

**9pm**

# **Compilation**

**21<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Mar 2022**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, (Fourth Week) 2022

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# General

# Studies

# Paper - 1

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### **MERGING OF FILM AND MEDIA UNITS WITH NFDC**

#### 1. **Film archives are our heritage. They must not be monetised**

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Film archives are our heritage. They must not be monetised” published in the Indian Express on 26th March 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS1 – **Indian** Art and Culture

**Relevance:** **Indian** Cinema

**News:** In recent developments, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has decided to bring all regional and national offices of the National Film Archives of India (NFAI), Films Division (FD), Children’s Film Society of India (CFSI), and Directorate of Film Festivals (DFF) under the workings of the **National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)**.

#### **Brief Introduction about institutes**

**The Films Division:** It was established in 1948. It produces, and distributes newsreels and documentary films on historical events and political figures.

– In **Post-Independence**, films made by the erstwhile colonial agencies of **Information Films of India, Indian News Parade, and Army Film and Photographic Unit** were handed over to Film Division (FD). It preserved audio and visual records of India’s history of decolonisation and the process of nation-building. For example, it includes works of Satyajit Ray, MF Husain, Mani Kaul, Pramod Pati, and more recent films by contemporary filmmakers.

**The NFAI:** It was established in 1964. It has the mandate to trace, acquire, and preserve the **heritage of fiction cinema in India**. It preserves several thousand films, books, scripts, posters, and photographs dating back to the 1910s, and it actively promotes film research and scholarship on **Indian and South Asian** cinema.

**The CFSI:** It was established in 1955. It was given the responsibility for **producing children’s films**.

**The DF:** It was established in 1976. It organises the National Film Award, for example, Dada Saheb Phalke Award, and the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) etc.

**The NFDC:** It is a public sector undertaking. It was established in 1975 and aimed to promote filmmakers outside the mainstream film industries of India. It also contributed to the development of parallel cinema.

#### **Arguments in favour of the decision**

In the era of digitisation, both NFAI and FD have uploaded rare Indian films, posters and photographs on their YouTube and Instagram accounts to increase public access.

Therefore, non-availability of the physical archives won’t create problem in the future.

#### **What are the issues involved?**

It implies neglect on the part of Indian government wrt cultural and historical value of films. It means the Govt views film as a medium for information and broadcasting.

As per NITI AAYOG’s 2018 analysis, **NFDC is a loss-making unit**. Subsequently, its closure was also proposed in Parliament. Therefore, it is not wise to bring FD, NFAI, CFSI, and DFF under the banner of NFDC.

The **film fraternity of India was not consulted** before taking the decision of merger with NFDC.

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The **MIB has not given any explanation** to why four public-funded bodies are being merged with a loss-making corporation.

The **government has not explained the plan** through which the transfer of fragile and inflammable material like celluloid will be carried out.

The MIB has also **dismissed various RTI inquiries** and a writ petition by FD employees. It has ignored numerous articles, public debates and open letters written by concerned filmmakers, historians and archivists that seek clarification on the matter.

The uploading of the **archives on social media platforms is going to face problems**. They will be owned by big multinationals. In recent years, a number of interviews, reports, and articles have been taken down from social media platforms based on the pressures of governments and interest groups.

There are other questions like **who will crowdfund a public archive** from our individual hard drives etc.

In case of absence of autonomous public institutions, the archives may be tampered, damaged, or destroyed forever.

### What is the way forward?

The government should declare archives as national heritage. Their monetisation should not be allowed.

India must preserve great works of cinema. It should establish systems of exhibition where the public can freely access them as has been done in the USA, France, UK, etc.

## GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN RELATED ISSUES

### **IMPROVING MATERNAL HEALTH**

#### 2. **Over 15 years of incentivised institutional delivery: Has it ensured safe births?**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Over 15 years of incentivised institutional delivery: Has it ensured safe births?**” published in **Down To Earth** on **25th March 2022**.

**Syllabus:** **GS2** – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

**Relevance:** **Understanding** the trend behind MMR, NMR, IMR and institutional births.

**News:** Maternal mortality ratio (MMR), infant mortality rate and neonatal mortality rate (NMR) have not improved at the same pace as institutional births.

#### **About the growth in institutional births**

The share of India’s institutional deliveries increased to 88.6% in 2019-2021 ([National Family Health Survey 5](#)) from 40.8% in 2005-06 (NHFS 3). The nine targeted states — Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Assam — recorded a similar increase.

#### **How did the government incentivise institutional deliveries?**

**Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), 2005:** Institutional deliveries were first incentivised by JSY. Under this, direct cash transfer is promised if a woman delivered a baby at a medical facility, rather than at home.

According to the 2020-2021 annual report of the Union health ministry, annual JSY beneficiaries have shot up to over 10 million from 739,000 in 2005-06.

**Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK), 2011:** It entitled pregnant women to several benefits, including no-expense childbirth, covering the complications during the ante-natal and postnatal period, free transport from home to the medical facility, etc.

According to the Health Management Information System, In 2020-21, nearly 17% of pregnant women received free medicines, 19% received free diagnostics, 19% received free food, 7% received free transport under the scheme.

**Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, 2016:** The scheme is providing free, assured and quality antenatal care. As of January 5, 2021, more than 20.6 million antenatal care check-ups were conducted under the scheme.

Similar incentive-driven schemes are being implemented at the state level also. For instance, Ayushmati Scheme in West Bengal, Chiranjeevi Yojana in Assam and Gujarat and Mamta Friendly Hospital Scheme in Delhi, etc.

**Read more:** [‘Maternity scheme exclusionary, need benefits for all’](#)

### About the mortality ratio

Maternal mortality ratio (MMR), infant mortality rate and neonatal mortality rate (NMR) have not improved as compared to the Institutional deliveries. The nine focus states continue to have the highest MMR, a majority of which are well beyond India’s national average of 103.

With the present pace, the country as a whole may be able to meet the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goal of reducing MMR to 70 by 2030.

### What is the reason behind the low improvement in Mortality rates?

**1)** Healthcare delivery and service utilisation are very different between states, those performing better than the national average and those lagging behind, **2)** Schemes incentivising institutional delivery are not enough to ensure a safe birth, **3)** Except Assam, the states recorded a higher NMR in private institutions than home births, **4) Limited beneficiaries:** Some schemes are applicable only if the mother is 19 years of age or above, some are only for the first child and some require ‘below poverty line’ identification.

### What should be done to reduce the mortality rates?

**1)** A holistic approach is needed to address infrastructure and human resource shortcomings, **2)** Policies that recognise and monitor the subnational disparities, particularly in the Empowered Action Group States plus Assam, and the rural and tribal areas are needed, **3)** An infrastructure development plan focused on the actual patterns of use could close the remaining gaps between states in a very short time,

**4)** The eligibility criteria for such schemes need to be expanded because currently, it excludes those who actually need it, **5)** An ideal institutional delivery needs to be defined for better monitoring of the scheme outcomes. For instance, creating a 10-point checklist with indicators such as how soon the pregnant woman is checked by the midwife, was the pulse/heartbeat of the baby was recorded, etc., **6) Closing the data gap:** Each institution must publish their morbidity and mortality data regularly and Health centres must be incentivised to deal with high loads of cases.

## **GENDER VIOLENCE AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **3. The serious public health burden of gender violence**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The serious public health burden of gender violence**” published in the **Live Mint** on **24th Mar 22**.

**Context:** Gender-based violence constitutes one of the serious public health burdens in India.

### What is gender-based violence?

'Gender-based violence' refers to violence that is directed towards an individual owing to their gender and/or sexual orientation. It also includes efforts to bring young boys or LGBTQIA+ individuals into dominant forms of masculinity or femininity.

### Global and National Trends of Gender-Based Violence

Globally, every third woman faced physical or sexually-intimate partner violence or both at least once in their lives (UN Women estimates).

In India, Nearly, one in four women has experienced physical or sexual abuse by a partner (As per NFHS).

**Socially or economically disadvantaged** women are at a higher risk of being exposed to such violence.

Now, **women and girls have to confront newer forms of violence**. It includes online abuses, for example, digital misogyny, online stalking, morphing of images, abusive trolling, death and rape threats on social media platforms etc. For example, In India, around 50% of women on social media has been facing cyber abuse.

### What are the impacts associated with gender violence?

**Women are subjected to extreme "Allostatic load"**: Allostasis refers to an equilibrium (homeostasis) maintained by adapting to stressful situations through the release of stress hormones. It helps to reduce or eliminate the stressors. If allostatic load is in excess over a period of time. It leads to bad outcomes including depression, anxiety, heart disease, etc. Therefore, gender-based violence becomes a serious public health burden.

**Public health burdens:** It leads to injuries, unintended pregnancies, pregnancy complications, poor reproductive and sexual health, sexually transmitted infections, HIV, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, difficulties with intimacy and interpersonal relationships, and death etc.

### What is the way forward?

Address the **underreporting** of gender-based violence. Survivors do not seek support because of the shame, stigma and self-blame associated with such violence, worsening its impact

There should be **digital inclusion** of Indian women. The Indian digital sphere is male dominated; For example, only 33% of internet users are female in India. Only 8% of Twitter users are female. Only 25% Facebook users are women in India (As per [NFHS-5 report](#))

There is a need to recognize **patriarchy** as a toxin. Its worst effect is gender-based violence.

We must stop normalizing violence, discrimination and exclusion against women. Everyone has a right to a life.

### ALL-WOMEN POLICE STATIONS

#### 4. **Stop applauding 'all-woman police stations'**

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Stop applauding 'all-woman police stations'**" published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd Mar 22**



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**News:** On March 8, International Women's Day, a Commissioner of Police in Tamil Nadu appointed women police officers as "heads" of police stations for a day. Also, many "all-woman police stations" have been created by the politicians over the years.

### What are the issues with such measures?

Such moves are **gestures for glory, admiration and, of course, votes** etc. without any substance.

It is **difficult for a woman victim to reach a distant "all-woman police station"** to seek redressal when the nearest one was just next door.

Most police leaders feel that creating all-woman stations is unjust to both male and female officers. It **gives an impression that men in uniform are uncaring, inconsiderate and insensitive** towards the cause of woman.

It **implies that the women officers are capable of dealing with only crimes against women.** Furthermore, it **compartmentalises women officers** rather than give them the independence of work" because women officers are interested in all kinds of police work. They are not interested just in women-related matters.

### Inadequate women in the police force

As per the Bureau of Police Research and Development, India has only around 10% women in the police.

– There are around 25% women in the Bihar police, 19% in the Himachal Pradesh police force, 18% in Tamil Nadu police force, 12% in Delhi, around 18% in Chandigarh and Ladakh and 3% in Jammu and Kashmir Police Force.

### What are the measures to address women related crimes in India?

Instead of changing the **gender profile of personnel** in a police station, which can lead to disruption in the functioning of the police stations, other measures are needed to address the situation.

– **Special recruitment drives** should be conducted for females. Their number should be brought up to the level of the pledged percentage, i.e., most police forces in states and Union territories have 30% or above reservations for women. It will ensure that **each police station** in the country has **women police personnel in adequate numbers** to attend to all citizens, including women victims and complainants.

– There is a need for **sensitisation of the political and police leadership** about this dismal failure related to women related crimes.

– The officers have to be **trained well in all police subjects and deputed in both urban and rural police stations.**

– **Discouraging posting of women police personnel in computer sections, counselling cells, reception desks,** etc

– The **infrastructure** like toilets and changing rooms for women in police stations should be adequately created.

– **Training in gender, respect to women and male cooperating with female colleagues** must be an integral part of basic police training. These topics also deserve to be emphasised during in-service workshops.

– The women police personnel should be given **leadership training and experience-sharing workshops** to sharpen their professional skills.

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# General

# Studies

# Paper - 2

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## **DRAFT INDIA DATA ACCESSIBILITY AND USE POLICY 2022**

### 1. **Forging a social contract for data**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Forging a social contract for data**” published in **The Hindu** on **26 Mar 22**.

**News:** In February 2022, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) released the **Draft India Data Accessibility and Use Policy 2022 (or Draft Policy) for public consultation**.

#### **What are the aims of the draft policy?**

**It will help in overcoming a number of historical bottlenecks:** (1) slow progress on the Open Government Data (OGD) platform, (2) fragmentation of data sets into departmental silos, (3) lack of data quality standards, licensing, and valuation frameworks to support data-sharing etc.

It can help in informed decision-making, improvement in citizen-centric delivery of public services, and economy-wide digital innovation.

#### **What are the issues with the draft policy?**

The Draft Policy is **silent on the norms, rules, and mechanisms** that are required to achieve the objectives.

The draft policy **allows transparency only in case of access to the non-personal data sets** of the public data.

– It may lead to **privacy or risk of data misuse** due to transparency-accountability considerations, as some citizen data sets generated during service delivery also contain personal identifiers.

The anonymisation standards put on the personal data sets are insufficient safeguards against privacy risks.

India has **no personal data protection law**. It makes it problematic to process the dataset.

The government agencies treat themselves as ‘owners’ of the public data under The National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP). There is a **lack of a data trusteeship framework**. Therefore, NDSAP gives government agencies unilateral privileges to determine the terms of data licensing.

The **draft does not allow data-sharing from both public and private sector** actors across various sectors. In fact, the private sector holds the most valuable data resources which can help in socioeconomic innovation.

The laws and regulations related to competition are **inadequate for the platform economy** in India.

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

We need a **new social contract for data** whereby the government is the **custodian or trustee**. It would act as a fiduciary to promote data use for public good. It was also recommended by the 2020 Report of the MEITY Committee of Experts on non-personal data governance.

**a)** democratisation of data value should be ensured through accountable institutional mechanisms for data governance.

**b) Voluntary data-sharing** should be promoted between the Public and Private sector. For example, The European Union has created a common and interoperable data space for such purposes.

**c) A data stewardship model** can also be promoted. It refers to the use of high-value data sets. It was proposed by the **MEITY's Committee of Experts in their Report on Non-Personal Data Governance (2020)**.

– In this, a government/not-for-profit organisation should be allowed to request the **Non-Personal Data Authority or NPDA** for the creation of a high-value data sets.

**d) There should be mandatory public access to private data** in exceptional cases such as public emergencies. For instance, it has been suggested in EU's proposed Data Act (2022).

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – CIVIL SERVICES

## **PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF THE IAS**

### **2. Has IAS Failed the Nation?**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Has IAS Failed the Nation**” published in **The Times of India** on **25th Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – The role of civil services in a democracy

**Relevance:** Civil Services Reform

**News:** The Prime Minister Narendra Modi openly expressed his disappointment with the prevalent ‘babu culture’ in the bureaucracy in the Parliament of India last year.

### **IAS in early Post Independence India**

Soon after Independence, they were seen as the home-grown answer to the colonial era ICS.

They were responsible for **nation building**. For example, carrying out agricultural development, land reforms, building irrigation projects, industrial development etc. IAS officers led in these efforts from the front

IAS Officers earned a formidable reputation for competence, commitment and integrity.

In the mid-1970s, the political executives used to appoint an IAS officer to inquire whenever a scam or a scandal used to take place.

### **Present Situation of IAS**

The IAS officers are found to be inept, indifferent and corrupt. Though, such IAS officers are in the minority. But the number of this minority is no longer small.

Now, the IAS officers are **publicly perceived** to be **elitist, self-serving** and maintaining the **status quo**. They are out of touch with reality. They have lost the courage of conviction to stand up for what's right.

### **What explains the issues with the IAS?**

The problems start from the recruitment examination, the induction training and subsequent in-service training and are strengthened with availability of limited opportunities for self-improvement.

The biggest problem is the **system of incentives and penalties developed by the politicians**. It promotes mediocrity and risk aversion and pushes the talented and young recruits who are

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full of enthusiasm into a world which is full of complacency, and laziness. They lose their moral compass.

