logistics.

A McKinsey analysis stated that as more netizens order online, India requires between 1 million and 1.5 million two-wheelers for delivery, by 2025.

Companies seem to be realizing that electrifying the delivery vehicles could help them cut **fuel and maintenance costs**, besides reducing **harmful emissions**. 100% electrification of their two-wheeler fleets by 2025 could save close to \$1 billion as well as a 1.5-million-tonne reduction in carbon dioxide emissions each year.

What are the challenges?

The idea is yet to take off on a larger scale owing to **structural issues**, including financing limitations, lack of awareness, and the limited availability of EV models right now.

Insurers lack sufficient data to accurately price risk while providing cover for these vehicles.

What efforts are done to tackle the last-mile delivery issue?

Efforts by private players:

-The rise of mobility platforms gives companies an option to **lease vehicles** instead of purchasing them.

-**Newer models** of EVs are coming up with features such as higher top speeds, longer ranges, and better tech packages that are ideal for last-mile delivery.

Efforts by Union Government:

-**FAME-II** incentives have been increased from ₹10,000 per kWh to ₹15,000 per kWh, to spur demand and supply in this space.

-**Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** for the automotive sector, where around ₹26,000 crores have been earmarked for 5 years. The initiative could incentivize EV production in the country.

98. Sustainable agriculture

Source: This post is based on the article “**Sustainable agriculture**” published in **Business Standard** on 23 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 –Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country.

Relevance: To understand the need and ways of sustainable agricultural practices.

News: During the recent climate summit in Glasgow, India did not ratify “**Action Agenda on Sustainable Agriculture**”.

India stated that it already has a “**National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture**” as part of its broad “National Action Plan on Climate Change”. However, these initiatives have failed to improve the condition of Indian agriculture.

What are the issues in Indian agricultural practices?

The country’s Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission from the farm sector is increasing constantly.

-India overtook China in 2011 to become the world’s top polluter in terms of agricultural emissions.

-Emission from the two main methane-emitting activities — paddy cultivation and livestock rearing — is also increasing continuously.

Environment-friendly practices, like organic farming or zero-budget cultivation, are not able to match the massive and rapidly growing demand for farm products.

What is the solution?

India needs “sustainable agriculture” whereby technologies and agronomic practices are efficient, least injurious to the environment, and yet profitable for farmers.

What are the means to execute such a sustainable practice?

Mixing the **modern** productivity-boosting **technologies**, including environment-resilient crop varieties and animal breeds, **with traditional knowledge** and norms, that promote living in harmony with nature.

Widely practiced mono-cropping and unchanged cropping cycles should be replaced with **diversified farming**. It should include a judicious mix of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and agroforestry.

Land-restoring and fertility-enhancing crops like legumes and quick-growing vegetation should be included in the cropping sequence. It will improve soil’s physical, chemical, and biological health.

Physical churning of soil needs to be avoided or minimized. Novel concepts like conservative agriculture involving **zero or minimum tillage** and direct seeding of crops can help to do so.

Mixing manures-Greater use of farmyard manure in combination with chemical fertilizers.

-Placement of fertilizers at the right depth near the plant roots and rational use of pesticides can help in promoting sustainable farming.

Integrated disease and pest management, involving the planting of disease-resistant crop varieties and deployment of natural predators of pests.

Promotion of rainwater harvesting and **economical use of water** through systems like drip and sprinkler irrigation.

Practices like **stubble burning need to be forbidden**.

99. What India should strive for in trade deals

Source: This post is based on the article “**What India should strive for in trade deals**” published in **Business Standard** on 23 Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: To get an inside view on the India’s trade negotiations.

News: India has decided to enter into trade agreements with key partners like the UK, UAE and Australia and announced an ambitious plan for an early harvest deal by March 2022.

These trade agreements coincides with India coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic-related slowdown and wants to become “Atmanirbhar” and play “a bigger role in the global value chain”.

What are the challenges?

India’s **previous negotiations** on trade agreements has not provided Indian exporters a level playing field.

-For example, in the case of early harvest with Thailand, Thailand has benefitted more compared to India.

India offered little and received a lower level of commitment, compared to its competitors in these markets.

The possibilities of attracting more FDI, gaining greater **market access, and partnership** have always taken a back seat in our industry consultations.

Policy uncertainty has been a key issue in many sectors in the case of India. Policies designed to meet certain objectives, like reducing the trade imbalance with China, ended up adversely affecting countries other than China.

India has one of the **highest tariffs** in the world. Since the trade agreements lead to tariff liberalisation, Indian industry always worries about tariff liberalisation intensifying competition in the domestic market.

India’s defensive policies like the ban on some GI products are considered by some countries as a violation of India’s GI obligation under TRIPS.

What should India do in the new trade agreements?

The consultations have to **look beyond tariffs**. The focus should be on attracting investment and the development of value chains.

Allowing greater market access can help other countries to source more from India, as seen in the case of ASEAN countries, and there is a good chance that our exports will increase.

Win-Win deal-Gains can be cross-sectoral, focus should be on areas of export competence and interest. For example, access to cross markets for Indian IT companies and UK liquor companies.

As India enters into trade negotiations, there is a need for **policy consistency and transparency**.

It is important to make India a bigger player in the **global value chain**, import substitution may not lead to greater global integration.

There is a **need for alignment** between domestic policy objectives and that of trade agreements to further India's position in trade negotiations.

India may **look at best practices** of countries like Vietnam, which has successfully signed trade agreements, as it designs its domestic policies and enters into trade agreement negotiations.

100. Over-valued unicorns in a distressed economy

Source: This post is based on the article "**Over-valued unicorns in a distressed economy**" published in **The Hindu** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – issues related to Startup sector

Relevance: Unicorns in India and their future growth

News: India's largest IPO (Paytm) made a disastrous stock market debut and ended its first trading day at a discount of 27% to the issue price. Questions are, hence, being raised on the valuation of the firm and the IPO.

Paytm, along with an educational technology start-up, are being viewed as one of the 'shining beacons' among a growing list of unicorns in India.

But the not so enthusiastic response towards the giant IPO casts doubts about the valuations of unicorns in India.

What are the reasons for the remarkable growth of Unicorns in India?

In recent years, the growth of **unicorns** in India is remarkable, covering diverse sectors. Digital payment in FinTech sector and educational sector has achieved unprecedented growth. The reasons are:

Market opportunity due to a growing smartphone user base: The country has around 640 million Internet users, of which 550 million are smartphone users. Rising Internet penetration and growth of digital payments are also crucial factors.

Impact of the Pandemic: it has been a blessing in disguise for EdTech firms. Many are forced to shift to e-education.

The expectation that startups have the ability to sustain an initial level of hyper growth: because start-ups with limited resources aim at technology disruption.

Why Paytm's IPO didn't go well?

Paytm that came out with the giant IPO was considered by many as a technology disruptor and game changer which created hype and overvaluation. However, it failed to sustain the hype because of the following reasons

Core business model is not unique: Paytm doesn't do anything different from its competitors'. For example, it is losing market share as more and more people are opting for UPI-based payments to directly transfer money from their bank accounts, instead of wallets.

Funding losses: The structure of the group has an inherent weakness. There are 39 subsidiaries and over half of these put together contribute to a mere 5% of its revenues.

What is wrong with India's overhyped unicorns?

Too many acquisitions: Many firms are doing multiple acquisitions. For eg: The Edtech startup (*whose name is not mentioned in the article*) acquired nine other firms in one year. Too many acquisitions with big ambitions to grow inorganically puts pressure on the balance sheet in the years to come, as some new acquisitions are likely to fail.

Overestimation of demand projections: Data by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) points that there are just about 23 million households which earn more than ₹5 lakh per year i.e., less than ₹42,000 a month, which is about 7% of all Indian families. If firms want to go beyond this 7% of households, they have to offer bigger discounts, burning more cash in the process.

Saturation point reached: The current state of Indian economy and employment situation are in a misery. Due to this, tech companies are already reaching the saturation point of their real customer-base i.e. consumers who can afford to consume without discounts.

Hence, India is witnessing new unicorns emerging every month, which are products of inflated valuations to tap more funds to burn more cash. These valuations are solely on the basis of future earnings, with virtually no profits to show in the present.

101. [The road to a Himalayan blunder](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "[The road to a Himalayan blunder](#)" published in **The Hindu** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Disaster management

Relevance: Vulnerability of Himalayan states, Chardam project, manmade disaster

News: The Char Dham road expansion project, to be executed by Min of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), was inaugurated in 2016.

In 2018, it was challenged by an NGO for its potential impact on the Himalayan ecology.

The Supreme Court (SC), in 2020, after consultation with the high-powered committee (HPC) and on the basis of MoRTH guidelines, said that the width of the roads cannot exceed 5.5 m.

Must Read: [Green and secure: Char Dham Highway project must see government and environmentalists work together](#)

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) filed an appeal for a double-lane road with an even higher road width to meet the requirement of the army.

Subsequently, Min of Road Transport and highways (MoRTH) amended its 2018 circular and raised the 5.5m width limit to 10m.

The case is in SC.

If the government does not desist from widening the roads under this project, it will be a Himalayan blunder.

What are the stances taken by the govt and the petitioners in this case?

Govt argues that wide roads are necessary for the sake of national security in the Garhwal region.

The petitioners, residents of the valleys in the Garhwal region, stress on the need for a regulated and narrower intermediate road width with a walking footpath.

What is the purpose of Char dham project?

[Char Dham road project](#) aims to **provide all-weather connectivity** to the four major shrines of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.

It was envisioned that providing infrastructural support will **increase pilgrimage tourism** from the Indian plains and provide local economic dividends.

However, in the process to boost economy, the government has ignored the ill effects of rampant construction on the fragile Himalayan range.

Why broader roads are not safe in Uttarakhand Himalayas?

Terrain of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand is different from the terrain in Ladakh: Valleys in Uttarakhand are narrow and close-ended with steep slopes of 60-70 degrees. On the other hand, the valleys in Ladakh have a slope elevation of 30 degrees.

Uttarakhand Himalayas is prone to frequent disasters. For instance, recent floods in the Dhauliganga, Rishi Ganga and Alaknanda rivers claimed over 200 lives.

Will increase man-made disasters: It will significantly reinforce mass wasting processes and erosion rates given the steepness of the slopes, earthquake activity and erosivity of increased monsoonal precipitation. **For instance**, during the monsoons, owing to the massive hill-cutting for the Char Dham road project, several landslides have occurred in the region.

Hence, the unique Himalayan landscape with steep slopes and sharp gradients is not amenable to human engineering.

What is the way forward?

– **Disaster-resilient, safe and stable infrastructure** is the only solution for commuting by road in the hills.

– **Minimum human-induced disturbances:** Any human-induced change beyond the Himalayas' carrying capacity will have an impact on stream run-offs and erosional or depositional processes. Considering such vulnerabilities, we need to keep the scale of human-induced disturbances to the minimum level possible.

102. Dear 'The Economist', climate change is a global predicament

Source: This post is based on the article "Dear 'The Economist', climate change is a global predicament" published in **Live mint** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to the energy sector

Relevance: Greenhouse gas emissions, Climate change, Energy transition

News: The Economist recently published a series of reports blaming countries like China and India for much of the carbon-emissions problem.

Such international media focus on just Indian and Chinese carbon emissions is unfair and doesn't help the larger cause of climate change.

There is no denying that, in 2020, in absolute terms, China and India emitted more carbon dioxide than the US and Europe.

However, labelling carbon emissions as a chiefly India-China problem is injustice to the cause and doesn't help solve it.

Nor does it help alleviate the structural issues ailing the transition of developing economies like India towards cleaner sources of energy.

Why it is unfair to blame that carbon emissions are chiefly an India-China problem?

Firstly, per capita carbon dioxide emissions of developed countries are still higher than India and China per capita emissions. For instance, in 2020, the per capita carbon dioxide emission of the US was 1.9 times that of China and eight times that of India.

Secondly, such a simplistic picture hides the complete truth. **For instance**, Although China was responsible for more carbon emissions than US and EU put together, in 2020, but it was also the world leader in solar and wind power, EV cars, and high-speed rail transport.

Thirdly, In the Indian case, the production of solar power has been rising, the government has set ambitious targets on electric vehicles to reduce India's dependence on petrol and diesel, and reduce emissions in the process.

However, there are certain structure challenges for India while transiting towards a clean energy economy.

What are the structural challenges for India that hampers India's transition towards clean energy?

Firstly, Coal-based power continues to be the dominant source of energy. In 2010-11, it formed 54% of the power produced. In this context, growth of electric vehicles that end up using electric energy derived from coal will have no impact on the net carbon emissions.

Secondly, if solar-power capacity expands fast, then many coal-based power plants will end up in further financial trouble than they already are, and this will create problems for banks which have lent them money.

Thirdly, As per the British economist Lord Nicholas Stern '*climate change results from history's greatest market failure—the failure to attach a price to the costs of carbon dioxide emissions*'

In this backdrop, it is widely believed that taxing fossil fuels at high rate will bring down the consumption of fossil fuels. In India, the government already taxes petrol and diesel at a very high rate. So, despite attaching costs, the market failure argument doesn't hold good for India.

Fourthly, the impact on fiscal resources: If electric vehicles become popular, tax collections from petrol and diesel are likely to come down.

103. [New cryptocurrency bill seeks to ban private players](#)

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

'New cryptocurrency bill seeks to ban private players' published in **The Hindu** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

'Bill to ban private cryptos this session' published in **Business Standard** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

'Crypto, not currency – Cryptocurrency: Ideal law will ban use as legal tender, allow it to be an asset' published in **TOI** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

'Govt plans Bills to bar pvt cryptocurrency with a few 'exceptions', repeal farm laws' published in **The Indian Express** on **24th Nov 2021**.

'Govt to move bill to ban all 'private cryptocurrencies' published in **Livemint** on **24th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Regulation of Cryptocurrency

News: The government has listed **the Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021** for the upcoming winter session of Parliament, starting November 29.

The bill is **yet to be officially approved** by the Cabinet.

This is among the 26 pieces of legislation, including the repeal of three farm laws, listed for the session.

About Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021

As per the government notification on Lok Sabha website – The bill seeks to prohibit all **private** cryptocurrencies in India, however, it **allows for certain exceptions** to promote the underlying technology of cryptocurrency and its uses.

Currently, there is no regulation or any ban on the use of cryptocurrencies in the country.

Through the cryptocurrency legislation, a **facilitative framework** will be created for an **official Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)**.

Various exchanges together have 15 million KYC-approved users, with an investment value of \$6 billion.

Further details of the bill are not out yet.

What are private cryptocurrencies?

Whatever cryptocurrency is not issued by the government, can be considered private, though there is no clear definition of private cryptocurrency.

According to some definitions,

- Bitcoin, Ethereum and many other crypto tokens are based on public blockchain networks, which mean transactions made using the networks are traceable while still providing a degree of anonymity to users.
- On the other hand, private cryptocurrencies could refer to Monero, Dash and others, which though built on public blockchains, hide the transaction information to offer privacy to users.

What is the way forward?

The need of the hour is to balance innovation and regulation.

As per D. Subbarao (*former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India*),

Internationally, regulatory responses to cryptos have fallen into three broad categories:

- **Passive tolerance:** It involves prohibiting regulated institutions from dealing in cryptos without explicitly clarifying their legal status. RBI tried this option but the Supreme Court struck it down.
- **Total ban:** A second approach is a total ban like in China. But that model entails the risk of pushing the trade into invisible and illegal channels, possibly inflicting even greater damage.
- **Regulation:** A third approach is to follow countries such as the UK, Singapore and Japan that have allowed space for cryptos to operate under a regulatory radar but without recognising them as legal tender. India will be well advised to follow this middle path.

Hence, the ideal way forward will be to ban Cryptocurrency use as legal tender while allowing it to be an asset.

104. Why Cities Must Lead The Climate Battle

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why Cities Must Lead The Climate Battle**” published in **TOI** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the importance of the role of the cities in fighting the climate change.

News: Glasgow Climate Pact makes no explicit mention of the critical role of urban areas in finding solutions to the climate problem. Once again, the challenges of cities have taken a backseat in global negotiations on climate change.

Why towns and cities will play a critical role in the fight against climate change?

- **More people now live in towns and cities** than in rural areas.
- Towns and cities are **responsible for producing over three-quarters of the world's carbon emissions** that cause the climate to change.
- Additionally, urban areas are disproportionately located along coasts and rivers, **highly exposed to climate-induced disasters** such as floods and sea level rise.
- With over one in three urban residents living in slums and one in four earning less than \$2 a day, cities also contain vast numbers of people who **lack the capacity to withstand the impacts of a changing climate**.

What are some potential negative implications of climate change on the urban population?

Climate disasters faced by Indian cities: From past few years, Indian cities have faced the brunt of the climate change.

- Floods in Chennai (*this month and in 2015*)
- Heatwaves (*such as the one in Ahmedabad in 2010*)
- Water scarcity (*such as in Maharashtra in 2016 when the water had to be shipped in on trains*)

Deteriorating health of urban residents due to changing disease patterns

An increase in violence due to extreme heat

As a result of all of the above, the **overall reduced wellbeing of city dwellers** and an **impact on the economic productivity** of urban areas that currently account for over 80% of the world's GDP.

What is the way forward?

Consultations with city residents: Comprehensive climate action plans need to be produced through genuine consultation with a wide cross-section of urban residents. **For instance,**

- **Odisha:** Innovative public-private partnerships between municipal bodies in Odisha and research institutions. This has led to an improved understanding of practical steps that can be taken to reduce emissions and build resilience in cities.

Role of state govt: The role of state governments is critical. They must ensure that all departments work together to make urban climate action a reality. A good example of this is **Maharashtra's** recent commitment to ensure that 43 cities in the state systematically reduce emissions.

Addressing problems of the urban poor: Our cities are fueled by those living in slums and working in the informal economy. Unfortunately, they are the ones disproportionately affected by a changing climate. Therefore, any move to help cities deal with climate change must have their interests at its core.

Climate finance: A key component of equipping cities to deal with climate change is the provision of finance. Time and time again, including this year's COP has proved that international climate finance is not a certainty. Hence, our state governments must enable cities to generate their own streams of finance for tackling climate change. This can be done via:

- **issuing municipal green bonds:** These have been used by cities such as **Cape Town** to raise large amounts of money to deal with crippling water scarcity. Cities such as **Pune** have issued bonds in the past, but there is a lack of understanding and most cities also lack the basic

financial systems for issuing these. The international community must share lessons in such innovative climate finance approaches.

105. Privatised Post-Repeal: Selling sarkari banks & PSUs is critical.

Source: This post is based on the article “Privatised Post-Repeal: Selling sarkari banks & PSUs is critical” published in **Times of India** on 25th November 2021.

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

Relevance: To understand the need and challenges of privatization.

News: In the upcoming winter session of Parliament, ‘The Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021’ to be proposed, will facilitate the transfer of ownership of two PSBs, by making changes in concerned laws.

In the last session of Parliament, GoI said privatisation was ongoing in the case of 21 PSUs. The exercise was completed in the case of one of them, [Air India](#).

What is the need for privatization?

Privatization is essential to **redeploy public resources** in areas such as education and healthcare.

It helps PSUs get the benefit of **additional capital** and a clear approach to business, thereby helping the economy.

PSU staff will be beneficiaries of it.

A few big-ticket privatisations will convey to stakeholders about the **reformist spirit** of the economy.

What are the challenges?

PSBs have carried the burden of the NPA problem. Any potential buyer will need GoI to absorb some NPA.

Loss-making PSUs, burdened by debt and staffed by an unionised workforce, make it tough to privatise. The privatisation of ‘Air India’ is an example.

106. A food crisis of the government’s own making

Source: This post is based on the article “A food crisis of the government’s own making” published in **The Hindu** on 25th November 2021.

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

Relevance: To understand the dilemma of crop yield and organic farming.

News: **Recently, the Sri Lanka government banned** agrochemical fertilizers, to switch to 100% organic agriculture.

The example of Sri Lanka is an eye-opener for the other countries as well. It proves that any unplanned attempt to move to organic farming may prove to be disastrous for the agriculture sector.

What were the issues associated with the plan of the Sri Lanka government?

It neither had solid scientific information nor a clear action plan to move to organic farming. It was based on the raw advice of some officials that only organic and traditional agriculture is safe for the environment and human beings.

Furthermore, it announced the compensation for the loss due to reduced crop yield due to a lack of agrochemicals. However, it created no mechanism to identify the reasons behind reduced crop yield, which could also happen due to natural causes, farmers' attitudes, and so on.

It failed to consider the fact that globally, only 1.5% of farmland is organic, due to various issues associated with it. The country **lacked the capacity** for mass production of organic fertilizers in a short period of time.

Meemkem and Qaim (2018) pointed out in an analysis that organic agriculture on average could result in a **yield drop of 19%-23%**, depending on the crop and agro-climatic region.

As the crisis deepened, it purchased a liquid nano-N fertilizer from Indian Farmer Fertilizer Corporative Limited (IFFCO). It was actually a nano-urea, which could not be used for organic farming. Health concerns that might arise on long-term exposure to nano-particles were also not clear.