- In this system, there is no pressure on officers to perform and deliver results.
- The smart, enthusiastic and capable are not assured of rising to the top.
- In fact, the corrupt, lazy and incompetent officers are rewarded.
- So there is no motivation for honest officers in this system **to upgrade their knowledge and skills.**

In fact, totally blaming the politicians for this is not accurate. It is the **weak moral fabric** of some IAS officers which lead to them to succumb to the temptation. Then others follow them. They are either attracted by the rewards or simply to save their careers.

### Way Forward

The bureaucracy should **stand united**. It should be inflexible and committed to collective high standards of ethics and professional integrity.

- **For example**, the British equivalents of our cabinet secretary and the Delhi police are so much regarded that they are investigating the scandal of the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

There are hundreds of young IAS officers who want to perform near miracles. Those IAS officers should lead to reform the system into a meritocracy.

GS2 - POLITY - BILLS AND RELATED ISSUES

### **DELHI MUNICIPAL COPR (AMENDMENT) BILL 2022**

#### 3. **3 in 1: New Bill silent on Corpn funding**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**3 in 1: New Bill silent on Corpn funding**” published in **The Times of India** on **26th Mar 22**.

**News:** The central government introduced the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022, in Lok Sabha. The Bill seeks to merge the three municipal corporations of Delhi into a single entity.

#### **What is the rationale behind the bill?**

The 2011 Trifurcation of the erstwhile Municipal Corporation of Delhi was uneven in terms of territorial divisions and revenue generating potential. As a result, there was a huge gap in the resources available to the three corporations compared to their obligations.

Further, the trifurcation has failed to offer efficient civic services as was expected from the more compact municipal corporation of Delhi.

Hence, the bill seeks to merge three Delhi MCDs.

#### **About Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill**

The bill proposes to give **wide-ranging powers to the central government** in running the municipal body.

The bill contains a provision allowing the central government, “if necessary”, to appoint a person to be called “**special officer**”. The officer will exercise the power and discharge the functions of the municipal corporation until the date on which the first meeting of the unified body is held.

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Bill is **silent on fund allocation** to the singular municipal corporation. Finance has been the bone of contention between the three municipal corporations and Delhi government for a long period.

– Under the current system, a part of the corporations' finances comes from Delhi government as per the recommendations of the state finance commission.

The bill contends that since the trifurcation, the **money gap has only widened**. It blames this lack of funds for the frequent strikes by the municipal employees which have not only affected civic services, but also created concomitant problems of cleanliness and sanitisation.

Another proposed change is a **reduction in the number of wards under the municipal corporation** from 272 to 250. This makes delimitation of ward boundaries and rotation of wards for reserved seats before the next civic polls an inevitability.

– The bill adds that the number of seats of councillors and those reserved for Scheduled Castes in the merged body will be determined by the central government through a gazette notification.

### Why there is an opposition to the bill?

The bill is being opposed on the following grounds:

– The legislation to divide the singular Municipal Corporation of Delhi into three entities was cleared by Delhi assembly, and so Parliament did not have the jurisdiction to merge them.

– As per the Indian Constitution, power to constitute municipal bodies is vested with the states.

– The bill hasn't suggested anything to resolve the financial crisis facing the municipal body.

– The move to reunify the three civic bodies was a ploy to defer the scheduled MCD elections .

### What is the govt's stance in the matter?

As per the Govt, Article 239AA of the Constitution gives Parliament the right to make laws for Delhi.

It further stated that the trifurcation of MCD was done to improve governance in the capital, but the experience of the last decade had shown results to the contrary.

## GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL ORG & GROUPINGS

### INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)

#### 4. **ICJ has ordered an end to invasion of Ukraine. This matters**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “ICJ has ordered an end to invasion of Ukraine, This matters” **published** in the Indian Express on 23rd Mar 22

**News:** The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN) has issued a provision measure i.e., an order to Russia to immediately suspend its military operations in Ukraine

#### What are the provisional measures?

These are **interim injunctions** aimed to preserve the rights of the party to the dispute (like Ukraine in this case). It is an interim order because the final decision is pending on the merits of the case.

#### Why did the ICJ order Russia to stop?

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Ukraine moved the ICJ against Russia based on claims that Russia has violated the **Genocide Convention that is binding to both Russia and Ukraine.**

Russia has waged war against Ukraine based on false claims that Ukraine is committing genocide in its own territory. In response, ICJ ordered to suspend the invasion as a **provisional measure** under Article 41 of the ICJ Statute.

ICJ issued the order due to the following reasons:

- ICJ had prima facie jurisdiction in the Russia-Ukraine Case. It is because the subject of genocide fell under the **Genocide Convention.**
- The provisional measure is important to preserve the **rights claimed by the parties** (here Ukraine) when a final decision is pending. Here, Ukraine claimed that it has a right not to be falsely accused of genocide crime and its territorial integrity cannot be threatened by Russia based on the false accusation.
- If ICJ does not order cessation of military action. It can lead to irreparable harm to Ukraine's rights. It is visible with the magnitude of destruction that the ongoing war has caused.

### **Significance of the ICJ order**

ICJ's decision is binding on Russia. It constitutes part of its international legal obligations. Its non-compliance can lead to violation of international law.

### **What happens in case of non-compliance of ICJ order?**

In case of non-compliance with ICJ rulings, it is the responsibility of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to make arrangements for compliance. But as Russia is a permanent member of UNSC, it can veto any actions of the UNSC.

Even if the ICJ order is not complied by the Russia, the ICJ decision is an impactful step in that direction. It implies an increasing weight of global opinion against Russia on its reckless abuse of international law.

## GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

### **INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

#### **5. A good foreign policy must also make a difference at home**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**A good foreign policy must also make a difference at home**” published in the **Indian Express** on **26th Mar 22.**

**News:** India's foreign policy is at the centre of debate due to ongoing geopolitical issues like the treatment of Indian students from the conflict-ridden Ukraine.

#### **What are the ingredients of a good foreign policy?**

A good foreign policy does not necessarily have to sound nice. It must be **able to meet the everyday needs** of Indian national nationals from the outside world, like assuring our national security.

Foreign policy is the **link to the outside world.** It must pass the test like It enables us to draw what we need for everyday need, like technology or capital, best practices, or even work opportunities.

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**At Personal level:** **(1)** For a student, it means ease of getting visas, the ability to travel during times of Covid, employment after studies, safely evacuation of the Indian nationals from the geopolitical crisis like Russia-Ukraine Conflict 2022, **(2)** For a businessperson, it mean access to foreign markets, receiving information about regulations and practices, and where circumstances demand it, assistance to solve problems, and **(3)** For the professionals and workers, it may be fair employment contracts, protection and welfare measures in times of difficulty etc.

**For external or internal security:** Diplomacy can help **prevent, mitigate** or **solve a security problem**. For example, countries can partner against common dangers, like terrorism, radicalization etc.

**For an economy:** Foreign policy can facilitate the creation of new capacities at home. It helps in **obtaining capital, technology and best practices** from abroad vis-à-vis information technology, auto manufacturing, food processing, metros or bullet trains, space capabilities or nuclear energy etc. For example, **Japan** was the pioneer in this regard during the **Meiji era**, while **China** after **Deng Xiaoping**. Therefore, it can accelerate **India's progress, expand employment** and **improve your quality of life**.

The foreign policy must be able to address **big issues** of like **Pandemics, Terrorism, and Climate change**.

It is important that our **foreign policy** shape India's image and influence the narrative prevalent worldwide about India. It matters what other nations think of India, our culture and our way of life.

Indian diplomacy should be able to deal with **contingencies**. For example, the neighbours (like **China**) may be unpredictable due to divergence of interests. Therefore, the policy must be able to show capabilities and deterrence.

### Objectives of India's Foreign Policy Since 2014

There were **six broad objectives** that were spelt out to the **policy-makers and implementers**:

**One**, we must bring about a change in the way of thinking about us in the world.

**Two**, we should create a partnership which is on more equal terms, and more generous with smaller countries.

**Three**, the global agenda and the big issues of our times should be shaped by India as much as possible.

**Four**, foreign relationships should be actively explored and leveraged for domestic development and progress.

**Five**, the very conceptualisation of India's foreign policy should be guided by a people-centric approach.

**Six**, our culture, traditions and thoughts should be able to influence international debates and initiatives. For example, Yoga and Ayurveda were obvious examples in this regard.

### What is the way forward?

India has entered into the 75th year of independence. We are going to celebrate Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav. In this regard, we should be fully aware of the opportunities and challenges that the world currently presents.



## **INDIA – CHINA RELATIONS**

### **6. The peculiar case of Ladakh's eastern boundary**

**Source:** This post is created based on “ The peculiar case of Ladakh's eastern boundary” published in The Hindu on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – India and its neighborhood

**Context:** Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is expected to meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval. This provides a chance to focus on Ladakh's eastern boundary and ongoing conflict.

#### **History of Ladakh's boundary:**

There has never been a defined boundary in this area because high watershed frameworks do not apply to parallel ranges in Ladakh.

By **Treaty of Timosgang, 1684**, Ladakh emerged as a distinct entity. This treaty established relations between Leh and Lhasa through trade exchanges.

**Treaty of Chushul, 1842** – Ladakh and Tibet agreed to maintain the status quo.

**Treaty of Amritsar, 1846** between the East India Company and the State of Kashmir included Ladakh with its eastern boundary undefined, and the focus remained pashmina trade.

**During British rule**, the focus shifted to the northern boundary of Ladakh because of the threat of Russian advance. In eastern Ladakh, however, the customary boundary was defined only for a very limited area under human occupation. This was also stated in the ‘**Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladak**’ in 1890. In this unoccupied Aksai Chin was described as “neutral territory”.

#### **New domestic consensus:**

The year **1954**, was a turning point in complicating the situation. Unilateral actions in ‘neutral territory’, establishing a strategic road, and defining the boundary converted a colonial ambiguity into a dispute. Instead of adopting the watershed principle as in the case of other Himalayan states.

**In 1959** – Both nations hardened their positions relying on selective historical correspondence that would justify their stand.

**In 1993** – Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control was signed, moving from history to principles.

**In 2020** – Focus has shifted to the ground situation. The recent joint statement highlights continuing dialogue to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

#### **What is the solution?**

Solution lies in continuing dialogue. An agreement on the watershed boundary following a well-established principle could meet national security concerns of India and China without bringing in intractable issues of sovereignty.

## **INDIA – RUSSIA RELATIONS**

### **7. Time for India to redefine its relationship with Russia**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Time for India to redefine its relationship with Russia**” published in **The Hindu** on **25 Mar 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations, Bilateral Relations

**Relevance:** Indo-Russia Relations

**News:** Russia’s war in Ukraine has decisively shaped international opinion. Indian Diplomacy is facing the question of how to navigate India’s great power relations in the future.

#### **What has been the impact of the Russia-Ukraine crisis?**

Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine has **changed the global order**. The Western world has imposed unprecedented sanctions against Russia and banned energy imports.

These sanctions can have an **impact on global finance, energy supplies, and transportation**, amid growing signs that they will constrain India’s ability to import Russian oil.

#### **What has been India’s foreign policy so far on such global matters?**

Former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru advocated for **India’s neutrality** in the bloc politics. It was the basis for India’s pursuit of an **independent post-colonial foreign policy**.

Since the end of the Cold War, India has been advocating the **policy of strategic autonomy**.

– It is a re-branded form of India’s non-aligned posture during the Cold War. It refers to the doctrine of ‘**multi-alignment**’ which is a reality of the 21st century.

Therefore, India **expanded its engagement with all the major powers**.

– For example, following the Soviet collapse, India joined Russia and China to promote a multi-polar world (*against the unipolarity of the U.S.*). Later, Brazil and South Africa were also brought into this coalition.

#### **What has been India’s stand on the present crisis?**

India has not directly criticised Moscow’s actions. It has abstained from voting at the UNSC.

Kremlin has praised India for taking an “independent and balanced” position.

#### **Why is India facing a foreign policy conundrum?**

The following factors are causing India a strategic headache and have come to restrain India’s strategic autonomy:

– At present, India is **heavily dependent** on Russia for its **arms imports**.

– Also, it has supported India during the Cold War era, like voting against pro-Pakistani diplomatic activism by powerful Western countries in the UNSC.

– China is blatantly expanding its sphere of influence in the military, economic and political domains through the Belt and Road Initiative in the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR). **Moscow has drifted much closer to Beijing**. The present may push Russia further into China’s military and economic orbit.

– The U.S. is most likely to bolster India’s future as a great power. It also counters China, which is asserting itself in India’s backyard. But **Moscow is also sharply critical of India’s engagement with the U.S. and the Quad**.

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– The US cannot ignore **Russia's aggression** along NATO's periphery. Therefore, The US may find it difficult to digest India's stand on Russian Invasion.

### Way Forward

The Russia- Ukraine Conflict implies that **Russia is unpredictable now**. For example, it is acting as a nuclear-armed bully. It is swinging wildly from one crisis to another. Therefore, it is **too risky for India** to pursue vague aims vis-à-vis Russia in these uncertain times.

Russia should rethink its concern against the eastward expansion of NATO. It is because a NATO-Russia Council was formed specifically to alleviate Russia's concerns.

The Ukrainian tragedy has introduced a **new era in international relations**. Therefore, amid such a crisis, New Delhi needs to be ready to radically redefine its relationship with Moscow.

## INDO-SRILANKA RELATIONS

### 8. Crisis in Sri Lanka

**Source:** The post is based on an article "Crisis in Sri Lanka" published in **The Hindu** on **25<sup>th</sup> Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations – India and its neighbourhood

**Relevance:** Indo-Sri Lanka relations

**News:** Sri Lanka is going through an **economic crisis**. It's facing issues like **long queues in front of petrol stations, steep rise in prices of essential commodities and frequent blackouts**.

The Sri Lankan economy has been facing both domestic and foreign debt. In addition, Sri Lanka has been facing a trade imbalance crisis since COVID-19 pandemic.

#### What are the cascading impacts on India?

Illegal migrants have started entering Tamil Nadu (16 people already entered recently). In addition, Tamil Nadu is already hosting nearly three lakh refugees after the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983.

It can also increase the smuggling and trafficking related activity from Sri Lanka to India.

#### What steps can be taken by Sri Lanka?

Colombo has approached India, China and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help.

Sri Lankan leadership should restructure the administration of concessions and subsidies. It should not bother about the Compulsions of electoral politics while doing so.

In addition to areas badly hit by the current crisis. The political devolution and economic development of the war-affected northern and eastern provinces should also be carried out.

#### How has India helped Sri Lanka?

In response, India has provided assistance of **\$2.4 billion**. It includes a **\$500 million loan deferment** and **\$1 billion credit line** to enable the supply of essential commodities.

#### Way forward

The crisis may serve as an opportunity to solve the bilateral issues of Palk Bay fisheries dispute.

### 9. Sri Lanka's aggravating economic crisis

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Sri Lanka's aggravating economic crisis**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd March 2022**.

**News:** Sri Lanka's economic crisis is aggravating rapidly, putting citizens through enormous hardship. Sri Lanka's Consumer Price inflation is at 16.8%, and it must repay foreign debt totalling nearly \$7 billion this year.

#### Reason for the crisis

Ever since the start of the pandemic, **1)** Sri Lankan labourers in West Asian countries were left stranded and returned jobless, **2)** Garment factories and tea estates were shut and youths lost their jobs in cities. This **hit all key foreign exchange earning sectors**, such as exports, remittances and tourism, in Sri Lanka.

**3) Lack of a comprehensive strategy:** This includes decisions such as an abrupt shift to organic farming, harsh import restrictions that led to market irregularities and hoarding.

#### How India is helping to avert the Sri Lankan economic crisis?

Beginning January 2022, India has extended assistance totalling \$2.4 billion — including an \$400 million RBI currency swap, a \$500 million loan deferment, and credit lines for importing essential commodities such as food, fuel, and medicines.