Thus, due to an unplanned decision, Sri Lanka had to use a fertilizer, which had no proven record regarding efficiency and safety.

What were its impacts?

Failure to maintain the same level of yield lead to **food shortage, increase food prices.**

The government ultimately has to resort to **food imports**, thereby hurting the public exchequer.

Also, the imported food is produced using agrochemicals because of the higher price of organic food. This was in contrast to the initial objective.

What steps are needed to be taken?

To switch to 100% organic agriculture, a country must have robust **scientific evidence** and a carefully planned **methodology** along with **targeted actions**.

107. What \$650 billion can buy – On India's currency reserves

Source: This post is based on the article "**What \$650 billion can buy**" published in **Business standard** on **25th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Significance of RBI in maintaining the stability of the economy

Relevance: India's rising foreign exchange reserves and the way forward

News: India's foreign exchange reserves have gone up by over \$160 billion since the beginning of the last fiscal year and are currently at about \$640 billion.

Since, India has one of the largest foreign exchange reserves, the debate has shifted to what it should do with the pool. Many options are being debated.

But it will be more effective if the higher reserves can be used to maintain the financial stability, given the global economic environment.

What are the various options, and the issues with them?

Firstly, using reserves to finance infrastructure needs. But it's not clear how this can be done.

Secondly, using foreign currency to buy foreign goods and services, or assets. But it is unlikely to be preferred as it will have a variety of macroeconomic implications.

Thirdly, forming a sovereign wealth fund, that would allow India to buy assets overseas.

Finally, there are suggestions that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should diversify its investment to increase yields. Since it invests in highly liquid assets, such as US government

securities, returns are usually low. However, this will increase risks and could potentially defeat the purpose of holding reserves.

So, the best option would be to use the reserves to maintain financial stability, given the global economic environment.

Why the reserves should be used to maintain financial stability?

Firstly, India is a net importer of goods and services from the rest of the world, and India regularly runs a current account deficit.

Secondly, India's reserves essentially reflect the excess flow of capital, and part of it could get reversed quickly as the US Federal Reserve has decided to "**taper**" its asset purchase program. This could result in tightening of global financial conditions, and capital could flow out from a country like India, at least temporarily.

As a consequence, a fall in currency triggered by large capital outflows can **pose risks to financial stability**.

In such a situation, the RBI will be able to control volatility in the currency market, due to its large forex reserves.

What is the way forward?

While higher reserves provide stability on the external account, the RBI cannot endlessly keep accumulating foreign exchange. Because of two reasons,

- **One**, higher reserves can potentially attract more capital flows and **makes currency management difficult**. This would keep putting **upward pressure on the rupee** and affect India's competitiveness.
- **Two**, sustained intervention by the RBI will push up the level of rupee liquidity in the system and increase inflation risks.

So, instead of heavily intervening in the currency market, India can **revisit the kind of foreign flows it needs**. **Foreign direct investment** and **equity flows** should be preferred to debt. Policymakers must align the capital account to broader macroeconomic objectives.

108. Farm Laws: Is MSP guarantee really the elixir that Indian agriculture needs?

Source: This post is based on the article "**Farm Laws: Is MSP guarantee really the elixir that Indian agriculture needs?**" published in **DTE** on **25th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to MSP

Relevance: MSP and its negative consequences

News: Recently, the Prime Minister announced the withdrawal of the farm bills. He also stated that the government would form a committee to discuss how the system of minimum support price (MSP) could be more effective.

The committee proposed by the Centre will have representatives from Union and state governments, farmer groups, as well as agricultural scientists and economists.

Irrespective of the committee's decision, a statutory guarantee to MSP will be a problem. So other options should be evaluated.

Read more: <https://blog.forumias.com/explained-in-perspective-farm-distress-and-the-demand-for-guaranteed-msp/>

What options have experts suggested in place of MSP?

Experts have recommended the following measures that the government can adopt instead of MSP:

- Giving remunerative prices to farmers for their produce.
- Letting the market determine the prices.
- Building mechanisms to safeguard farmers against fluctuations, like government interventions when commodity prices become dearer.
- Building efficient markets and provide price or income support for efficient production.

What measures can be looked into to protect farmers against price fluctuations?

Experimenting with Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana. It is a price differential scheme to compensate farmers in the event of a price crash that was started as a pilot scheme in Madhya Pradesh (2018). It was not relaunched the next year owing to criticism regarding cartelisation and depressed prices.

Re-examining the Income assurance scheme introduced during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's rule: The model calculated the seven-year average income. Based on this, if a farmer didn't get the best yield or price in three of the last seven years, the government would compensate them.

Government should create an index of the farmers for providing price support during distress. The index should contain information's on irrigated area, land, types of crops produced on an average, insurance cover, weather vulnerability. This index can be used for providing price support during distress.

109. Farm bills may be repealed, but farmers will still need help

Source: This post is based on the article "**Farm bills may be repealed, but farmers will still need help**" published in **Indian Express** on **25th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Agriculture

Relevance: Diversification of agricultural labor force

News: Recently, the Prime Minister announced the withdrawal of the farm bills.

In this context, the farm bills, whether they are passed or not, were unlikely to have made any sustained difference to the life of the farmer.

Because, the farm bill that stands withdrawn didn't have any policy solution to address the issues faced by agriculture sector and lift the Indian farmers out of a low-income existence.

Solutions to improve the life of farmers lies in the development of non-farm sector (service and manufacturing).

Why farm bills were inadequate to address the key problems faced by the agriculture sector?

Indian agriculture is unproductive: This is the fundamental reason why the Indian farmer is poor. The land, despite many improvements in irrigation, seeds, fertilisers and mechanisation, just doesn't have enough in it to sustain the sheer number of people dependent on it.

Agriculture today employs 45% of India's workers, while only producing around 10% of its output.

In this backdrop of unproductive farms, farm laws that aimed towards better price realisation of agricultural products by bringing changes with agricultural marketing laws are **inadequate to address the low productivity** of Indian agriculture.

Why labor shifted from agriculture to non-farm sector in industrialised countries when they were at similar income levels a century ago?

Firstly, the difference between labour productivities in the non-agricultural and agricultural sectors was much smaller in the industrialised countries due to relatively few policy controls on prices and quantities. Hence, the initial misallocation of labour was smaller.

Secondly, deterioration in the agriculture in the currently industrialised countries generated a push factor that induced labour to shift out of agriculture.

Thirdly, expansion of large scale, low-tech industrial employment, provided the avenues to absorb the surplus agricultural labour.

Why the shift is not happening in India?

Welfarism approach towards agriculture: Measures such as, minimum support prices, subsidies to cultivators and interest rate subventions on crop loans hardly do anything for long-term changes in the agriculture. Instead, they trap farmers by giving them marginally stronger incentives to remain in agriculture though productivity and incomes are declining.

Failure of India's large-scale, low-tech manufacturing sector: This is the sector that typically absorbs surplus agricultural labour in bulk while also providing them with significant improvements in incomes. This sector has completely failed to grow in India.

Less productive service sector: In India, the majority of the non-agricultural employment growth has happened in the service sector. Unfortunately, 80% of this service sector employment is in very low productivity.

What is the way forward?