#### What are the concerns raised with India's assistance?

A Sri Lankan media depicted India's emergency financial assistance as “diplomatic blackmail” for crucial energy projects. There is a suspicion in Sri Lanka that India's assistance in the past was “tied” with key infrastructure projects. Such as [Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm project](#); the National Thermal Power Corporation's recent agreement with Ceylon Electricity Board to set up a solar power plant in Sampur and two renewable energy projects in northern Sri Lanka.

### INDO-JAPAN RELATIONS

#### 10. India & Japan take recent shifts in their stride

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India and Japan take recent shifts in their stride**” published in the **Business Standard** on **22 Mar 2022**

**News:** Recently, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was on visit to New Delhi. The visit was important for several reasons.

#### What are the important outcomes of the visit?

**Wrt Ukraine conflict:** In the Joint Statement, both sides called for international law to be respected and for an immediate cessation of violence in Ukraine. It is mostly on lines of India's Position. Therefore, this visit must have lowered down the probability of major diplomatic backlash against India. It was because the western countries were not happy with India's measured position in wake of the Ukraine Crisis.

**Wrt Myanmar crisis:** Both countries have **similar stands** on the Myanmar crisis, 2021. For example, New Delhi and Tokyo have chosen to adopt **quiet diplomacy** and an **ASEAN-brokered political solution** to the crisis.

The Japanese announcement of **investment of worth \$42 billion** over the next five years is crucial for economic growth of India.

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Both agreed to have a range of **partnerships in cybersecurity, development assistance, and clean energy development**. For example, Tokyo's vital support for high-technology innovation and development in the Northeast,

Both restated their long-standing commitment to supporting the other's **bid for permanent membership** at the UN Security Council.

**Defence Sector:** India and Japan signed a Mutual Logistics and Supply Agreement (MLSA) in 2020 which allows the militaries to access each other's bases and a host of related supplies. In the context of the Ukraine crisis, this provided an opportunity for India to diversify its source of armaments and key technologies.

**Geostrategic Importance:** Both aims at providing security for the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, India, Japan, the United States and Australia are trying to build a new security architecture in Indo-Pacific.

### What are some issues in India-Japan ties?

**Defence:** India is facing trouble in acquiring Japan's Shinmaywa US-2 maritime reconnaissance aircraft. In addition, Indo-Japanese MLSA is also a scaled-down version of the more expansive Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement.

The **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor** is a crucial part of India's diplomatic strategy has not come to reality so far. It is a joint Indo-Japanese effort to build infrastructure and connectivity projects in Africa and South-East Asia.

There has been **no progress on reworking the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** which was signed in 2011. While the CEPA did boost bilateral trade, it has expanded India's trade deficit with Japan.

### What is the way forward?

Both must urgently review and avoid the shortcomings that are coming up in the Indo-Japan efforts in the AAGC.

The CEPA should be reworked as soon as possible. It remains critically important if Indo-Japanese trade is to be both robust and balanced.

## 11. Amid Ukraine crisis, India does well to deepen ties with Australia and Japan, draw red lines vis a vis Beijing

**Source:** This post is based on an article "**Amid Ukraine Crisis, India does well to deepen ties with Australia and Japan, draw red lines vis a vis Beijing**" published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd March 22**

**News:** The Chinese Foreign Minister attacked QUAD members.

He mentioned that "*No country should pursue its so-called absolute security at the expense of other countries' security*".

He stated this in wake of Indian Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi's summit-level meetings with the prime ministers of Japan and Australia.

### Accusation made by China on the west

China referred to the present situation in Ukraine and claimed that the present situation is the result of "the NATO strategy of eastward expansion".

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In fact, China has caused several provocations in the Indo-Pacific.

### Why the accusations of China are wrong?

In reality, China has itself become assertive in the Indo-Pacific region. It is asserting at the “expense of other countries’ security”.

The US forces and its allies have been present in the **Indo-Pacific region** since the end of the Second World War.

Moreover, the Quad is **not a military alliance**. It is not like NATO. In fact, It is a response to assertive nature of China in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, China is occupying islands and trying to control sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific. It is also carrying out activities along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India.

Both, **China** and Russia have entered into a “**no-limits**” **partnership**. They have effectively created an alliance in which they would back each other’s plans in **Ukraine** and **Taiwan**. In other words, China is doing what it is accusing the West in the Indo-Pacific.

### What is the way forward?

Both India and Japan have rightly deepened their **bilateral economic cooperation** and **strategic convergence**. For example, Japan will invest about **\$4.2 billion** over five years

Australia is likely to unveil new projects and investments in India.

India **should hold diplomatic engagements with Beijing**. In fact, India has stated its stand that the Chinese activities on its borders or in the Indo-Pacific thwarts the smoothening of India-China relationship.

## 12. Japanese PM’s visit reaffirms salience of bilateral ties with India at a time of geopolitical ferment

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Japanese PM’s visit reaffirms salience of bilateral ties with India at a time of geopolitical ferment**” published in the **Indian Express** on **21st Mar 22**.

**News:** Recently, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited India. It is significant that despite the recent developments in Ukraine, Tokyo and New Delhi have managed to present a united front vis-a-vis China.

### What is the significance of the visit of Japanese PM to India?

**First**, it was the first bilateral state visit of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida since he assumed office. No annual summit-level meeting has occurred between both countries in last two years since 2019 because of Covid-pandemic.

**Second**, the visit comes at a time when the two countries are marking 70 years of bilateral ties. Both Delhi and Tokyo formed a “**Strategic and Global Partnership**” because both acquired salience and depth in 2006.

**Third**, the visit marks both a re-affirmation of the close **economic** and **strategic ties** between the countries. It further lays out the prospect of deepening the relationship in the wake of the current geopolitical turmoil. Both are committed to cooperate on digital security and green technologies.

**Fourth**, Japan’s announcement to invest 5 trillion JPY signals that Japanese companies and the government continue to see India as a **viable investment destination**. The investment will cover

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a wide range of activities, and effectively boost Japanese investments, skill Indian labour and build supply chains.

**Fifth**, it holds out the possibility for the second- and third-largest economies in Asia to effectively **collaborate in the face of Chinese dominance**. Both sides discussed China's aggressive stance in the Indo-Pacific as well as its encroachment on India's land borders. Both Japan and India are committed to the rules-international based order.

**Sixth**, On the strategic front, in the joint statement, both sides **condemned Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks** on Indian soil. Also, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to collaborate to ensure **"peace and stability" in Afghanistan**.

This mutual goodwill generates hope that the bilateral relations can be shaped up for greater cooperation during the upcoming 2+2 ministerial conference.

### What are the diverging Interest of India and Japan?

On the one side, Japan has condemned the Russian attack. On the other side, India has called for peace and dialogue. This is in line with the two countries' positions, and individual strategic needs.

GS2 – POLITY – PARLIAMENT

## **INDIAN LEGISLATIVE SERVICE**

### **13. Needed, an Indian Legislative Service**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article **"Needed, an Indian Legislative Service"** published in **The Hindu** on **23<sup>rd</sup> Mar 2022**.

**Context:** There is a need for All India Legislative services for effective functioning on legislative bodies.

Since the first Parliament in 1952, Secretaries-General of Rajya Sabha are usually parachuted from civil services and other services from time to time. On September 1, 2021, Dr. P.P.K. Ramacharyulu became the first Rajya Sabha Secretariat staff member who rose to the position of Secretary-General. However, he was replaced in less than 3 months.

#### **Need for an independent secretariat:**

**Article 98** provides for separate secretariats for two houses of Parliament. It is based on the principle that the secretariat should be **independent from the executive**.

The Secretary-General has a rank equivalent to Cabinet Secretary. They enjoy privileges such as freedom from arrest, immunity from criminal proceedings, and obstruction of their rights would amount to contempt of house. They are mandated with many parliamentary and administrative responsibilities which require vast knowledge of parliamentary procedures, practice and precedents. Most civil servants lack this aspect of expertise.

#### **Situation in Lok Sabha:**

Unlike Rajya Sabha, the Lok Sabha had nine of its staff (including lateral-entry officers) raised to Secretaries-General to date.

#### **Issues with appointing civil servants as Secretary-General:**

- 1. Conflict of interest:** Civil Servants come with the long-held baggage and the clout of their past career.

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- Breaches Separation of Power:** Officials mandated with exercising one area of power may not expect to exercise the others.
- Reduces answerability of the executive:** Parliament must have technical and human resource competency to be an effective body for providing meaningful scrutiny and to make executive accountable. However, bureaucracy prevents that from happening.

### Need for an All-India Service:

- Presence of variety of law making bodies:** Ranging from Panchayat, Block Panchayat, Zila Parishad, Municipal Corporations.
- Robust legislative institutions** require well trained staff in place.

Hence, a common service can build a combined and experienced legislative staff cadre, enabling them to serve from across local bodies to the Union Parliament. Under **Article 312** Rajya Sabha can pass a resolution to this effect. For example – in the UK, the Clerk of House of Commons is always appointed from the legislative staff pool created for serving the Parliament.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – ISSUES RELATED TO DEV & MGMT OF EDU

### CUET and related issues

#### 14. Teachable moments

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “Teachable moments” published in Business Standard on 24<sup>th</sup> March 22.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to Education

**News:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) has taken a decision to hold the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for undergraduate admissions to all 45 centrally funded universities.

#### Issues that remain to be clarified:

CUET is expected to provide a level playing field to a great extent. However certain issues still remain to be clarified. Such as:

- Handling of Supernumerary admissions** such as through the quota for sports and extracurricular activities.
- Role of Class XII board exams** in the admission process. Whether the CUET supersedes them or some colleges will prescribe a minimum cut-off.
- Disadvantage to state board exams** as the syllabus for the exam will be the prescribed Class XII National Council of Educational Research and Training curriculum.
- Nature of exam:** It must avoid the pitfall of following a set pattern of variable questions, eventually creating a set of standard Q&As that students merely have to learn by rote. This can also lead to mushrooming of coaching classes.
- Divert attention from non-academic activities:** The non-academic activities, which go towards offering a rounded education, may well fall by the wayside as students focus on cramming for the CUET, just as they do for the NEET and JEE.

Hence, CUET should focus on not perpetuating the limitations of the Indian education system.



## **HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **15. On India's education and healthcare: Mind, body & growth**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**On India's education and healthcare: Mind, body & growth**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Governance – Issues related to dev & mgmt of education & healthcare

**Relevance:** How to ensure India's government schools, healthcare deliver quality service for the majority

**News:** Ensuring top quality and a proper delivery of public goods like education and healthcare is one area where successive governments have underperformed in India.

The article highlights the current situation, reasons for underperformance and measures to address the issues.

#### **What is the situation wrt education and healthcare in India?**

– **Education:** ASER reported in 2019 that only about half the students in Standard III could read at Standard I levels.

– **Healthcare:** The rate of malnutrition amongst India's children stays stubbornly over 30%, which is higher than in Ghana or Kenya.

#### **Why India has not been able to deliver on education, health and other public goods?**

**Lack of responsibility:** One of the reasons is that no particular person can be held responsible for local level health or education infrastructure. **For instance:** No one can be held responsible for a local primary health centre (PHC) that is frequently out of medicines, or for a local government school where the teacher is perpetually absent.

**Local elections fought on populist matters:** The aggrieved locals or their panchayat representatives often have little ability to reach the state capital to air their grievances about poor condition of local level infra. So local elections are rarely about improving delivery of public goods. Instead, campaigns are based on populist giveaways such as loan waivers or free rations that have broad appeal across the state, job reservations based on caste, region, or other subgroup identities etc.

#### **What measures need to be taken?**

**Pushing the demand side:** The supply side of service delivery in health and education is improving, but at too slow a pace. The demand side needs to be mobilised. Instead of centralising administration, we need to decentralise, while empowering beneficiaries.

**Empowering the local govt:** Some power to reward or punish providers needs to be handed to local government. Even better would be to set up school boards and health boards, staffed primarily by user households, which should be the primary input to the local govt's decisions.

**Removal of arbitrary laws** that any administration – local, state, or national – has to harass critics. These laws cause fears against protesting a bad service delivery.

**Private service providers:** Private providers can offer people more choice. Instead of viewing them with suspicion, regulating them lightly and effectively, is a much better alternative.

**Enhance transparency:** Transparency can lead to more informed choice. Parents should know their local school's test performance and its teachers' qualifications. There is however no need to insist that every teacher have a B. Ed.

The eventual aim should be to **allow state and private providers to compete on a level playing field**. If the poor household chooses private alternatives, the government should aid them through school vouchers and health insurance. For instance: Ayushman Bharat.

The **regulatory side of the state should be independent of the side providing the service**, so that regulations do not inhibit competition to state providers.

**Rethinking spending priorities:** Consider sums being given under Production-Linked Incentives schemes – it will cost \$10 billion or more in subsidies to convince a big industrialist to build one semi-modern chip factory, a highly capital-intensive (*not labour-intensive*) enterprise. That sum could fund 50 top-notch universities churning out 50,000 fantastic scientists and engineers a year or 1,000 schools with state-of-the-art laboratories, libraries and gyms.

### **MEDICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA**

#### **16. Changing the jurisprudence of scarcity**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Changing the jurisprudence of scarcity” published in the Hindu on **22 Mar 2022**

**News:** The Prime Minister’s recently made observation about the plight of the Indian medical students returning from Ukraine is on point.

#### **Why are problems being faced in the education sector?**

States are **demanding reservation higher than 50%**. It is demanded because most of the state’s population is eligible for reservation and goes beyond 50%.

For the political parties, higher reservation serves social justice and also leads to **electoral benefit**.

**Rising new demands for reservation** like preferences to students of rural schools, students of State Board schools, etc. For example, Tamil Nadu’s attempt to secure a 7.5% preference for governmental school students.

The demand for reservation arises due to the **shortages in education or scarcity of seats**. For example, 16 lakh candidates compete for 88,000 MBBS seats in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test.

#### **What are the judiciary’s views?**

Judiciary in the *Balram* (1972), *Indra Sawhney* (1992) and Maratha reservation (2021) cases has enunciated the principle of 50% reservation.

The Supreme Court believes that the reservations are an exception to the rule of equality, and cannot exceed the norm of 50%.

#### **How these issues can be addressed?**

There should be a **legal right** for Indians to have a medical education system. It should be accessible and affordable. **For example**, the right to health and to a good education is part of the right to life (*Article 21*), under our expanded conceptualisation of Fundamental Rights.

The **education system should be expanded**. It should be able to accommodate the youngsters who want to make this their profession.

The government should facilitate investment. It should **promote employment** of the talent. It should work to provide quality infrastructure in the education field.

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The **fee/pricing policy should be rationalized**, and seats should be increased as the students are willing to pay.

There is a need for **reform in the education related policies**. There should not be unreasonable and unnecessary restrictions in the education field. For example, presently only trusts or societies provide education. Such restrictions drive the commercials into the black market.

The policy reforms should **allow the market forces to operate**. The demand and supply equilibrium will lead to benefits of pricing and quality.

The government can **restructure tax benefits**. It can make it viable to start and run medical colleges. Allow minority institutions too to avail the benefits of Section 80G of the Income Tax Act for donations to its college.

**Providing scholarship should be made mandatory** as the social commitment upon the institution.

The government should **bring policies which keep into consideration reservation, total and partial scholarships**. Such a policy should allow the institution to run with freedom and make a reasonable profit.

The government should **focus on running its own colleges better**.

### GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – RESERVATION IN INDIA

#### 17. A solution in search of a problem: on 10% reservation

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**A solution in search of a problem: on 10% reservation**” published in **The Hindu** on **22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Indian Constitution: Features; Government policies and interventions aimed at development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

**Context:** 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act requires reforms.

The Government passed **103rd Constitutional Amendment Act** creating a 10% reservation for economically weaker sections (EWS), for those, who have an income threshold of Rs. 8 lakh per annum. This article discusses potential implication of the EWS Amendment, followed by some alternatives:

#### Issues with the amendment:

- 1. Excludes no one:** As per India Human Development Survey (IHDS), the annual household incomes of 98% houses are less than 8 lakh. Other exclusion criteria applied (e.g. amount of land owned and size of home), the Amendment still covers 95% of households.
- 2. High costs to other reserved categories:** The Amendment removes 10% jobs from “open” category i.e., which can be taken by anyone – SC, ST, or OBC. Hence, it reduces opportunity for the reserved groups. It can also lead to a demand for more reservation as the amendment breaches the 50% limit.
- 3. Getting caste certificates:** As a large number of SC/ST/OBC households report difficulties in obtaining these certificates. A few non-reserved individuals also get fake certificates.
- 4. Specialized fields:** Skill demands are rapidly outpacing supply of candidates in specialized fields. In such cases, the compulsion to select a candidate from a particular category including EWS, acts as a restraint.

#### Need for redesigning reservations:

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- **Spreading the benefits:** This can be done within the existing framework and ensure that individuals use their reserved category status only once in a lifetime. This would result in spreading the benefits broadly within the reserved community and more upward mobility.

**Focus on skilling:** To ensure that citizens regardless of caste, class, or religion are able to participate in the economic growth. For ex: IHDS data shows that at Class 1 level – 68% of forward class students can read, 56% OBC, SCs (45%), STs (40%). Thus, there is a need to target such inequalities.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – EFFECTS OF POLICIES AND POLITICS OF DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON INDIA'S INTERESTS

### **ISLAMOPHOBIA AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **18. India's complex position on Islamophobia**

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India's complex position on Islamophobia**” published in **The Hindu** on **26th Mar 22**.

**News:** The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a consensus resolution declaring March 15 to be celebrated as “International Day to Combat Islamophobia” annually.

#### **What is Islamophobia?**

It refers to the fear of and prejudice, discrimination and hate speech against Islam. **For example**, Muslims claims the face negative stereotyping in Western countries has exacerbated since 9/11 terrorist attacks.

#### **Who Introduced the resolution and for what purpose?**

It was sponsored by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

OIC wanted “high-visibility events” for curbing Islamophobia by the member states of UN. But, OIC had to withdraw this demand.

Instead, it was decided to observe March 15 as “International Day to combat Islamophobia” in “an appropriate manner”.

#### **What was the stand by various countries and organizations?**

India and the European Union (EU) had major difficulties with the very basis of the proposal.

#### **India**

– India wanted that the prevalence of religiophobia should be acknowledged instead of focussing on just one religion. The prevalence of ‘phobias’ are just not against Abrahamic faiths.

– These are found against non-Abrahamic faiths also like Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. For example, India has given refuge to the prosecuted members of Zoroastrians, Jews and Buddhists (*Dalai Lama and his followers*). India did “condemn” Islamophobia along with all other religiophobia.

– India formally accepted the resolution and allowed the resolution to pass without breaking the consensus.

#### **EU**

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Unlike India, the EU's opposition was based on different philosophical underpinnings. The EU placed its focus on individual rights and freedoms. It did not focus on protection of religions per se. Thus, its emphasis was on the rights of non-believers.

### China

China sponsored the resolution. This was despite China's abysmal record of treating the Uighurs (its Muslims). However, the China's approach to the Resolution perhaps may be a result of a quid pro quo

### What is the way forward?

Focus on a single religion may lead to divisiveness based on "religious camps" in UN.

## RUSSIA – UKRAINE CONFLICT

### 19. Dial down the security dilemma that sets vicious cycle in motion

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "Dial down the security dilemma that sets vicious cycle in motion" published in Live Mint on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International relations

**Context:** The Russian invasion of Ukraine has given a blow to post-1989 'liberal' international order.

### What was the post-1989 'liberal' international order?

The global order rested on the premise that the world could rely on **economic interests** to spread **prosperity and mitigate conflict**. For instance, as the middle and rising powers such as Russia and China became richer, they would become more like the 'West'. The gains made from trade would overshadow the geopolitical competition.

### What is happening now?

The old order's narrative is being replaced by **geo-political 'realists'**. Their version of the world is characterized by **zero-sum great-power competition**, where national security and absence of global rule enforcers will lead mostly to conflict. In such a scenario, the issue of containing Russia and China becomes dominant. Other matters such as trade, climate change, poverty, public health take a backseat.

The central framework of 'realists' is based on the **'security dilemma'**. In this, attempts are made by each country to become more secure which further adds to insecurity of other countries. This then triggers countermeasures that creates the **vicious cycle**. For instance, **Ukraine's** interest in entering a military alliance was to bolster its economy and security. But Russia saw it as inimical to Russia's interest and took counter measures.

This dilemma is exacerbated when American and European policymakers talk about a **"rules based international order"**, but use it to fulfill their own interests and overlook their transgression of it. This leads to hostile views of the West. For instance, the exclusion of **Chinese firms such as Huawei** from the global market, fuel China's concern that America wants to undermine its economy.

The dilemma further increases when great power seeks **hegemony rather than accommodation**. The US is guilty of this. For instance, it is expanding its military presence via NATO but leaves little room for other powers' legitimate security concerns.

### Is there an alternative to this order?

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Yes, it is possible to create a stable world while remaining realistic about the nature of great-power competition. As in the long term a country cannot invest all its resources in military capabilities. They also need to focus on building their economy. For instance, **South Korea** after the 1960s focused on its economic strength to deal with its northern neighbor. For this end, the countries can:

1. Set national security goals which are not overtly offensive.
2. Convey their intentions and concerns better.
3. Reduce scope for misunderstanding and work for cooperation.

### 20. Buyers' power: India depends on Russian arms. But Russia depends on Indian arms purchases. That gives Delhi leverage

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Buyer's Power: India depends on Russian arms. But Russia depends on Indian arms purchases. That gives Delhi leverage**" published in the **Times of India** on **23rd March 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

**Relevance:** Ukraine crisis and India's dependence on Russian arms

**News:** India's national interest and its international stand on Ukraine are at centre of debate due to the Ukraine-Russia Conflict.

#### Status of the Russian Economy

Russia relies hugely on exports of two products, oil and petroleum products and arms products.

**Oil and Petroleum:** Russia's oil and petroleum products export was 8 million barrels/day. However, The Western sanctions may lead to its reduction to 5 million barrels/day.

**Arms:** According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Russia was the world's second largest arms exporter behind the US with a market share of 19% during the period 2017-21".

#### Why is India facing pressure due to the ongoing Ukraine Crisis?

India is heavily dependent on Russia for arm trade. Therefore, India is in a vulnerable situation.

Therefore, it has not taken a critical diplomatic position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Thus, Quad members and European countries aim to persuade India to take a more critical stand.

#### Is India in a vulnerable position because of its dependence on Russian arms imports?

Not really.

Russia is also dependent upon India for arms trade. India is Russia's largest defence customer. India is the recipient of 28% Russian arms exports from Russia.

**Importance of India to Russia's arms exports:** Russia had a global market share of 24% arms export between 2012-16 period. When India began to diversify its arms sources; Russia's export share fell by 5%.

In the 2017-21 period, **India** and **Saudi Arabia** were the largest arms importers in the world.

#### What is the way forward?

India is not in a weak position in Indo-Russia defence relation. If India needs Russia's arms, Russia needs India to buy them.

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China is not going to buy more Russian arms. China is not at the top in the list of arm importing countries. In fact, China's needs are different and its capabilities are much higher.

India has **diplomatic leverage** against Russia. India is in a powerful position to negotiate with Russia. Therefore, it gives India the room to critique Russian Invasion of Ukraine.

### 21. When West Weaponizes Sanctions

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**When West Weaponizes Sanctions**” published in the **Business Standard** on **22<sup>nd</sup> Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations – Effects of policies and politics of developing and developed countries on India's interests

**News:** Recently, the Indian PM pointed towards the domestic political stability in the face of external threats and challenges like global conflict, instability and mounting inflationary pressures.

#### **Consequences of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine Conflict and the economic sanctions**

The military campaign in Ukraine has **destabilised the European security order**. The western economic sanctions on Russia are destabilising the global economic order

Due to the ongoing crisis, **India** and **developing countries** are going to pay a heavy price. The unintended consequences may range from **rising commodity prices** to shrinking markets, from devalued currency to fiscal constraints at home.

– India is also facing challenges of rising price of oil, gas, coal, fertilisers and vegetable oils.

The developing economies are already facing risk of another wave of COVID-19. If it comes, it may slow down the global trade and the movement of people across the world.

#### **What measures can be taken to address the situation?**

##### **Short Term**

It is in everyone's interest that a **ceasefire be immediately declared by Russia**.

It is also equally in global interest that the **US and EU step back from the reckless attempt to weaponize global economic links**.

There is a need to focus on **inflation control, employment generation, external economic & security challenges** and internal social and political stability.

##### **India:**

– India has very well resisted US pressure on Indian purchase of Russian oil. India **cannot afford to ignore low-cost options** considering India's external dependence in oil and gas.

– India has the **opportunity to discuss common issues** important for India and the global south in the upcoming **G20 Summit** next year (India to host). These issues are related to the comprehensive national power through the building of economic, social and human capabilities

– The “**neighbourhood first**” should be India's foreign policy priority. There is a need to improve India's relations with its neighbourhood. Stability and peace in our neighbourhood should be part of our strategy for **building comprehensive national power**. For example, India has renewed ties with Sri Lanka.

### Long Term

**Sustained economic growth** is needed to generate the revenues needed to fund the welfare programmes.

- India would have to **grow at 9% per annum over the next five years** so that India can grow from the current level of \$2.7 trillion to \$5 trillion economy by 2022.
- India needs to **expand its nuclear and renewable energy programmes** to reduce India's external energy dependence.
- India's **RuPay card can be promoted** both at home and abroad. It can insure against potential threats to the SWIFT system

### 22. Russia's offer of cheaper oil is tempting, but India must be cautious

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Russia's offer of cheaper oil is tempting, but India must be cautious**" published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd Mar 22**.

**News:** Global crude oil prices have now risen above \$100 a barrel due to the Russia-Ukraine Conflict 2022.

#### Impact of high crude prices on India

Indian government is under tremendous pressures. It has to spend twice as much to import oil. It cannot pass on these high oil costs to consumers, and will have to bear these costs.

This can severely hamper the government's ability to spur the economy through increased capital expenditure.

Russia has offered to **sell oil** at lower prices to India.

#### What can be the consequences of India accepting the Russian offer?

Russia's offer is tied with **some hidden costs** for India. It may be similar to the situation when the IMF offered help to India based upon some conditions that included India to adopt measures for economic reforms in 1991.

The **US has cautioned India** against buying Russian oil. It may lead to secondary sanctions against India for buying discounted Russian oil.

The US may be **antagonized** due to the cascading **de-dollarization phenomenon**. It is because India cannot not buy Russian oil using US dollars. So, Russia may insist on payment in rubles. Similarly, China, which is the second-largest trading partner of India, may also insist on payments in Chinese yuan.

India may also become the centre of **geo-economic war** as a result of the cascading de-dollarization phenomenon.

#### What is the way forward?

**Exports remain India's biggest hope at present.** It is because India is facing weak domestic demand, lack of private investment and fiscal bottlenecks to government expenditure. Therefore, it can lead to a long-term sustainable economic recovery, job creation and also address problems arising out of high crude prices at present

The Russia-Ukraine conflict can be an **opportunity for India**. India can step up and capture global market share in goods and services. For example, India is looking forward to capitalising on wheat exports amid the global sanctions against Russian wheat.



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India should **equally negotiate with its trading partners** i.e., the US, Russia, China and others for its best possible National interests. It is because the US and China are India's largest trading partners. And, The Russia-Ukraine conflict has reshaped the world order. Now, there are two axes, i.e., the US and its allies v/s China and Russia.

### 23. An 'atmanirbhar' India can look the world in the eye

**Source:** The post is based on an article "An Atmanirbhar India can look the world in the eye" published in the **Indian Express** on **21st Mar 22**.

**News:** Recently, Russia's military assault on Ukraine has been at the centre of attention lately. Its impact is being acutely felt in India.

#### Why did Russia attack Ukraine?

Putin's stated aim of "de-Nazifying" a democratic nation (headed by a Jewish president). Ukraine has a past of collaboration with German occupying forces in WWII.

**Violation of NATO's guarantees** that it would not expand even "an inch eastward" on the dissolution of the USSR. In the past, NATO enlisted 10 former Warsaw Pact members over a decade. By 2021, **four more East European** nations had joined NATO and Ukraine appeared to be on the verge of doing so. It was perceived as a threat to the restoration of Russia's glorious past by Putin.

#### What was the response of Europe and India?

The West has imposed economic sanctions on Russia, which resulted into the crashing of rouble and unplugging of Russia's economy. In response, Putin described the sanctions as "akin to a declaration of war."

India has adopted successive abstentions on the Russian Invasion of Ukraine during votes in the UN Security Council and elsewhere. However New Delhi stance has attracted criticism as it has placed it alongside China and Pakistan who also abstained. Therefore, India is seen as pro-Russian.

#### Why did India adopt a policy of abstention in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine?

It is rooted in "**realpolitik**". India's vital national interests can well be served by its "balancing act" at the cusp of the East-West Duopoly. The intricacies of the long-simmering Russia-Ukraine tensions are another factor that has discouraged India from taking a hard stand.

**Security Angle:** India source 60-70% of its military hardware from Russia. Any interruption in the supply could have a devastating impact on our defence posture vis-à-vis the China-Pak axis. It has jeopardized the credibility of India's "strategic Autonomy".

#### Why has India failed to attain a degree of self-reliance in military hardware?

**Politicians are indifferent towards national security:** Their focus remains on the five-year electoral cycle/ This has prevented the evolution of a long-term vision for India's Defence Technology Industrial Base (DTIB).

**The bureaucracy's incomprehension of military technology:** It has allowed the defence science establishment to have its way without an iota of accountability for missing time, cost or performance targets.

#### What is the way forward?

**De-Russification of the armed forces:** Since 1962 Sino-Indian war, India was heavily relying upon **Moscow's military-industrial complex**. And, since the Soviet Collapse in 1990, the

relationship has become brittle and transactional. It is time to initiate a process of progressive “de-Russification” of Indian armed forces; not to switch sources, but of becoming self-reliant.

**Genuine Indigenisation of India’s defence technological and industrial base (DTIB):** Under the banner of “atmanirbharta” label, the focus is on production of the battle-tanks, warships and jet-fighters for the self-reliance. But the vital sub-systems like engines, guns, missiles, radars, fire-control computers, gear-boxes and transmission that are either imported or assembled under foreign licences, are being ignored under the self-reliant mission. Therefore, genuine atmanirbharta requires **selective identification of vital military technologies**

The military needs to look beyond its immediate operational needs and lend support to indigenization.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

### **ISSUES WITH THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

#### **24. Sealed justice: On sealed cover jurisprudence**

**Source:** This post is created based on “Sealed justice: On sealed cover jurisprudence” published in The Hindu on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022. **Syllabus:** GS 2 – Functioning of the Judiciary

**News:** Recently, the Supreme Court has decided that it will examine the issue of ‘sealed cover jurisprudence’ in the Media One channel case.

#### **What is ‘sealed cover jurisprudence’?**

This practice gained much traction in recent years, in this contents or evidences are provided to judges in sealed envelopes, withheld from lawyers appearing against the government, which is seen by judges alone. In this manner, the courts can rule in favour of the government without providing an opportunity to the affected parties to know what is being held against them.

**In Media One case,** Kerala High Court upheld the validity of an order revoking broadcasting rights of Malayalam news channel Media One, on the basis of a sealed envelope evoking national security. For now, the Supreme Court has allowed the channel to resume broadcasting.

#### **What is the validity of ‘sealed cover jurisprudence’ under law?**

Law permits the submission of confidential material in some cases. Courts can also order some contents to be kept confidential. **The Evidence Act** allows the privilege of non-disclosure of some documents and communications. The government usually justifies the submission of secret material on the basis of **national security or ongoing investigation**.

#### **What are the undesirable consequences of such practice?**

- 1. Compromising defence of accused**– especially in cases of national security, money laundering, or corruption.
- 2. Denying bail** on the basis of undisclosed material. (P. Chidambaram case)
- 3. Gives scope to state to avoid scrutiny of the need and proportionality** of its restrictions on freedom.

The Supreme Court should determine and prescribe circumstances in which confidential government reports can be used by courts for adjudication.

GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN ISSUES

GS2 – POLITY – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

## **HIJAB ROW IN KARNATAKA**

### **RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION**

#### **25. TWO FREEDOMS AND THE HIJAB IN OUR MIDST**

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Two freedoms and the hijab in our midst” published in **The Hindu on 21st Mar 22**

**News:** The Karnataka High Court recently ruled that wearing Hijab is not an essential practice in Islam. The judges held that neither the prescription of uniform in schools nor the Karnataka government’s order disallowing the wearing of hijab in schools was violative of Article 25 of the Constitution.

#### **Two concepts of freedom:**

In the debate around hijab issue, two questions of freedom emerge:

**First**, whether Muslim women ‘freely’ choose to wear hijab or do so because they are socially conditioned to believe that modesty is a womanly virtue?

**Second**, the **freedom of an individual/ community vis-a-vis the state**. How much of the freedom one gives to the state when one enters the **social contract**, and how much does one keep for oneself? This creates the difference between public and private sphere. The freedom that individuals keep can be exercised in the private sphere. Whereas in the public sphere, there are restrictions.

In a secular state, **religion is in the private sphere**. This means two things. **One**, a person is free to practice their religion. **Second**, the State does not profess any religion. But where does the private sphere end and the public sphere begin? For example: If a Muslim student is made to remove hijab at school, does this trample her religious right to wear a hijab or uphold secular nature of the school?

According to the **theory of social contract** – When a citizen enters into a social contract, she/he gives up some freedom in the process. Similarly, when a person enters into a contract with an institution, such as a school, he/she gives up certain freedoms. For example: freedom to attend classes as per will. The uniform issue is similar.

#### **Essential religious practice:**

The equation of a community with scripture or texts is a feature of Abrahamic religion. In Indian context, the practices of Islam and Christianity are also largely fluid that defies essence. Hence, the discourse of essential religious practice needs to be rethought in a largely pagan context such as Indian.

## **INTER-STATE DISPUTES AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **26. The controversy over the proposed Mekedatu water project**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The controversy over the proposed Mekedatu water project**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure

**Relevance:** Controversy pertaining to Mekedatu water project

**News:** Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are heading for a political confrontation over the Mekedatu drinking water project across river Cauvery, proposed by the former.

Within days of Tamil Nadu Assembly’s resolution against the project, Karnataka’s legislative assembly is set to counter it with a resolution seeking the project’s early implementation and clearances from the Centre.

Furthermore, with Cauvery being an emotive issue that binds people in the Cauvery basin districts in Old Mysore region, Mekedatu is likely to impact election results.

#### **About Mekedatu project**

Originally mooted in 1948, Mekedatu (*which translates as Goat’s crossing*) is a drinking water cum power generation project across river Cauvery.

Karnataka gave the project shape after the final award of the **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal was notified in February 2013 allocating the riparian states their shares**.

The ₹9,000 crore balancing reservoir at Mekedatu on the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border will involve **submergence** of nearly 5,100 hectares of forest in **Cauvery wildlife sanctuary** hosting rich flora and fauna.

#### **What is the current status of the project?**

The project is now before the **Cauvery Water Management Authority**. The Authority is exploring the possibility of having an exclusive discussion on the project, when the matter is sub judice.

**Tamil Nadu** has written to the Centre to withdraw the permission given to prepare the detailed project report (DPR). It has also filed a petition before the Supreme Court, explaining its objections against the project.

The **Centre and Karnataka** have also filed counter affidavits.

#### **How will it benefit Karnataka?**

Along with the 5th stage of the Cauvery Water Supply Scheme, the water from Mekedatu is **projected to meet the water requirement of Bengaluru for the next 30 years**. Currently, more than 30% of Bengaluru is dependent on borewell water.

Besides, there are also plans to **generate 400 MW of power**. The **revenue** earned from power generation is expected to compensate the Govt its investment on the project within a few years.

Karnataka argues that the reservoir will also help to **ensure monthly flow stipulated in the award for Tamil Nadu**, rather than harm the neighbouring State’s interest in any way.

#### **What are the arguments by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu?**

##### **Karnataka**

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- Karnataka says that there is **no case for Tamil Nadu** after its share of 177.75 tmc ft. of water is ensured at the inter-State border gauging centre at Biligundlu.
- Also, the project falls **inside the jurisdictional limit of Karnataka** and Tamil Nadu's permission is not needed.
- The State also argues that since there is **no stay in any court for the project**, Karnataka can go ahead.
- On utilising the surplus water, Karnataka says that **any allocation in this sphere should be done after hydrology studies** to ascertain the quantum of excess water available in the basin.

### **Tamil Nadu**

Tamil Nadu feels that Karnataka, through the project, will **impound and divert flows** from "uncontrolled catchments" to itself.

As the upper riparian State, **K'tka has adequate infrastructure** even now to address the water needs of Bengaluru. Hence, there's **no need for the Mekedatu project**, according to Tamil Nadu.

Mekedatu also **does not find mention in the Tribunal's final order or the Supreme Court judgement**.

Besides, given the **unpleasant experiences** that it has had with Karnataka in securing its share of the Cauvery water, as per the monthly schedule of water release, Tamil Nadu is skeptical of its assurances.

### GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

#### **TB CONTROL AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **COVID PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT**

#### **27. Fighting TB with lessons learnt during Covid pandemic**

**Source:** the post is based on an article "**Fighting TB with lessons learnt during Covid Pandemic**" published in the **Indian Express** on **24th Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Social Sector, Health Sector, Policies and Programs,  
**Relevance:** TB Control

**News:** Recently, World TB Day was organized. Focus on TB has declined due to Covid-19 Pandemic.

It's time we acknowledge the magnitude of the disease, and work harder at offering individuals' equitable healthcare access and resources that the disease warrants.

#### **Why should TB be considered serious?**

On one side, 1.8 million people succumbed to the Covid-virus in the first year. On the other hand, 1.5-2 million individuals died every year between 2010-20 due to tuberculosis.

The government spent 162 times more public money on the Covid-19 than the amount spent on TB in 2020.

#### **What are the similarities and difference b/w Covid and TB?**

##### **Similarities**

- Both are airborne infections and transmissible in nature. Both can spread in crowded settings, and harm people with immuno-compromising conditions.

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## Differences

– Differences only lies in the profiles of those who get infected. TB disproportionately affects people in low-income nations, the poor and the vulnerable.

## How has COVID impacted TB control?

It has **increased the burden on the healthcare facilities.**

There has been **redirection of human resources** within the health system towards the Covid management, leaving TB facilities **understaffed**, leading to poorer quality and delayed care.

Due to Covid, TB diagnosis, **case detection and treatment has dropped.** Now, the proportion of such “missing cases” is likely to have increased. It may also be due to stigma associated with respiratory symptoms

Covid may lead to an **increase in TB cases.** Historically, wars, food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition have resulted in surges in the incidence of TB.

Further, Covid may lead to **reactivation of dormant TB bacilli.**

## What can be learnt from Covid-19 vis-à-vis TB control in India?

The **epidemiological triad:** i.e., Agent, host and the environment can be the new approach for TB management in India

**Test, treat and track (TTT) Strategy** can be employed in TB Control. The innovative strategies such as active surveillance, bidirectional screening for respiratory tract infections using the most sensitive molecular diagnostics, and contact tracing can be done.

**Vaccine development** at war scale can be replicated the same way for tuberculosis. There can be lobbying for funding from governments and industry to develop a successful vaccine for TB.

**Public education can transform behaviour.** Therefore, focus on tobacco smokers, educating individuals to avoid crowds when possible, and to encourage voluntary masking, especially in ill-ventilated and closed spaces.

**Social security programmes** should be initiated like the health insurance etc. Avoid “medicalising” the disease.

**Adequate focus be given on addressing malnutrition, poverty and immuno-compromising conditions** such as diabetes which are strongly associated with TB.

We need to **actively engage the private sector**, build bridges and partnerships as we did in the case of Covid.

The **government must increase the public funding** for health, nutrition and preventive services including TB. It should invest in state-of-the-art technologies, build capacity, expand its health workforce and strengthen its primary care facilities. For example, **telemedicine** and **remote support** for health services can be focused.

There has to be an **open and collaborative forum** where all stakeholders, especially affected communities and independent experts, take a lead role.

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# General

# Studies

# Paper - 3

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GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – ISSUES RELATED TO CHILDREN

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – INFORMATION TECH

### 1. Let's enforce age gate rules to secure children on the internet

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Let's enforce age gate rules to secure children on the internet**” published in the **Live Mint** on **21 Mar 22**.

**News:** Recently, a report was published by BBC News investigation pointing towards the digital inscrutability (*incapable of being scrutinized*) of kids.

#### Why are children at risk in the internet world?

The veil of anonymity afforded by the internet ensures that underage web users are constantly exposed to age-inappropriate content. Moreover, lack of robust age-verification mechanisms by social media platforms means the risk for children is further amplified.

#### What are the policies and proposals at present aimed at making the internet safer for children?

Most popular social media firms like TikTok and Meta Platforms Inc's Instagram have a minimum age of 13.

An array of **new children's codes** have also been proposed by legislators across Europe, Australia and also in the US. If they work, online apps will be forced to offer alternative versions for children.

**Germany** might be the first country to impose age verification standards on internet businesses. For example, it has already approved approximately 80 different approaches for age-checking online and the country's regulators are further ahead than any others.

#### What are the ways to verify someone's age online?

**Facial analysis:** Algorithms taught using thousands of facial images can estimate someone's age through the front-facing camera of a phone or computer, typically accurate to within a year or two.

**Voice recognition** through Artificial intelligence could also help divine age from someone's voice.

**Digital tokens** offering proof of age that are verified by local shopkeepers can be used to access certain websites.

Web platforms can also use **profiling data based on someone's online behaviour**

**Credit checks** or verifying a person's age via their mobile network operator.

#### What are the issues with age-recognition technologies and proposed policies?

##### Proposed policies

– In the UK, the proposed the Online Safety Bill doesn't require companies to follow certain standards for age checking.

– In the US, the proposed the Kids Online Safety Act, modelled on the latest UK bill lacks detail on how standards for age-checking would be enforced.

##### Age-recognition tech

– Improving tech can make it easier for companies and malicious actors to harvest the facial data of thousands of people on the net, including children. It can be misused by them



### What is the way forward?

There should be **strict standards on age checks**.

– **Penalties:** For example, there should be penalties for non-compliance. The standards should be **enforceable** by the regulators. For example, Germany’s child protection regulators also have threatened to block one of the world’s largest pornographic websites over inadequate age-checking.

GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT OF BORDER AREAS

### **SECURING THE NORTHEAST BORDER AREAS**

#### **2. Shoring up the Northeast frontier: How rebranding the discourse on connectivity is imperative to meet the China challenge**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Shoring up the North-East Frontier: How rebranding the discourse on connectivity is imperative to meet the China challenge?**” published in the Times of India on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

**News:** Recently, China renamed districts in Arunachal Pradesh and there was a viral video of the PLA unfurling the Chinese flag in Galwan on New Year. It indicates that 2022 will be more of the same in India-China relations.

#### **What are the issues in the development projects in border areas?**

Border infrastructure development is predominantly viewed as China-driven where local aspirations are incidental. It is believed by locals that “if construction is on, it is for the military”. For example, there is absence of supporting infrastructure to boost socio-economic development for locals in Arunachal Pradesh.

#### **What measures should be taken by India to secure its border areas?**

**Reimagining border connectivity:** Infrastructure in border areas like Arunachal should not be constructed with the image of ‘**the eye on China**’. The ongoing efforts of the central and Arunachal government in infrastructure building should be guided to support adventure sports, high-end tourism and horticulture development.

**Promotion of Horticulture:** There should be endeavour to promote organic kiwis (India’s only certified organic kiwis from Ziro valley), kiwi wines, and other niche sectors like tea tourism. It will address the local anxiety over lack of economic opportunities and mainland apathy.

**Celebrating the local culture:** Recently, a 17-day civilian-Army joint religious trek to Athu-Popu which is a sacred place for the Idu Mishmi tribe and a celebration of the Si Donyi festival of the indigenous Tagin tribe was organized. More such efforts are needed.

**Promoting Adventure tourism:** It could result in more jobs and revenue locally. For example, the **Bailey’s Trail** (a historical route taken by a British political officer) was revived for mountaineers last year. It benefited 80 local youths who were trained in the adventure tourism.

**Checking mass media narratives which often conflate Buddhism with Arunachali identity:** It is wrong narrative because Arunachal is home to 26 major tribes having faith in nature and animistic worshipping (for example, Donyi Polo is still practised in large numbers as per the 2011 national census).

There is a need of boosting digital connectivity, roads and standardisation of modest homestays. It will allow tourists to enjoy the local culture.

**Need to address local issues which are impending development efforts:** (a) 'a culture of compensation' i.e., temporary structures come up overnight along with exorbitant compensation claims which thwarts the development works, (b) the Tibetan Refugee Rehabilitation policy, (c) issues of rampant drug abuse and addiction in the eastern part of Arunachal

To cultivate resilience on the ground, integration of local communities in border conversations is vital.

### GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – AGRICULTURE

#### **ECONOMICS OF ANIMAL REARING**

##### 3. **Tapping the usefulness of non-bovine milk**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Tapping the usefulness of non-bovine milk**” published in the Business Standard on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Context:** The demand for the milk and milk products of non-bovine has begun to swell in the recent past.

#### **What are non-bovine milk and milk-products?**

It refers to the milk and milk products such as milk powder, cheese, yoghurt, ice cream, chocolates, cosmetic products, and various other kinds of specialty items from the animals, such as goats, sheep, camels, donkeys, and yaks (other than cows and buffaloes).

#### **What are the reasons for growth of non-bovine milk?**

**Role of several start-ups and established dairy brands:** They have begun manufacturing milk products with non-bovine milk and also such products are readily available in major dairy product outlets and online marketing channels.

**The commercial importance:** It could be an excellent functional food and also a key ingredient in pharmaceuticals. It could be used for preparing super foods, bio-functional immunity-boosting food supplements, and pharmaceuticals to impart immunity to human beings against several diseases, including Covid.

**Employment:** Non-bovine animals are reared by the **poor and landless people for their livelihood**. They are valued also for their meat and other products like hair (wool) and skin (hide).

Some of the non-bovine animals are used as **draught animals** for transportation and farm work.

**There is growing awareness of their nutritional and therapeutic virtues:** Such items are being used as carriers of probiotics in fitness foods and as healing agents in various drug formulations. Nowadays, many doctors also routinely prescribe such products to treat various diseases.

#### **Specific healing qualities and other valuable traits of the milk of various non-bovine animals**

**Camel milk:** it is useful in managing diabetes, tuberculosis, and viral and bacterial infections, apart from autism.

**Goat milk:** It is believed to be useful for cardio-vascular diseases, allergies, inflammation, diarrhoea, chikungunya, asthma, and eczema, apart from dengue.

**Sheep milk:** it is an excellent source of bioactive peptides (amino acids) found useful in heart diseases, epilepsy in children, cysts, gall stones, and bacterial and viral infections.

**Donkey milk:** It can be helpful in managing dermatitis and other skin diseases, hepatitis, gastric ulcers, and cardio-vascular ailments. It is used as an alternative to mother's milk. It is used in stamina-boosting drinks for sports persons because it is low in cholesterol and fat but high in energy.

**Yak's milk:** It is thought to be good for hypertension, diabetes, cardio-vascular troubles, and cancer.

### **What are the issues in promotion of the non-bovine milk?**

**High prices:** the goat milk was priced more than Rs 300 a litre. This milk is believed to boost the platelet count in blood and quicken recovery of dengue patients.