The need of the hour is for the non-agricultural sectors to step up and provide a viable alternative to low productivity agriculture.

The government, thus, needs to focus on incentivising entrepreneurs to invest in large-scale manufacturing by legislating labour reforms.

110. Pointers that India is witnessing a K-shaped recovery

Source: This post is based on the article “**Pointers that India is witnessing a K-shaped recovery**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to Growth, Development and Employment.

Relevance: Economic Cycle- Expansion, recession, recovery

News: There have been talks about a V-shaped recovery for quite a while, ever since the first lockdown following the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Though, India is on a recovery path, but it can't be classified as a V-shaped recovery because the pandemic has had an uneven impact on different socio-economic groups.

The recovery we see today is more **K-shaped** than V-shaped with some groups and industries recovering much more rapidly than others.

A V-shaped recovery is characterized by quick and effective recovery in measures of economic performance after an acute decline in the economy.

What are some indications of a K-Shaped recovery in India?

Decline in two-wheeler sales: The sales of two-wheelers are the second-lowest it has been in seven years. Two-wheelers represent the economic situation of the lower and middle-class groups and India's small businesses.

What are the reasons behind India's K-Shaped recovery?

Sustained loss in disposable income due to the taxation policy of government:

Government taxation policies continue to be regressive, with increased indirect taxes and lower direct taxes placing greater tax burden on the poor. While inflation increased, the incomes of the middle and lower-middle-class have remained constant.

Lower Budget allocation accounts for MGNREGA tends to increase the pressure on unemployment figures: MGNREGA acts as an alternative employment source for the informal sector at the time of distressed economy.

However, the Government of India had cut its budget allocation towards MGNREGA by 34% for 2021-2022 when there is a greater demand now for MGNREGA jobs.

Further, the lower Budget allocation accounts for the inability to compensate workers in time and fairly.

The recovery in the stock market and other such financial assets over the past year benefitted only a few sections of the population: Less than 5% of India invest in equities, which means that less than 5% of India directly benefited from said recovery. The lower middle class, which does not invest in such assets, has no protection against inflation.

Disproportional benefit of the asset price inflation favored the upper-middle-class and this further explains the inherent K-shape of the recovery.

What is the way forward?

The Government should address this phenomenon and works towards aiding the middle and lower-middle class.

First, Social welfare schemes must be given greater importance to assist households to get through this period. International examples from The U.S. and European economies can be a case point.

Second, Government should try to increase progressive (direct) taxes and reduce regressive (indirect) taxes to ease the financial pressure on lower-income households.

111. [A unified regulatory framework](#)

Source: This post is based on the articles:

'The growth and inclusion potential of India's telecom space' published in **The Indian Express** on 25th Nov 2021.

'A unified regulatory framework' published in **The Hindu** on 25th Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: Telcos and internet firms need to be governed by a uniform regulatory framework

News: With 5G technologies on the horizon, new dynamics are emerging wherein there is a growth of an **integrated sphere of cooperation** as well as **competition** between telcos and Internet companies.

This has fueled the need for regulatory parity between them.

What is the new integrated sphere of competition and cooperation b/w telcos and internet companies?

This new architecture, that has been talked about in the article, involves elements of both competition and cooperation b/w telcos and internet firms.

Note: *Telcos* here refers to telecom companies like Airtel, Jio etc., while **internet companies** here refers to companies like Amazon, Google etc

Competition in substitute services:

- **OTT messaging services:** The growth in over-the-top (OTT) messaging services by Internet firms has been accompanied by significant reductions in the revenues of text messaging services provided by telcos. **For instance**, the quarterly SMS volume in the U.K. has declined by half to 10 billion by 2021 in the past five years.
- **VoIP services:** Similarly, the growth of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services offered by OTT service providers is also a threat to telcos.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), is a technology that allows one to make voice calls over a broadband Internet connection.

Cooperation in complementary value networks: Under this, network operators, handset manufacturers, platform vendors, and content providers are offering a bouquet of services. These are termed as Complementary value networks or 'Walled Gardens'.

Must Read: [What is a complementary value network?](#)

Despite the fact that services can be substituted and despite increasing competitive pressures within walled gardens, there is an **asymmetric regulatory stance** with respect to telcos and Internet companies.

What is an example of asymmetric regulation wrt telcos and internet companies?

Net Neutrality: One example of the prevailing asymmetric regulation are wrt net neutrality provisions. These provisions prohibit discriminatory treatment of Internet companies by the telcos, but impose no such regulatory limitations on internet companies.

The net neutrality principles prohibit **service providers** from discriminating against Internet content and services by blocking, throttling or according preferential higher speeds.

Over the past decade, the Internet has evolved to a point where many Internet companies also provide an essential service and enjoy significant market power. **For instance:** Web search, is a market dominated by Google, an internet company. Without **search neutrality**, search results may be manipulated to favor certain firms.

What is the way forward?

- **Net neutrality principles need to be applied to Internet companies** as well.
- **Interconnection regulation:** It is mandatory for telcos to provide "equal access" for interconnecting with other telcos' networks. Similarly, social media networks, instant messengers, and indeed any Internet service that exhibits critical mass dynamics needs to be governed by interconnection regulation.
- Presently in India, while the sector regulator makes rules for telcos, the competition regulator oversees the behavior of the Internet firms. It is time for a **unified regulatory framework**, like in the case of European Union.

112. Do not ignore livestock's contribution to climate change

Source: This post is based on the article "**Do not ignore livestock's contribution to climate change**" published in **Livemint** on **25th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the need to initiate a dialogue around reducing Greenhouse emissions from animal agriculture and livestock production.

News: About 103 countries, took the [Global Methane Pledge](#), which includes a commitment to reduce emissions of this gas by 30% from 2020 levels by the end of this decade.

But the problem of emissions from animal agriculture and livestock production is also central to the global discussion on climate change.

And much of the developed world is not even talking about it.

This is an opportunity for India to assume a leadership position in building a dialogue and furthering action around this issue.

Why reduction of livestock production matters?

According to the IPCC,

– Livestock production currently contributes at least **14.5 %** of all greenhouse gas emissions.

And, if current production levels continue on the same trajectory, it is expected to account for nearly **81% of emissions**, possibly raising global temperatures by **1.5° Celsius** by 2050.

What are India's challenges in lowering of GHG emissions from ruminant animals?

Huge population of cattle: With a livestock count of over half a billion, as per the 20th livestock census of the department of animal husbandry, India is the world's **third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases such as methane**, which is produced by ruminant animals.

India's rural economy is dependent on animal agriculture: Two-thirds of India's 1.3 billion-plus population still lives in rural parts of the country. A sizeable number is dependent on animal agriculture (i.e. dairy, poultry and fisheries).

Policy priority: The Indian government's investments also prioritize animal agriculture as a livelihood option. **For instance:**

– In 2018, govt launched the **Dairy Infrastructure Development Fund** to incentivize investment by the cooperative sector for the development of dairy infrastructure.

– In 2020, India announced a ₹15,000-crore **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund**.

What is the way forward?

– **Transition to an economy that promotes a lifestyle and diet based on plant nutrients.**

Our huge population is a strain on the limited resources we have, and so depending on animal-based sources of food such as milk is a problem. Also, research by the University of Oxford indicates that a shift to a plant-based diet could **free up 75% of agricultural land**.