**Shrinking grazing resources:** It is becoming a major constraint in feeding these animals.

**The population decline:** Some species population is either stagnant or dwindling, especially in areas where common grazing grounds have vanished or are in poor shape.

**Policy issues:** Measures taken have backfired. For example, The Rajasthan's camel protection law —the Camel (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act, 2015 by barring the transportation of camels out of Rajasthan has virtually destroyed the market for these animals, disincentivising camel herders to breed and bring them up for sale. As a result, the camel population is estimated to have shrunk by a huge 35 per cent.

### **Way Ahead**

A **well-advised breeding policy** is needed for the genetic upgradation of non-bovine mammals to boost their productivity. For example, open up the health care and artificial insemination network meant for the bovines for the non-bovines as well.

The need is to **incentivise the pharmaceuticals and health foods industries**. They can gainfully exploit the therapeutic traits of non-bovine milk by developing innovative products for domestic and export markets.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND GROWTH

## **FOOD PROCESSING AND RELATED INDUSTRIES**

### **4. Food processing potential**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Food processing potential**” published in **Business Standard** on **24th Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Changes in industrial policy

**Relevance:** Strengthening the Food processing sector, Food production

**News:** Food processing sector has performed impressively in the past few years on the back of govt support. Even in times of the pandemic, this sector has grown due to the inc in demand for ready-to-consume and home-deliverable foods.

But, it still has a huge untapped potential.

The article throws light on the current situation of the food processing industry in India and issues being faced by the sector.

### **Why the food processing industry is important to India's economy?**

The food processing industry has emerged as the **biggest employer** of labour in the manufacturing sector.

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– As per the Govt, over 2 million people were engaged in the food processing units in 2018-19 (Annual Survey of Industries data). This means the textiles sector, employing about 1.6 million people, is now at second position.

This sector has **attracted nearly \$5.51 billion foreign direct investment** between 2014 and 2021. The gross value added in this sector has therefore risen from Rs 1.34 trillion in 2014-15 to Rs 2.24 trillion in 2019-20.

### What is the situation wrt food processing in India?

India is the world's second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables, **a sizeable part of which goes to waste** for want of processing facilities.

– Currently, hardly 10% of the produce is processed into value-added and shelf life-enhanced products. This compares poorly with the developed countries, where over 80% of the harvest is processed into value-upgraded products.

– Even in several emerging economies, more than a third of the farm produce is processed to prolong its shelf life.

Though India has also set a goal to raise the processing level to 25% by 2025, it can achieve a far more ambitious target if some major constraints faced by this sector are addressed.

### What are the challenges being faced?

The **lack of supply chain infrastructure**, including storage and transportation facilities.

The much-needed preliminary **post-harvest treatment of the produce, in terms of cleaning, grading and safe handling, is generally missing**. This is vital given that the quality of agricultural produce begins deteriorating immediately after harvest.

Besides, **most of the crop varieties planted by the farmers are meant for fresh consumption** rather than processing. It is only recently that the plant breeders have begun to churn out crop varieties suited specifically for industrial processing.

The **research and development facilities** for evolving innovative processed products and convenience foods are also **underdeveloped** as yet.

On top of that, the food processors have to **procure their supplies through the regular marketing channels** (read regulated mandis) in most states, which add to the costs besides creating several other problems.

## PHARMA SECTOR IN INDIA

### 5. India trails other countries in researchers

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**India trails other countries in researchers**” published in **Times of India** on **22nd Mar 22**.

**News:** In this article, S Sridhar, the President of the Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI) lists what can help consolidate India's pharma industry's advantages and help it touch \$130 billion by 2030 from \$42 billion in 2020.

India is the world's third-largest drug manufacturer in volumes and ranks 14th in value terms. However, as per the Global Innovation Index 2021, India is the 46th most innovative country in the world.

How can the PLI scheme for key starting materials, intermediates and APIs be improved?

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Such schemes, along with a well-defined policy including Intellectual Property (IP) protection as well as innovation-driven private enterprises, will go a long way in creating India as a centre of excellence.

### **Suggestions to improve the scheme:**

- A research-Linked Incentive Scheme
- Offering subsidy for access to and the implementation of new technology in projects under the existing PLI Scheme, to enable better output.
- Already identified products as well as any future inclusions for KSMs, DIs and APIs should be exempted from any price controls under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 for a period of 10 years, or till the end of the tenure of the scheme.

### **What are the issues that need to be sorted?**

– The New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019 have specific provisions for expeditious approval of drugs for which there is an unmet need in India. The local Phase 3 clinical trial data may be waived if a new drug is approved and marketed in countries specified by the Central Licensing Authority under Rule 101. However, this **list of countries remains absent and implementation of the above provisions remains open to subjective interpretations and delays** in launch of path-breaking therapies.

– Indian law permits state drug regulatory authorities to grant marketing approval for a generic version of a medicine four years after the original product was first approved. Meanwhile, state regulatory authorities are **not required to verify**

**the remaining term of the patent protection** on the original product. Such gaps need to be resolved.

– **Inadequate inputs from academia:** Less than 0.5% of Indian students pursue a PhD or its equivalent. India also trails other countries in the number of researchers: It has only 216 researchers per million population versus 1,200 in China, 4,300 in the US and 7,100 in South Korea.

### **How should India's drug regulatory system be streamlined?**

The ecosystem of therapeutics is evolving from the old model of one-size-fits-all pharmaceuticals to offering more complex and targeted solutions. For instance: companion diagnostics, biomarkers, and/or combinations of medical technology and pharma products.

### **Suggestions for streamlining regulatory set up in India:**

With a fast-moving evolution, there is a need:

- for **harmonised guidelines** and aligned systems across processes, therapeutic areas and product categories
- for a **close dialogue** with regulators
- to **establish transparency** through the creation of a single end-to-end digital portal which will act as an interface between Innovator and Regulator.
- **Strategic policy interventions**, as done during the pandemic by the Govt. During the pandemic, the government introduced regulatory policies to fast-track introduction of Covid vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.

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

Encouraging research and innovation will be important to usher the next era of growth.

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For India to evolve as an epicentre of biopharma research, sustained policy interventions and strategic partnerships are necessary.

**Dedicated specialised patent benches** with the requisite technical know-how for adjudication of patent disputes are critical, especially as patents granted under the Patents Act, 1970 have protection only for a limited period of time.

**A strong academic foundation** is reqd that drives research in collaboration with various stakeholders. This means identifying key academic institutions as centres of excellence, supporting them with adequate funding, focussing on therapy areas of national importance, and encouraging collaboration with industry. India should also incentivise foreign institutes to set up campuses.

### Textile industry and related issues

#### 6. GET THESE WRINKLES OUT OF SOUTH ASIAN TEXTILE STORY

**Context:** South Asia became a major player in the global textile and clothing market with the onset of the **third** wave of global production.

#### **What is the standing of countries?**

**Bangladesh:** It is the 3rd largest global exporter. This is due to lower production costs, FTA with western buyers, and adoption of technology. It specializes in the low value & mid-market price segment.

**India:** Holds 4% share in the global textile and apparel market, and is in 5th position. The Technical Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) has promoted technical linkages in the cotton and textile industry. However, India is yet to move to man-made fibers.

**Pakistan:** It is very focused on cotton products. However, it is falling behind due to skilling and policy implementation issues.

**Sri Lanka:** Progress in training, quality control, product development, and merchandising are attracting international brands to Sri Lanka.

#### **What does the future hold?**

The **Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)** is characterized by automation including robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), 3D printing etc. Digitisation can be important in designing, prototyping, quality control and timely delivery. The Asian Development Bank anticipates the challenges of job losses and disruption, inequality and political instability, concentration of market power by global giants and more vulnerability to cyber-attacks.

**India is facing high unemployment rate**, India faces the challenge of job creation in wake of increased automation. The integration of skilling and technological investments is required to adapt to new jobs.

#### **What is the concern regarding 'Sustainability'?**

Textile and apparel effluents account for 17%-20% of all water pollution.

Bangladesh has started **"Green Manufacturing"** – to help conserve energy, water, and resources.

India is focusing on **sustainable inputs** such as – regenerative organic farming and sustainable energy.

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Further the government can provide tax exemptions, reductions in imported technology, accessibility to financial incentives to boost the industry.

### **The labour lead**

Access to affordable labour is a huge advantage for the region. The US-China trade war opens the door for India and Pakistan as they have strong production bases. Bangladesh investments in technology in the past is an added advantage.

India extended tax rebates in apparel exports till 2024. Labour law reforms, income tax relaxations, duty reduction for man-made fiber, etc. are other notable moves.

### **Way forward**

1. Need for diversification with respect to technology, product basket and client base.
2. Adaptability in meeting demands for man-made textiles & other complex products and services.
3. Reskilling and upskilling of labour force.
4. New approaches in compliance, transparency, occupational safety etc.
5. Government's proactive support in infrastructure, liquidity, capital, and incentivisation.

## GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

### **TRANSLOCATION OF WILD ANIMALS TO INDIA**

#### **7. The complexities of introducing african cheetahs to india**

**News:** The Union Government has launched an action plan to reintroduce African cheetahs to restore open forest and savannah systems.

#### **What was the distribution of cheetahs in India? What were the habitats?**

Historically, Asiatic Cheetah had a very wide distribution in India. From Punjab to southern Tamil Nadu. From Gujarat and Rajasthan to West Bengal in the East.

Cheetah's habitat was also diverse: scrub forests, dry grasslands, savannahs and other arid and semi-arid open habitats. Iran hosts the last surviving population of Asiatic cheetahs.

#### **What caused the extinction of cheetahs in India? When did they disappear?**

The records of cheetahs being captured goes back to 1550s, recorded by Mughals and other Deccani kingdoms. The British added the woes by declaring a bounty for killing it in 1871.

**Major reasons for extinction:** The consistent and widespread capture of cheetahs, high infant mortality rate in the wild, its inability to breed in captivity, 'sport' hunting and bounty killings.

**Last recording:** It is recorded that the last cheetahs were shot in India in 1947, but there are credible reports of sightings till about 1967.

#### **What are the conservation objectives of introducing African Cheetahs in India? What are the priorities of India? Is it cost effective?**

It is difficult to conclude that the introduction of African Cheetahs is based on scientific evidence. The issue calls for an open and informed debate.

**Arguments against:** The focus should be on conserving already existing species such as lion and tiger, rather than trying to re-establish species that have little chance of surviving. The **2013**

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**Supreme Court** order which quashed plans to introduce cheetahs to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

**Conservation objectives** include – establish a **viable cheetah population** to perform its role as top predator and to provide space for cheetah **expansion within its historical range**.

However, open dry habitats have other species performing this role such as leopards, wolves and caracals all of which need urgent attention. A few dozen cheetahs in a couple of sites will not have significant ground impact.

**Another objective** is to use cheetahs as **charismatic flagship species** to garner resources for restoring open forests and savannah systems. However, Asiatic lions and other species can perform this role. The government can remove grasslands from wastelands to prevent further degradation, fragmentation, and destruction of these habitats.

Hence, there are other cost-effective speedier and inclusive ways to conserve grasslands in India.

**What is the current status of this project? What are the chances of it succeeding?**

According to the Government, Kuno is ready to receive cheetahs and a team visited Namibia to inspect cheetahs. Negotiations are underway to finalize MoU and it is expected to be signed by the end of March. The cheetahs are to be provided by the Cheetah Conservation Fund, an NGO. These are expected to arrive as early as May 2022.

Given all the challenges, especially the lack of extensive areas with sufficient density of prey will hinder African cheetahs from establishing themselves as a truly wild and self-perpetuating population.

### GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

#### **INDIA'S TRADE POLICY**

##### **8. Heartening milestone: On India's overseas shipping record**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Heartening milestone: On India's overseas shipping record**” published in **The Hindu** on **26th Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy, Issues in planning and mobilization of resources, Growth, and Development

**Relevance:** India's booming exports

**News:** Govt has announced that India's merchandise exports have already surpassed the target set for this fiscal year, with overseas shipments crossing a record \$400 billion mark by March 21.

##### **Why is this news significant?**

This news assumes importance esp in light of the last fiscal's pandemic-induced slump in global demand.

Also, the fact that the export growth has been achieved against the backdrop of **persistent logistical challenges**, including **container shortages** and **port congestion**, is laudable. It further reflects the concerted effort made by the government in coordination with industry and the country's overseas missions.

##### **Which sectors have performed well?**



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**Petroleum products** were the standout performer as the global surge in oil prices lifted the dollar value of overseas shipments of goods produced at India's refineries by 150% over the first 11 months of the fiscal.

Key value-added sectors of **engineering goods and apparel and garments** have also done well this year.

### What are some challenges that need to be addressed?

Multiple challenges persist on the trade front.

**Inc in trade deficit:** Imports have outpaced exports this year, almost doubling the trade deficit in the April-February period to more than \$175 billion. The gap is wider than the pre-pandemic year of 2019-2020 as well and points to the pressing need to step up the pace of export growth.

**Lack of purchase of capital goods:** Project goods were the only item of import, among the 30 broad categories listed by the Ministry that contracted over the 11-month period. The lack of overseas purchases of capital goods for new projects is a clear indicator that private Indian businesses are still not making fresh investments given the lack of momentum in personal consumption.

*Project goods are the input materials required in the construction of civil and private infrastructure projects. The import of project goods may act as a barometer for the pace of infrastructure creation, both public and private, in the country.*

*India is a net importer of such goods and, historically, has had a higher inflow during periods of growing infrastructure activities.*

**War in Ukraine and sanctions on Russia** is now posing fresh problems for exporters seeking to ship goods to not only these countries but other markets in Europe as well.

### What is the way forward?

Commerce and Industry Minister made a reference to the role played by India's embassies and envoys in exploring new opportunities for Indian products. If the current momentum in exports is to be sustained in the coming years, the **diplomatic corps will need to enlarge their role in trade promotion.**

**Policymakers must go beyond stopgap measures** such as enabling rupee-rouble trade. They need to expedite ongoing negotiations on free trade agreements so as to at least help lower some of the tariff walls.

## 9. On boosting exports: Beyond \$400 billion

**Source:** The post is based on an article "Beyond \$400billion" published in the Business Standard on 24th March 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy, Issues in planning and mobilization of resources, Growth, and Development

**Relevance:** Macroeconomic Situation, External Sector

**News:** Recently, there has been an export boom in the international market. Therefore, India has fixed a goal of attaining the \$400 billion target for the current fiscal year.

### What are the factors driving India's exports?

All-around performance of the engineering goods, petroleum products, and chemicals have played a significant part in boosting the merchandise trade of India. Factors responsible are:

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- **Higher global commodity prices** have pushed up the value of Indian export. For example, Petroleum products contribute about 15% to total exports and have grown significantly in the current year.
  - The global economy's **recovery from the pandemic-induced disruption** has revived the merchandise exports.
  - Major share in India's export basket includes engineering goods, chemicals, petroleum products, and gems and jewellery. These products have **higher elasticity to global growth**.
- Thus, India's export performance significantly depends on the pace of global growth.

### Why global economy is expected to slow down?

- Global growth is going to be impacted by ongoing **geo-political uncertainty**. At present, the commodity prices have been pushed up due to this. For example, India's imports have reached a record high of \$589 billion. It has resulted in a trade deficit of \$189 billion.
- Global growth is going to be impacted by the **increase in interest rates by the US Federal Reserve** and other large central banks. This could tighten financial conditions in the coming months.
- The **Covid cases have been surging in China and other countries**. Such a surge would affect supply chains. It would result in lower output and higher inflation.

### How India's policies may obstruct its export growth?

- On the policy front, the **government has been raising tariffs**. It may obstruct India's participation in the global value chain, which is essential for attaining sustained exports growth.
- India also decided against joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). India is negotiating bilateral trade deals with a number of countries, which might take time, and will not compensate for its decision to not join the RCEP.
- Higher current account deficit and capital outflow over the coming quarters will put pressure on the rupee.