– **Raising crops only for human use** may boost available food calories by up to 70%, effectively feeding 4 billion people.

– **Large investments** aimed at boosting animal agriculture that will lead to climate change **should be discouraged**.

India:

Food system transition policy: India needs to grow and consume food differently. It must develop a comprehensive policy that

– moves farmers to sustainable modes of plant-based food production

– diverts subsidies from industrial livestock production and its associated inputs, and

– looks at job creation, social justice, poverty reduction, animal protection and better public health as multiple aspects of a single solution.

113. Decline in India's camel population is worrying

Source: This post is based on the article “Decline in India's camel population is worrying” published in the **Indian Express** on **25th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Relevance: Understanding the need to empower Raikas and control the decline of the camel population.

News: According to the article published in National Geographic, the camel population in India has been in decline, especially in Rajasthan because of the Indira Gandhi Canal which hampered the movement of Raikas and Camels.

What were the reasons behind the decline in the camel population?

Fewer dairy benefits: Long gestation period (15 months); limited saleable meat yield (less than 5 kg a day), high cost of maintenance, high cost of milk, and strong flavour of camel milk, all make it unsuitable for the domesticating camel for economic benefits.

Change in lifestyle: Replacement of the nomadic-pastoral way of life by agriculture. Individually owned farmlands that are often fenced restrict the movements of camels. Camels are rarely used for ploughing along with that shrinking of grazing grounds, shortage of fodder also a reason for reduced camel population.

Other means of transport: Camels are replaced largely by road networks.

Raikas- *The Raikas are a specialized caste of pastoralists from northwestern India, particularly the arid and semi-arid parts of Rajasthan. Although they also raise goats, cattle, sheep, and water buffalo, the most important animal for Raika's cultural identity is the camel. The Raika and their camels talk to each other; this language/conversation is called akal-dhakaal.*

Fewer benefits for Raikas: Raikas do not sell dead camels for their bones and also do not eat camel meat. Raikas believe they were born of Lord Siva's skin to protect camels.

How does the Rajasthan government aims to protect camels?

Rajasthan's government enacted **The Rajasthan Camel (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act, 2015**. The Act aims to prohibit the slaughter of camels and also to regulate their temporary migration or export from Rajasthan.

But the Act does not show positive results. Camels are now sold in the grey market, further driving down camel prices. Camels that should normally command a price of Rs 40,000 plus, reportedly sell in this grey market for less than Rs 5,000. The ban has benefitted only the meat traders and corrupt officials.

What the government should do?

Camel-rearing still has potential economic opportunities and have great demand in the Middle East. So, the government should

1. Focus on controlling the decline of the camel population,
2. Empower Raikas with education, trading skills, etc.

114. **After farm laws repeal, farmer unions want legal guarantee for MSP. Should the govt give in?**

Source: This post is based on the article “After farm laws repeal, farmer unions want legal guarantee for MSP. Should the govt give in?” published in **ToI** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – issues related to MSP

Relevance: Legalising MSP

News: Despite the announcement by the PM to repeal the three farm laws, farmers are demanding that, MSP should be made a legal entitlement.

This article provides both the side of the arguments (support and against) w.r.t legalising MSP demand. Some points are already covered in the following article:

Read more: <https://blog.forumias.com/explained-in-perspective-farm-distress-and-the-demand-for-guaranteed-msp/>

What are the arguments in support of legalising MSP?

Farmer distress: Survey after survey has shown that income from farming is inadequate to sustain basic financial needs of farming households. Hence, MSP represent a lifeline for farmers, and they want that lifeline to be given legal sanctity.

India's Food security: India's food independence and security against hunger are non-negotiable and this independence and security depends on farmers continuing to farm and produce food to feed nearly 1.38 billion citizens.

Lack of avenues to absorb the out-of-work farmers elsewhere in the economy: The proponents of free-market price discovery argue that this very mechanism will push farmers out of farming where excess labour is currently unproductive. However, Indian economy currently doesn't have the capacity to absorb the 900 million farmers of India.

Fundamental right: The demand for legal guarantee of MSP also stems from the constitutional fundamental right to life and livelihood. It is the constitutional duty of the government to ensure and enforce this fundamental right in favour of the farmers of India.

What are the arguments against legalising MSP?

Other effective alternatives exist: If the objective of MSP is to help the poor, we can now effectively use the most direct way. For less than the amount spent on MSP, we can lift millions out of poverty by transferring funds into their bank accounts.

If our objective is to reduce farm price volatility, then direct funds transfer to the poor can partially address that objective along with a well-regulated crop insurance system.

Impact on Nutrition and export earnings: MSP is given only for a few crops, which means there is excessive production of these at the expense of other crops that may be more nutritious and could earn us export revenues.

Impact on water security: A distorted focus on few crops also depletes the water table.

Give rise to vicious demands: There is a demand to expand MSP to more crops, which is financially unviable for the government.

Effects of MSP on equity: Poor farmers get virtually nothing from MSP because they have little or no surplus, and many subsist as agricultural labourers.

In sum, MSP may have a few positives, but it has many negatives and should be deployed only with great circumspection.

115. Setting the tone at Glasgow, the job ahead in Delhi

Source: This post is based on the article "Setting the tone at Glasgow, the job ahead in Delhi" published in **The Hindu** on **26th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the significance of Glasgow summit and what needs to be done to realize the targets set under it.

News: Net zero target set by India has cemented its position as a world leader in global climate change policy landscape.

Now, keeping in line with the spirit of climate justice, rich countries need to veer away from their unsustainable lifestyles and wasteful consumption patterns.

India too needs to focus on sustainable well-being.

How the Glasgow Climate Pact indicates a changing world order?

The carbon colonialism of the West was called out by the poor countries at Glasgow when the UK, along with G7 countries, tried to push for a phase out of coal in the final pact.

India and China came together on the last day of the COP26 at Glasgow to effect a change in the language of the pact from 'phase out' of the coal-based power to 'phase down'.

That G7 had to accommodate this change indicates the coming of a world order in which the G7 no longer sets the rules.

Must Read: [Coal controversy at the Glasgow summit](#)

What is the way forward?

– **Reduced consumption by the West:** Consumption of affluent households both determines and accelerates an increase of emissions of carbon dioxide. In the West, these factors have overridden the beneficial effects of changes in technology. This is visible in the increasing carbon footprint. Thus, the West must begin by reducing its consumption.

India:

– In parallel with the **infrastructure and clean technology thrust**, the consumption patterns need to be shifted away from resource and carbon-intensive goods and services. **For instance:** mobility from cars and aircraft towards buses and trains, and nutrition from animal and processed food towards a seasonal plant-based diet.

– Along with reducing demand, **resource and carbon intensity of consumption has to decrease**, e.g. expanding renewable energy, electrifying cars and public transport and increasing energy and material efficiency.

– **More equal distribution of wealth with a minimum level of prosperity and affordable energy use for all:** For instance, housing and doing away with biomass for cooking.

– **Floor' and 'ceiling' of sustainable well-being:** The Govt must set up focused research groups for the conceptual frame of sustainable well-being. It should analyze the factors of affluent overconsumption. It should further create awareness around how much energy we really need for a decent level of well-being.

– After the Stockholm Declaration on the Global Environment, the Constitution was amended in 1976 to include Protection and Improvement of Environment as a **fundamental duty**. Further, the Parliament used Article 253 to enact the **Environment Protection Act** to implement the decisions reached at the Stockholm Conference.

Under Article 253, Parliament has the power to make laws for implementing international treaties and agreements and can legislate on the preservation of the natural environment.

The decisions taken at COP26 need to be enabled by a new set of legislation around ecological limits, energy and land use, including the efficient distribution and use of electricity, urban design etc.

Must Read: [Glasgow Climate Pact \(GCP\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

116. Decomputerize to decarbonize: A climate debate we can't avoid

Source: This post is based on the article “**Decomputerize to decarbonize: A climate debate we can't avoid**” published in **Livemint** on **25th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand the carbon footprint of computers.

News: Our planet faces an existential threat, with climate change and global warming threatening to make it un-liveable in a few decades.

Digitization doesn't just pose a risk to people, It also poses a risk to the planet.

How computerization and technology adoption is contributing to climate change?

One huge factor ruining our planet is the uninhibited **computerization and technology adoption**, as is visible from the following facts:

– A UN study revealed that the **manufacture of one desktop computer** took 240 kg of fossil fuels, 22 kg of chemicals and 1,500 kg of water.

– A University of Massachusetts team calculated that **training one model for natural-language processing** emits 626,155 pounds of carbon dioxide, what 125 New York–Beijing round trips will produce. OpenAI has estimated that the computing used to train a single AI model is increasing by a factor of 10 every year.

Natural Language Processing (NLP) —the branch of artificial intelligence (AI) that helps ‘virtual assistants’ like Alexa understand humans.

– **Hundreds of data centres** that Google, Microsoft and others use water and power at alarming rates. As per reports, data centres consume **200 terawatt hours per year**. This is roughly the same amount as South Africa, and is likely to grow 4-5 times by 2030, which would put it on par with Japan, the world's fourth-biggest energy consumer.

– **Semiconductor chips:** A fabrication unit takes \$20 billion to build and need **2-4 million gallons of ultra-pure water per day**, roughly equal to the needs of an American city of 50,000 people.

In fact, the carbon footprint of the world's computational infrastructure has matched that of the aviation industry at its peak, and it is increasing at a faster rate.

Hence, decomputerization is necessary for decarbonization.

What is the way forward?

Though we don't need a ‘Luddite revolution’ but in order to decarbonize, we must decomputerize. This does not mean getting rid of computers, but only the unnecessary ones in our homes and offices.

Luddites were the members of the organized bands of 19th-century English handicraftsmen who rioted for the destruction of the textile machinery that was displacing them. Today, the term is usually referred to any person who is against technology.

117. Airport Lessons

Source: This post is based on the article “**Airport Lessons: Private airports are good for everyone**” published in **Times of India** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development, and employment.

Relevance: To understand the need of private participation in airport development in India.

News: The Jewar International Airport, a greenfield project will be the second airport in NCR. Both international airports in NCR will then be under private management. It demonstrates India's success in the last two decades in attracting private capital and management into airport infrastructure development and maintenance.

How private players' participation was facilitated in airport development over the years?

The watershed moment was 2006, when Delhi and Mumbai airports were leased out for 30 years to private entities under a PPP model.

It was followed by greenfield airports in Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

Further, in 2008, a key development was the creation of a **statutory body**, Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (**AERA**) which regulates airport tariffs.

– It helped in getting both private capital and also buy-in from passengers.

The importance of a regulator can be gauged by the fact that in **the case of railways**, a lack of a regulator has hampered its efforts to attract private capital.

How has private participation helped?

It resulted in **economic benefits from the increasing traffic** – 341 million passengers in 2019-20. This revenue stream allowed Airports Authority of India (AAI) to develop airfields in locations that can't attract private capital right now.

What is the way forward?

The future of greenfield airports and expansion of existing ones will depend on states. National Civil Aviation policy expects them to acquire land and provide it free for airports.

118. Chinese med imports up 75%, raises concerns

Source: This post is based on the article "**Chinese med imports up 75%, raises concerns**" published in **Times of India** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 -Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development, and employment.

Relevance: To get an inside on the medical technology sector, our med-tech imports and issues associated.

News: China has become the largest exporter of medical devices to India, overtaking US and Germany during 2020-21.

The imports of med-tech and medical devices having jumped up to 75% from China alone, whereas overall increase in med-tech imports from all nations is just about 7%.

What are the reasons for the huge increase in imports?

Due to Covid-19 crisis, international supply chains initially got disrupted. To maintain investments in this field and ensuring supplies, the government resorted to **reducing duty on Covid-critical devices** to zero temporarily, which led to a huge influx of imports.

Most of the increase is attributed to imports of critical items like oximeters, diagnostic instruments, digital thermometers and chemical reagents, which were needed during the pandemic as a **quick scale-up wasn't possible**.

What are the issues with imports?

These **harm the domestic industry**.

The nil customs duty did not benefit consumers and, with no MRP printed on devices, there was **massive profiteering** due to the huge mark-ups.

Such huge imports are also a **challenge to India's 'Atma Nirbhar' policy** as private sector procurement largely has not been supporting 'Make in India', with China continuing to be a major supplier.

What is the way forward?

The Centre's bulk purchases have been mainly restricted to respiratory care and oxygen delivery equipment due to the pandemic. Hence, impetus needs to be given to **build capacity in other segments**.

Medtech sector can't be 'Atma Nirbhar' in a few months. We need to build **technology, quality, supply chain** and **right policy**.

119. Indian agriculture needs a Verghese Kurien

Source: This post is based on the article "**Indian agriculture needs a Verghese Kurien**" published in **The Hindu** on **27th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Cooperative sector

Relevance: Verghese Kurien's legacy, cooperative movement

News: 26th Nov, 2021 was Kurien's 100th birth anniversary

What is the legacy of Verghese Kurien?

Architect of a rural revolution: He transformed the lives of millions of farmers in Gujarat. Poverty alleviation and social transformation was central to his idea of Co-operative model.

Professional integrity: There were many who saw him as an outsider due to his diverse socio-economic background. But Kurien won the farmers over with his professional integrity and his vision of a central role for farmers in India's journey of development.

Launched the White Revolution: He was behind the design of Amul as a co-operative, that later became a global brand and transformed India as the largest milk producing nation in the world.

Co-operative model of business development: He decided that Amul would grow and establish its identity neither as a public sector undertaking nor as a private corporate entity. He felt that, the co-operative model, was in the best interests of Gujarat's milk producers.

Learning from the Best practices: He borrowed the ideas and the practices of the corporate world in areas such as innovation in marketing and management, branding and technology etc

How has Amul performed in the years after the demise of Verghese Kurien?

Amul has grown steadily on the strong foundation laid by its visionary leader, diversifying its product range and adding new ones.

Amul remains one of India's best-known food brands and is an inspiration to other dairy cooperatives such as Nandini in Karnataka, Aavin in Tamil Nadu and Verka in Punjab.