### What is the way forward?

RBI should manage the rupee and allow it to depreciate in a non-disruptive manner.

The RBI should not defend the Indian rupee to contain inflation caused by expensive imports. It would affect exports and create longer-term macroeconomic imbalances.

## UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

### 10. Whither unemployment benefits

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "**Whither unemployment benefits**", published in **The Hindu** on **22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Economy – Inclusive growth and associated issues/challenges.

**News:** As per Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, the average urban unemployment rate remained 9% in 2021.

Before COVID the unemployment rate touched its peak in 2017-18 at 6.1%, with urban unemployment as high as 7.8%. This was further exacerbated by the pandemic. As per **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy**, the average urban unemployment rate remained 9% in 2021.

**What are measures available for assistance of unemployed?**

- a. **The Employee State Insurance Act, 1948** – Covers unemployment due to closure, retrenchment or permanent invalidity. This provides relief to those who have made contributions for two years to ESI.
- b. **Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY, 2018)** – in this unemployed insured persons are provided allowances.
- c. **Industrial Disputes Act, 1947** – Industrial establishments employing 100 or more workers must pay retrenchment compensation to workers. Employment intensive industries like construction and services are excluded.
- d. **Social Security Code, 2020** – This included unemployment protection in its definition of ‘social security’ but it did not provide a scheme for the same.

**Unsuccessful Schemes:**

- a. **Annual Reports of Employee State Insurance Corporation** reveal that only 0.043% of employees availed of unemployment allowance from 2007-08 to 2019-20.
- b. Under **ABVKY** – From July 2020 to June 2021, only approx 45,000 people benefitted with an average daily cash relief of Rs. 148.

Hence, the government cannot solely rely on these schemes.

**What can be done?**

During the pandemic, MGNREGA played a significant role in providing relief to millions of workers. Economists have shown that relief to workers does not cause much as a proportion of GDP. Hence, an urban employment guarantee scheme should be framed to alleviate the sufferings of workers in the urban labour market.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

**NATIONAL GENERIC DOCUMENT REGISTRATION SYSTEM (NGDRS)**

**11. One nation one software**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**One nation one software**” published in **Business Standard** on **22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022**.

**News:** National Generic Document Registration System can be helpful in dealing with the land records related issues.

The Constitution of India is imbued with a federal vision. The 7th Schedule provides for 3 lists:

1. “Union List” – defines the area of work for the Union government.
2. “Concurrent List” – here both Union and State can make laws. However, the Constitution gives primacy to the Union.
3. “State List”, where legislative powers lie with the state governments, and the role for the Union is only one of giving advice and money.

These lists are created based on the “**subsidiarity principle**”, which asserts that every task of the state should be done at the lowest possible level of government. At the same time, as one nation, a certain degree of uniformity assists economic modernization, helps connect globalization, and harnesses economies of scale.

**Issues with “Land” as a subject:**

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Land is the most important asset class in all countries. Better economic efficiency in the use of land will yield big gains in GDP. Despite this, there are **issues** in land management in India. Such as:

1. **Poor land records (State Subject):** The information with the government suffers from data quality issues, a backlog of contested claims, and lack of integration/consistency across multiple departments of local government.
2. To deal with this, The Union Government launched the **(Digital India) Land Record Modernisation Programme (DI-LRMP) in 2008**, with a view to augmenting resourcing into computerising land records, integrating registration with the land records maintenance system, and integrating textual and spatial data.
3. Presently, there is a tricky **mix of a state subject (land) with a concurrent subject (registering property deeds)**. The Registration Act, 1908 – is the primary one on the subject of registering documents. As this is on the Concurrent List, there are many state-specific amendments to this Act.

To deal with this, **the National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS)** was launched in 2016 under the umbrella of DI-LRMP.

### **Benefits of NGDRS:**

1. It is a generic, scalable, and flexible software that links all the stakeholders in the registration process. Its design allows states to configure the software to local needs/requirements.
2. It can link land records databases to financial institutions, revenue offices, income tax, the Unique Identification Authority of India, etc., thus bringing a new level of transparency to land holdings.
3. It facilitates swift registration and delivery of documents.
4. It has many features to accommodate state-specific requirements, including a database of properties that are restricted for transfer, like tribal land, government land and mortgaged land.

These are important developments in the field of land. Policymakers at the city and state levels, and the Union government, need to continue to think and innovate in this difficult field. Alongside the objective of achieving frictionless transactions and reducing disputes, focus should also be on data privacy.

## GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – CRYPTOCURRENCY AND RELATED ISSUES

### **REGULATION OF CRYPTOCURRENCY**

#### **12. Heavy taxes are fine for quasi-assets like crypto**

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“Heavy taxes are fine for quasi-assets like crypto”** published in **Livemint** on **22nd Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Money and Banking

**Relevance:** Taxing Crypto transactions

**News:** The government seems ready to expand the scope of goods and services tax (GST) to cryptocurrency transactions. Reports suggest it may impose crypto-token purchases with GST, just like on any other product. The entire value chain is expected to be included into its tax net.

Presently, services provided by crypto exchanges are taxed at 18%.

#### **How would Crypto transactions be taxed under GST?**

Taxing tokens would involve their classification as either goods or services, both of which are under GST rules. The tax rate of **28%** is said to be under consideration on the argument that these are purely speculative buys, like casino chips or lottery tickets.

### Why Crypto tokens are likely to be treated as purely speculative assets?

Due to the following reasons:

- These tokens began life online as tokens of exchange, but most of them ended up as **stores of value** and lures for capital gains, due to short supply and an increased investor interest.
- They typically bear **no underlying claim** on any issuer.
- They are **not contracts** and **offer no interest returns or share of profit** generated by underlying businesses. Hence, the casino-chip analogy holds true.

### Why classifying Cryptocurrencies is the right policy approach?

- Classifying cryptocurrencies properly is **crucial to regulating them**. Moreover, their decentralized nature means they could exist in perpetuity.
- Our Central bank **can't be deprived of its domestic monopoly on legal tender**, as that would impair its monetary authority, only an officially-issued crypto can be accorded 'currency' status.
- Moreover, unlike bonds and shares, which are tools of capital allocation, crypto coins serve no productive function.

### Is a lower tax rate more appropriate for Crypto transactions?

For the sake of market activity, a light levy like a securities transaction tax (of 1% or less) may be more appropriate.

Moreover, a top-rate GST can deal a big blow to crypto trading activity by pushing them off-radar.

Digital tokens have been hailed as 'e-gold' of the information age. They are prized for scarcity and also portrayed as an inflation hedge. Hence, it should not suffer punitive taxes.

### What is the way forward?

Profits on sale of Crypto coins must be held liable to capital-gains tax, as is currently the case.

Perhaps a stiff tax will nudge people to invest in stuff that's designed to play an active role in the expansion of our economy.

Govt should spell out its stance at the earliest and enact a law to govern these digital creations.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND GROWTH

## **EASE OF DOING BUSINESS IN INDIA**

### **13. Ask the right questions for Ease of Doing Business 2.0**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "Ask the right questions for Ease of Doing Business 2.0" published in **Livemint** on **23rd Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Industrial policy and growth

**Relevance:** Improving Ease of Doing Business in India and reducing the compliance burden.

**News:** In her budget speech, Finance Minister expressed the government's resolve to launch Ease of Doing Business 2.0 and Ease of Living programmes.

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She highlighted that in recent years, over 25,000 compliance requirements were reduced and 1,486 Union laws repealed.

### Has the reduction of compliance requirements impacted Ease of Doing Business in India?

It is difficult to estimate the impact due to the following reasons:

– **Govt has not given any additional information. For instance:** *What was the nature of these compliances and laws? For how long did these remain in the statute books and through what process were these identified, reviewed and discarded?*

– Further, it was stated in Rajya Sabha that the info was based on aggregates of data uploaded on the Regulatory Compliance portal by central ministries/departments and states/Union Territories. But the portal, while live, **remains inaccessible to the public**, so the figure and its relevance cannot be put to open scrutiny.

– **Several repealed laws were mostly archaic in nature** and did not necessarily impact the business environment. These include the Case Disabilities Removal Act, 1850, and the Fort William Act, 1881.

### What are the factors that need to be considered while improving Ease of Doing Business 2.0?

– The **objective of any compliance and its dropping should be clear and legitimate**. For this, India's regulatory reform exercise needs to be transparent and inclusive in nature, and open to public enquiry. Secrecy gives rise to suspicion and is against the principles of governance.

– **Issuing of new compliance requirements is a threat** to the gains achieved via any compliance-reduction exercise. A recent report by Observer Research Foundation and Teamlease, titled Jailed for Doing Business, estimates that about 3,000 new compliances have hit businesses every year.

– The government has till now relied on **digitization** to improve transparency and contain duplication & delays in its compliance framework. It seems to believe that leveraging technology, and integration of central and state systems and enabling single-point access of citizen centric services, will result in trust-based governance. These measures are necessary, but **not sufficient, to EoDB 2.0**.

### What is the way forward?

#### For the Govt

– Focus not only on the existing compliances but **regulate the issuance of new ones** is likely to have a positive impact in the long run.

– It will need to **trust entrepreneurs** on adhering the rules, acknowledge the existence of a usual proportion of deviants, and make it harder for itself to issue new compliances.

– It should be required to justify the need for every additional compliance requirement at the time of its issuance. Such an exercise should also cover existing compliances from time to time.

#### Other measures

– Any **compliance requirement must be proportionate**. As per ORF-Teamlease report, as of now, there are 26,134 imprisonment clauses in India's business laws. The budget introduced an additional one by making the publication of import and export data an offence punishable by a jail term.

– **Easing compliance burden on MSMEs:** Evidence suggests that micro, small and medium enterprises bear a disproportionate compliance burden and are required to incur substantial compliance costs, which contribute to their remaining stunted.

**Passing the justification test:** For EoDB 2.0, the government must ask itself three questions about every existing and proposed compliance:

- Is it legitimate?
- Is it necessary? And,
- is it proportionate?

Only if a requirement passes all three tests should it be retained or added to Indian statute books; else, it should be discarded. Asking these questions would also be the key to improvements in India on our ease of living.

### GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

## **WATER CRISIS AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **14. World Water Day: Are we ready for the thirsty future?**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**World Water Day: Are we ready for the thirsty future?**” published in **Down to Earth** on **22nd March 22**

**News:** Notwithstanding, water scarcity and river pollution, we are making things worse for the conservation of the valuable resource.

#### **What is Water Scarcity?**

Water scarcity implies that either sufficient water is not available (*because it does not rain, the water table has gone down, or the demands have increased*) or water is inaccessible (*because it is present in snow-capped mountains and glaciers, the infrastructure is not appropriate or because of geopolitical factors*).

#### **Situation wrt Water Scarcity**

In the 15th century, Akbar left Fatehpur Sikri because of water scarcity.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 50% of the world’s population will be facing acute water shortage by 2025.

According to the World Resources Institute, India is among the top 20 countries facing severe water stress. India’s groundwater usage far exceeds that of China and the United States combined.

In 2022, Indonesia announced that it may be shifting its capital from Jakarta. It fears that the entire city could sink by 2050 due to recurrent floods.

#### **What are the factors behind increasing water scarcity?**

**Availability of water** has become critical due to reduced **water table** coupled with declining **rainfall**, and persistent drought-like conditions.

**Agriculture:** The Green Revolution led to extensive cultivation of water intensive crops. It led to high level of groundwater extraction. This further resulted into groundwater depletion. For example, the GW extraction is critical in States of the Northern Plains, and other states like Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

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The factors like **population increases**, **affluent lifestyles**, and **industrialisation** are also contributing towards the looming water crisis. **For example**, Shimla has been facing acute water crisis and may face “Day Zero” in the coming future due to the problem of over tourism.

In the coming years, **Climate change** may lead to shrinking of the Himalayan glaciers. It may make Ganga and Yamuna seasonal rivers. Consequentially, they will flow only during monsoon and not during summers.

### Why is it important to tackle the water crisis?

Water is important for the survival of life on this planet. This can affect food production and the lives of millions of people dependent on these rivers. It is also important for economic growth.

The right to clean and right to safe water has been recognized as a human right by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010.

### What is the way forward?

**Policy related reforms** are needed for water management. For example, the Interstate water dispute should be resolved in an amicable way.

**Inter-ministerial coordination** should be promoted between all the union ministries which are related to water use and consumption.

The **smart and climate-resilient agriculture** should be adopted.

There has to be **adequate infrastructure for distribution of water**. It will lead to improved access to water and foster social equality.

**Mitigate climate change**. It will mitigate associated extreme weather events. It will also ensure a water-secure world.

**Water management should be taken up at the local level**. It is because water is a local resource. It depends on the hydrology, climate, terrain and geography of a particular area. Therefore, solutions should also be local.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECH – ISSUES RELATED TO IPR

### IPR RELATED ISSUES

#### 15. A blow to equitable access to essential medicines

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**A blow to equitable access to essential medicines**” published in **The Hindu** on **23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022**.

**News:** In October 2020, India and South Africa tabled a proposal in the World Trade Organization (WTO) seeking temporary waiver from Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). This was to ensure availability of affordable vaccines, medicines and other medical products.

#### What are the reasons for such demand?

This was based on the contention that enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPR) were hindering timely availability of affordable medical products. Hence, rapid scaling up of manufacturing globally is required.

#### What is the stance of advanced countries?



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**US Approach:** Initially, all advanced countries opposed the proposals. The advanced countries put the **interests of pharmaceutical companies** ahead of the interests of developing countries. However, after the Biden administration took office, the U.S. backed the waiver only for vaccines.

However, this has led to vaccine inequality as only **14% people in low-income** countries have received at least one vaccine dose.

**The EU 'solution':** The EU has forwarded a “compromise outcome”. While opposing the concept of “waiver”, the outcome proposed granting **compulsory licenses** to enhance vaccine production.

India and South Africa, who had earlier tabled the waiver proposal, have diluted their stand and have accepted the EU's proposal.

### **When are compulsory licences granted?**

Usually compulsory licenses are granted if patent holders charge high prices in exercise of their monopoly rights. Or if the efforts to obtain voluntary licenses from patent holders have failed.

### **What are the provisions of the 'compromise outcome' with respect to licensing?**

The solution proposes that voluntary license, as a precondition for compulsory license, should be removed in case of medical emergency. Also, WTO members would be able to issue compulsory licenses even if their national legislation does not have provision for the same. These can be granted using executive orders, emergency decrees, and judicial or administrative orders.

### **Conditions attached with the compulsory licensing provisions:**

The solution can only be used by an “**eligible member**” i.e., a “**developing country member**” of the WTO that “had **exported less than 10%** of world exports of COVID-19 vaccine doses in 2021”.

This implies that “least developed countries” are excluded. Also, countries like Bangladesh which are developing but have a growing pharmaceutical industry are also excluded.

These conditions were introduced to limit China's expansion in the vaccine market. But in reality, China has developed several home-grown vaccines and does not need compulsory licenses to expand its production base. Hence, the proposal is a severely truncated version of “waiver proposal”.

**Additional conditions:** The proposal has introduced additional conditions, such as listing all patents covered under compulsory licenses, which are above and beyond already existing TRIPS provisions.

Hence, compulsory licenses may not result in the outcome the waiver proponents were aiming for. It will make it difficult to scale up production of COVID-19 vaccines, medicines and medical devices in the developing world.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

### **TRANSITION TOWARDS CLEAN ENERGY**

#### **16. Phasing out coal-based plants: The way forward**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Phasing out coal-based plants: The way forward**” published in the **Business Standard** on **24<sup>th</sup> Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Infrastructure, Energy, Environment

**Relevance:** electricity sector, coal plant, and energy consumption

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**Context:** The world including India is making plans to decarbonise in context of the looming threat of climate change

### Challenges in achieving 500GW non-fossil fuel generation capacity by 2030

There are questions on the availability of the **sufficient demand in the economy**

Such a huge capacity of renewable generation needs **grid stability**.

Renewable energy requires to be **stored**. Therefore, there is the issue of the projected cost of storage in the years to follow.

**DISCOM health:** The private sector needs support of the distribution company to invest such a huge amount in renewable generation. But, DISCOMS may not be healthy enough to give confidence to encourage private investment.

**Concerns over general investment climate:** Reopening power purchase agreements (PPAs) and delaying the dues of the renewable generators has brought in bad publicity.

### Status of Coal based power sector in India

As of January 2022, India coal-based electricity generation capacity stands at 203 GW). Out of total, 31% of the capacity is in the central sector, 33% is in the state sector and 36% is in the private sector.

### How to phase out India's coal-based plants to decarbonise the power sector?

We need to **fix a criterion** on the basis of which coal-based plants would be phased out. It can be done on the basis of –

#### Age of the coal plant:

– The argument against decommissioning coal plants reaching 25-years of age is that the station heat rate (SHR) of a properly maintained plant running at good capacity does not become adverse over time. The SHR provides the calorific value of coal required for every unit generated. So the lower the SHR, the more economical is the plant. This means an older plant is economical

#### Station Heat Rate (SHR)

– Phasing out could also be considered on the basis of the SHR. All plants above a certain SHR could be decommissioned since they are relatively more inefficient. However, this may lead to an increase in the total generation cost because many pithead plants would get decommissioned necessitating transporting coal to longer distances. Coal transport is expensive and at long distances the cost can go up by 30 to 40%.

However, there will be savings since a higher coal cost will be offset against an increased efficiency as high SHR plants would be decommissioned.

*Non-pithead plants are power plants where the coal mine is more than 1,500 kilometres away.*

#### Merit-order dispatch

– In a merit order scheme, all plants are compared on the basis of their variable cost, lowest to highest. Since we have more capacity than we actually need, the high variable cost plants are not used at all. The discoms still have to pay the fixed cost of such plants. So one could explore the option of decommissioning these high cost plants as one possible criterion.

### Challenges in decommissioning of coal plants

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33% of the coal capacity is in the state sector and the central government does not have the authority to decommission a state plant. The state govts, may not be willing to decommission inefficient plants due to political concerns as doing so may lead to large scale unemployment.

### What is the way forward?

There is a need to immediately decide on the criteria to be adopted for decommissioning coal-based plants

The addition of renewable capacity and decommissioning coal-based plants should go hand in hand.

40 GW of renewable capacity must be added each year between now and 2030 to fulfil targets.

### 17. Recycling heat generated by datacentres

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Recycling heat generated by datacentres” published in the Hindu on 23rd March 2022.

**News:** Microsoft has partnered with Fortum, Finnish energy company to launch the world’s largest scheme to provide heat to homes, services and business in Finland with waste heat.

Heat would be sourced from a new data centre region that Microsoft has planned to build in the Helsinki metropolitan area in Finland.

#### How will this work?

First, excess heat generated by the data centre is captured.

It is transferred from the **server cooling process** to the **district heating system** which is a centralised location that captures heat.

The heat is then distributed from the district heating system to buildings for residential and commercial heating needs.

#### What is a data centre?

A data centre is an organization’s **physical facility** located in a **dedicated building**. It comprises computers servers, storage systems, etc. which are used to store the data, critical applications and data etc.

These **data centres consume large amounts of energy**. Therefore, these physical facilities have temperature controls and energy efficiency systems.

Around 75% of the electricity that is consumed by a data centre becomes **waste heat**.

Therefore, a data centre can be used to heat up to 85 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter season, similar to a gas boiler.

#### What’s the scale of their carbon footprint?

On a global level, data centres consume **more than 1% of the world’s total electricity**. Therefore, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), they contribute to **0.3%** of all global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

As per Ireland’s energy regulator, the data centres located in Ireland could use almost 30% of the country’s electricity by 2027. Therefore, they are going to endanger the climate goals.

#### Why is recycling waste heat important?

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It can provide clean heat or climate friendly waste heat to homes, businesses and public buildings in the cities, for example Microsoft aims to provide it in the Helsinki.

It can help the countries and cities reach their **CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction targets**. For example, it can reduce dependence on the coal-fired heat unit in the cities.

### Which other countries recycle waste heat from data centres?

Datacentres thrive in cold climates. Therefore, **recycled waste heat systems** are used for district heating in the Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as in Russia and China.

### Which other companies are doing this?

**Facebook** is implementing a project in Odense, Denmark.

**Apple** is planning such a project in Denmark.

**H&M** has been distributing waste heat to nearby homes in Denmark since 2013.

An **IBM data centre** in Switzerland is heating a nearby community pool.

In Canada, **Quebecor** donates its heat to the editorial office of a local newspaper.

## ISSUES RELATED TO IPR

### 18. A blow to equitable access to essential medicines

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### What are the reasons for such demand?

This was based on the contention that enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPR) were hindering timely availability of affordable medical products. Hence, rapid scaling up of manufacturing globally is required.

### What is the stance of advanced countries?

**US Approach:** Initially, all advanced countries opposed the proposals. The advanced countries put the **interests of pharmaceutical companies** ahead of the interests of developing countries. However, after the Biden administration took office, the U.S. backed the waiver only for vaccines.

However, this has led to vaccine inequality as only **14% people in low-income** countries have received at least one vaccine dose.

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### When are compulsory licences granted?

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**Additional conditions:** The proposal has introduced additional conditions, such as listing all patents covered under compulsory licenses, which are above and beyond already existing TRIPS provisions.

Hence, compulsory licenses may not result in the outcome the waiver proponents were aiming for. It will make it difficult to scale up production of COVID-19 vaccines, medicines and medical devices in the developing world.

## GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

### **VALUE OF CURRENCY AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **19. It may be time to revive Keynes’ idea of a global reserve currency**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**It may be time to revive Keynes’ idea of a global reserve currency**” published in Livemint on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022. Mint

**Context:** The US has weaponized its financial power to pressurize Russia to withdraw from Ukraine. The result of sanctions is that Russia cannot access around half of its foreign exchange reserves. This has led to discussion that other countries will try to diversify their reserves away from the US dollar.

#### **Why is the US Dollar the global reserve currency?**

The US runs on a **structural current account deficit**. It has been providing dollars to the rest of the world through this trade gap, by sending dollars rather than goods to countries with which it has a trade deficit.

It is also a **global buyer of last resort** whenever there has been an economic shock.

#### **What are the advantages to the US?**

The US does not face the usual balance of payments constraints. It only needs to print its own currency to pay the rest of the world, while other countries have to earn dollars.

Despite this advantage, there is no other country right now which is ready to replace the US by running a structural current account deficit.

### What is the idea of 'global currency' as floated by Keynes?

It states that a Global Central Bank (*International Clearing Union*) would issue a Global Currency (*Bancor*). Countries would use this to make payments to each other. Each country would get an initial allotment of bancor based on its net exports. The global central bank would be the manager of global liquidity. Bancor was supposed to be an international medium for exchange rather than a store of value.

However, this was rejected by the US at the Bretton Woods conference.

### Can the Bancor idea be adopted in our times?

Economists have stated that there can be "common digital currency" – issued and regulated by the International Monetary Fund. The Fund can administer it on the basis of transparent digital distributed ledger and an algorithm that would adjust total supply according to trade volume.

### What are the challenges associated with a global currency?

1. **Currency is not just a function of trade flows:** This means that the countries do not hold global reserve currency only to fund their international transactions, but also as a precaution in case of sudden shock.
2. **Global currency and Global central bank cannot be pulled out of thin air:** As network effect ensures that countries use the US dollar for transactions because other countries also use it. Any attempt to replace the US dollar will also cause geopolitical headwinds.

However, if global reserve currency is regarded as a public good, then Keynes' idea can be revisited in the age of digital currencies.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

## POVERTY AND RELATED ISSUES

### 20. The worsening hunger problem of India's poor

**Source:** This post is created based on "The worsening hunger problem of India's poor" published in Indian **Express** on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues related to poverty and hunger

**Context:** In October 2020, The Right to Food Campaign conducted a **Hunger Watch Survey (HW-1)** to analyze the effect of lockdown. Covering close to 4,000 people in 11 states, the survey highlighted the extent of widespread hunger and a deterioration in the quality of diets compared to the pre-pandemic period.

The second round of the **Hunger Watch survey (HW-II)** was conducted in December 2021-January 2022, following the second wave of pandemic.

#### Findings of the survey:

**Food insecurity** was widespread – **79 per cent** of the overall sample reported experiencing conditions ranging from worrying about not having enough food, to not being able to eat a diet of sufficient quality or quantity, to running out of food and having to go without eating a whole day.

**Situation worse in urban Areas** – As 87% reported food insecurity compared to 76% in rural areas.

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**Availability of cereals:** In HW-II **only one in three households** said that their consumption of cereals was sufficient for their needs. **Two-thirds** of households could not afford cooking gas in the month before the survey. This was higher in rural areas than urban.

**Nutritional Deficiency:** **More than a quarter** could only eat more affordable items like dark green leafy vegetables and pulses fewer than two-three times a month. The conditions were poorer in rural areas.

**Other findings:** Two in five respondents said that the nutritional quality of their food had worsened since the pre-pandemic period.

**Way forward:** There is an urgent need to acknowledge the problem of hunger and take immediate action, including allocating sufficient resources to address the issue.

### **Advance national accounts estimates for 2021-22**

#### **21. Global uncertainties, India's growth prospects**

**Source:** The **post** is based on an article “**Global Uncertainties, India's growth prospects**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy, Issues of Planning and Mobilization of Resources

**Relevance:** Macroeconomic Impact of Russia-Ukraine Conflict 2022 on Indian Economy

**News:** On February 28, 2022, the National Statistical Office (NSO) released India's GDP data for Quarter 3 of 2021-22. The NSO also released Second Advance Estimates (SAE) for Fiscal Year 2021-22.

#### **India's Growth performance**

As per the estimates, India's real GDP and GVA growth are estimated to recover to 8.9% and 8.3%, respectively, in 2021-22 after the pandemic situation.

#### **What are the challenges for economic recovery amid ongoing geopolitical uncertainties?**

**Inc in global crude oil prices** may result in reduction in real GDP growth and an increase in CPI inflation in India. If the prices of other imported commodities also increase, the inflation impact will be higher.

**The demand for public expenditure may increase** with respect to prices of petroleum products, fertilizer subsidies etc. Therefore, the government may face the challenge of maintaining the fiscal deficit at the budgeted level.

It would lead to worsening of the current account balance due to higher import bills and depreciation of India rupee.

**Sectoral supply-side bottlenecks** and the **cost escalation** would be faced by certain sectors. These sectors may be fertilizers, iron and steel foundries, transportation, construction and coal which depends upon petroleum products.

It would lead to disruption in Indian trade with Russia and Ukraine. It would be due to the discontinuation of transactions through **SWIFT**.

The ongoing economic uncertainties have led to **increase in the outflow of the net Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)** from India and reduction in the inflows of net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

#### **Challenges in bearing burden of increased oil prices**

If the oil marketing companies don't raise prices of petroleum products, then the oil sector-linked subsidies would go up.

If the central and State governments reduce excise duty and value-added tax (VAT) on petroleum products, their tax revenues would be adversely affected.

If, burden is passed on to the consumers and industrial users, it can impact already weak investment and private consumption.

### What is the way forward?

There should be proper rationalization of **burden of higher prices of petroleum products** among consumers and industrial users, oil marketing companies (OMC) and the Government in India

Efforts should be made towards **promotion of consumption growth and reducing the cost of industrial inputs.**

RBI may raise the policy rate. It can help tackling inflationary pressures and outward flow of the U.S. dollar.

### GS3 – AGRICULTURE – ISSUES RELATED TO FARMERS

#### **AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

#### **22. The effect of farm sector changes on agrarian movements in India**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The effect of farm sector changes on agrarian movements in India**” published in the **Live Mint** on **25th Mar 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Price

**Relevance:** Farmer's protest movements and related issues

**News:** In recently-concluded state elections, the farmer's movement and the repeal of the three farm laws that passed in 2020 were referred to during the political discourse in some parts of the electoral landscape.

In Punjab, a group of farm protestors who contested elections failed to register their presence.

In Uttar Pradesh, the agitation failed to mobilize farmers beyond the state's western belt, which was the hotbed of farmer mobilization. The political articulation failed to find resonance even in other parts of UP or neighbouring Uttarakhand.

#### **Why the movement couldn't succeed in generating any political consensus on farmer issues?**

The movement was restricted to a **narrow geographical region**. Therefore, It could not influence voters beyond that.

The farmer movement 2020 was **largely a response to an action of the government**. It was not an organic mobilization over the concerns of a large majority of farmers. The 2020 protest ceased to exist with the repeal of the farm laws.

The farmers movements have **failed to build alliances**. During the past five years, there were protests in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra (Long March to highlight their plight) and Tamil Nadu (Farmers protested in Delhi for 100 days). But they could not come together.

It **could not reach common ground** with agricultural and non-farm casual labourers. In fact, their lives and livelihoods are also affected by agriculture.



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**Agricultural concerns differ across states** because the nature of agriculture (like cropping patterns) has changed across states.

– For example, now, horticulture and commercial crops dominate over cereal-based cropping patterns. Unlike rice and wheat, they do not enjoy state support through public procurement at minimum support prices (MSPs).

**Decline in use of farm labour** due to an increase in capital intensity and mechanization of agriculture. Therefore, **most casual-wage farm labourers** are now seeking employment elsewhere. It has weakened the solidarity among wageworkers and cultivators

Now the **non-farm sector** has become dominant. Therefore, the challenge for agrarian politics has gone beyond the narrow demands of loan waivers and MSP guarantees.

### What is the way forward?

To have any political impact, the agrarian mobilizations require a broadening of the movement. This requires **building coalitions across different classes of farmers** as well as wageworkers who are impacted by the prevailing rural distress.

**Mobilization of farmers is necessary** for farmers to attain a stronger bargaining position vis-a-vis the market and the state. It is because the farmers are now vulnerable to unexpected market changes.

Also, the state has a duty to protect agriculture, farmers and the rural economy.

## GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – THREATS TO INTERNAL SECURITY

### ICJS project

#### 23. Technology can make policing better — and also more dangerous

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Technology can make policing better – and also more dangerous” **published** in the Indian Express on 25th March 2022.

**News:** On March 11, the NCRB Foundation Day, the union home minister said that the second phase of the **Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) Project is going to be completed by the year 2026.**

#### Features & advantages of ICJS

The system will include **artificial intelligence, fingerprint systems** and other tools of **predictive policing.**

For example, Recently, the Indore Police Commissioner unveiled a “**fingerprint-based criminal record data fetching system**” developed to control crime in the state.

#### Advantages

– The CCTNS and ICJS can lead to cross-referencing of data. It can help to make policing more efficient.

– The criminals can be traced easily. For example, if a small thumb impression machine is added to a phone. It can be placed to capture fingerprints at checking points, public spaces, etc. All information about a person’s criminal record will be pulled up.

#### What are the issues with the ICJS project?

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**Privacy concerns:** The predictive policing practices will give birth to mass surveillance. It may violate the private which has been declared as a fundamental right to informational privacy by The **Supreme Court in K.S Puttaswamy Case**.

**Oppression of communities:** The mass surveillance may be put on certain oppressed caste communities, like Nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, which are referred as Habitual Offenders (HO).

– For example, after an introduction of the **Commissionerate system in Bhopal and Indore**, members of Vimukta and Adivasi communities are being summoned as part of “Operation clean“. Those subject to policing rarely includes dominant caste persons having resources, who may have even been convicted of a crime. With ICJS and CCTNS, this system may be replicated as a pan-India phenomenon.

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

Any measure that seeks to collect information or surveillance must be legal, necessary, and proportionate so that it does not violate the fundamental right to informational privacy.