Has cooperative sector benefitted from Amul's success?

Sadly, Amul's success has not been the catalyst for an economic transformation at the grassroots level. It has neither resulted in similar movements across other agricultural commodities in India.

The cooperative movement in India is in a **state of uncertainty**. It has suffered due to lack of professional management, adequate finance and poor adoption of technology.

120. Is crypto mania more a symptom than a cause?

Source: This post is based on the article “**Is crypto mania more a symptom than a cause?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **27th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the reasons as to why Cryptocurrencies are attractive assets and why banning cryptocurrencies might not be a bad idea

News: Instead of rooting for its ban, we must try to decipher the reasons behind popularity of Cryptocurrencies and why they appear so attractive an asset for investors.

What are the reasons behind fascination and attraction around Cryptocurrencies?

- They are a fascinating technological innovation. Part of their initial attraction was that they promised a **new governance order**.
- Faced with the inflation of the 1970s, thinkers like Friedrich Hayek theorized about reasserting the dominance of private currencies, protected from the state. This required a **solution to the problem of ‘trust’** on which every currency depends. Crypto seemed to solve that problem, with its decentralised architecture and community and self-verification protocols.
- The global economy currently has an **abundance of cheap money**, while small savers are desperate for return. In this context, it is easy for the powerful to misallocate money, and the small saver to indulge in speculation via cryptocurrency.

Why a new governance order backed by Crypto can never be a reality?

This obvious due to the following reasons:

- **No state is going to let go of its power to assert control over the monetary system.** The sustenance of state-sponsored fiat money is one of the great achievements of modern state formation, and the foundation of its power and legitimacy.
- **Crypto requires substantial material infrastructure**, which a state could always control. States can shut down mining, as China has done.
- Neither Bitcoin, nor any other cryptocurrency currently possess stability, efficiency, privacy and safety that would allow it to dominate central bank money. Crypto is now considered more like an asset.

Are there any tangible benefits to Cryptocurrency?

Some financial products bring genuine gains for the economy or development, others pose a risk. Cryptocurrency doesn’t bring any concrete development benefits.

The underlying technology of Blockchain can be harnessed for potential benefits even without crypto. Hence, a ban on cryptocurrency should not be a major problem.

Why a ban instead of regulation is a good choice for India?

Because the insulation of the financial system from the volatility of crypto markets will be difficult to achieve for the following reasons:

The first reason is **political economy**. A large number of investors, and some influential ones, will become a vested interest in their own right, potentially demanding the socialisation or mitigation of losses. Now RBI is facing lobbying by investors as an interest group.

A major new class of assets, especially if volumes grow, will have **systemic effects on the rest of the economy**. For instance:

- In a crisis, if stable coin redemptions go up, RBI will have to step in.
- Opportunity costs of investments flowing into crypto on prices of other assets and monetary instruments.

What is the way forward?

- RBI should avoid a scenario where it bans but then carves out exceptions.
- Ensure that trade does not go offshore. Not fully banning and allowing it offshore will be the worst of both worlds.
- Lastly, RBI's case would be strengthened if it spelled out the systemic risks that crypto might pose to the stability of the real economy.

Must Read: [Cryptocurrency: Ban or regulation – Explained, pointwise](#)

121. The dreaded rainforest shift

Source: This post is based on the article “**The dreaded rainforest shift**” published in **Down To Earth** on 26th Nov 2021.

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

Relevance: Understanding the role of amazon rainforest in the world's climate, its change from a carbon sink to source.

News: A study was conducted in which vertical profiling measurements of the air above the Amazon rainforest was done over a period of nearly one decade.

The study shows that major portions of the Amazon rainforest have shifted from a **carbon sink to a carbon source**. Recent deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest- up 22% in one year, is at the highest level in nearly two decades.

What are the main results of the study and the reason for the shift?

The study shows the **eastern Amazon rainforest** has become a significant source of carbon emissions, competing with cars, trains, planes, and power plants.

-Multiple factors behind this shift from carbon sink to carbon emitter are global warming, deforestation, and fire all happening in the eastern Amazon.

Western Amazon is also facing pressure from logging, agriculture, and mining, extending deeper into the forest. Therefore, it will soon look like eastern Amazon.

What are the impacts seen?

This shift has severe **planet-wide negative implications**.

The temperatures across the southeastern Amazon have risen dramatically in comparison to the western part of the rainforest.

Transpiration of around 20 billion tons of water was used to evaporate per day in the region. This huge flow of vapor into the atmosphere was also called **invisible flying rivers**. Due to deforestation, this is hampered.

- The release of water vapor into the air and circulation of water and weather patterns throughout the globe is also impacted.

What is the way forward?

Due to the inter-connectedness of all ecosystems, it is one of the most important roles for humans to act as caretakers and protectors of natural systems.

The neoliberal capitalism's politics of growth at any cost, destroying ecosystems along the way, must be stopped through youth participation.

Brazil is a signatory to CoP26 to end deforestation by 2030. It should keep its promise and an anti-environmental stance should be shed away.

122. Yes, there are two Indias, and they are not getting any closer together

Source: This post is based on the article "Yes, there are two Indias, and they are not getting any closer together" published in **Business Standard** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources.

Relevance: To understand the stark contrast within India's development.

News: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) has released the 2019-21 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5).

Read more: [NFHS-5 and its findings – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why it is called two India?

There is a stark contrast of development that exist between better performing Indian states and less performing Indian states. The fifth [National Family Health Survey](#)'s findings make it clear yet again that there are indeed two Indias. For example,

In social development: Tamil Nadu has less than a third of the diarrhoea cases when compares to Bihar. Similarly, Bihar has only two-thirds of Tamil Nadu's ratio of literate women or doctors per 1,000 population, but a 50% higher ratio of stunted and wasted children.

In economy: State's comprising most of Southern and Western India and states like Haryana have an annual net income per head of about \$3,000. Their per capita income is closer to the Philippines.

Bihar with barely a third of India's net income per head might get bracketed with Niger. UP might get clubbed with Niger's neighbour in the Sahel, Mali.

So economically, Africa's Sahel region and the Philippines co-exist in India.

Note: Niger is ranked 204th out of 215 countries and territories on per capita income.

What are the impacts of these two India?

Private investment will go to India that might catch up with the Philippines, not the India that compares with the Sahel.

Poorer states' own tax resources are much lower when compares to the better-off states.

Are these two India's getting closer?

Even though there is a difference when the gap is smaller than for some other metrics. For example, on metrics like households that have electricity, women with bank accounts and drinking water, the difference is less.

Progressively, these two India's have to get closer. But that is not the reality for two reasons.

1. **Infrastructure does not reap enough benefits:** For instance, UP claimed that it will have Asia's largest airport at Jewar. But the real catchment area for that airport is not in the hinterland of Western UP but in the urban and industrial areas like the National Capital Region.

2. **State's Policies against migration:** Migration to more prosperous places will create a level playing field. The Covid lockdown showed how migrants are spread across India. But, states like Haryana are creating laws that favour locals in employment, even though people from other states are willing to work for low wages.

This will hamper 1. The creation of enough jobs in India, 2. Less-educated Indians are forced to leave the state, 3. Make less competition between states, 4. Hamper the economy.

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