

9pm
Compilation

March, 2022

General Studies - 1

1. Prisoner of Gender
2. Winds of Change in Urban India that demand close investigation
3. New guidelines on abortion care will help prevent more than 25 million unsafe abortions: WHO
4. MORE WOMEN IN POLITICS WILL STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY
5. India's gender empowerment enigma
6. If women are not empowered, the economy loses
7. Reaping the potential of the female workforce
8. Women and Indian society
9. A new Vision for Old age care
10. Rethinking the 100 new cities plan
11. WESTERN MNCs HAVE WEAKENED GLOBALIZATION BY TAKING SIDES
12. Sanskritisation
13. Film archives are our heritage. They must not be monetised
14. Over 15 years of incentivised institutional delivery: Has it ensured safe births?
15. The serious public health burden of gender violence
16. Stop applauding 'all-woman police stations'
17. NALSAR University shows how meaningful action can be taken for LGBTQI+ inclusivity: By listening to students
18. Caste analysis and it's reading today

General Studies - 2

1. Lines and roles: On Governors
2. Where Are Our Qiaos & Wangs?
3. A world Fragmented by divergences in data regulation
4. Weaponised economies, beyond the theatre of war & more
5. US not ready for a solo space ride
6. India's tea industry is on tenterhooks as Russia wages war on Ukraine
7. The Strain When You Abstain
8. Will Russia's war spur trade diversification?
9. Escaping the global sanctions net
10. The Ukraine war, India and a stand of non-alignment
11. Ukraine's situation, India's national interest
12. Debunking Russia's international law justifications
13. Western Sanctions: Impact & Ways Around Them
14. A pragmatic tightrope walk
15. The anatomy of India's Ukraine dilemma
16. With Russia-Ukraine conflict, comes inflation challenge
17. The dividends of democracy are worth the requisite investment
18. Democracy ought to get the better of autocracy
19. The systemic problems that have kept Indian schooling ineffective
20. Bitter pill, again
21. No quick fix: On the state of medical education in India
22. What to make of Indian opinion polls and our pollsters
23. A negation of the individual and a collective moral decay
24. The growing scourge of anti-microbial resistance needs urgent attention

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

25. Counting those who qualify as EWS
26. The 'global rules-based order' is an idealistic myth
27. Care informed by data: On children orphaned by the pandemic
28. Care informed by data: On children orphaned by the pandemic
29. Why India may not get a sizable role in post-war reconstruction of Ukraine
30. What ails medical education in India
31. What the plight of students in Ukraine reveals about medical education in India
32. A safety net for students abroad
33. Phygital education can prove transformative for the country
34. Disruption@gov.in
35. On resumption of international flights: Skies wide open
36. A fresh blow to globalisation
37. Navigating economic uncertainties caused by Ukraine war
38. THE MACROECONOMIC FRAMEWORK THAT CAN GUIDE OUR POLICY CHOICES
39. Global stagflation risk
40. How invasion of Ukraine could transform nuclear landscape of Asia
41. How to handle impact of Ukrainian crisis on India's energy sector
42. Risks Rise Above Earth Too
43. Do economic sanctions work as a deterrent?
44. Revive tax increases, stub out tobacco product use
45. Clear signals: On India-China ties and the new global currents
46. An open data policy won't work without earnest implementation
47. Treating values of individual freedom as trifles
48. May all mothers live: on Maternal Mortality rate
49. Looming fertilizer shortage
50. THE ECLIPSE OF SOVEREIGN EQUALITY
51. Fragmenting world order, untied nations
52. The war's cold facts and what India needs to glean
53. Ukraine invasion and the great geopolitical reset
54. Ukraine invasion, global wheat supply and India's opportunity
55. RUSSIA'S MISADVENTURE IN UKRAINE SETS OFF EUROPEAN RE-ARMAMENT
56. NO OVATION FOR INDIA'S STAND ON UKRAINE WAR
57. 'BHARATNATYAM' IN INDIAN DIPLOMACY
58. A MISFIRING AND ITS TRAIL OF POOR STRATEGIC STABILITY
59. BrahMos can't be mistaken for nuclear-tipped missile
60. On the Issue of Accidental Indian missile drop in Pakistan
61. Our weak educational outcomes have a wide set of societal causes
62. Towards inclusive education
63. Fixing Indian Higher Education is the ideal way to rescue students
64. Let an open market for vaccines fulfill demand
65. Why next FATF review is critical for India?
66. United Nations votes are not black and white
67. Aarogya Setu proved to be of limited utility, and it only aroused the suspicion of a wary citizenry.
68. Forging a social contract for data
69. Has IAS Failed the Nation?
70. 3 in 1: New Bill silent on Corpn funding
71. ICJ has ordered an end to invasion of Ukraine. This matters
72. A good foreign policy must also make a difference at home
73. The peculiar case of Ladakh's eastern boundary
74. Time for India to redefine its relationship with Russia
75. Crisis in Sri Lanka

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

76. Sri Lanka's aggravating economic crisis
77. India & Japan take recent shifts in their stride
78. Amid Ukraine crisis, India does well to deepen ties with Australia and Japan, draw red lines vis a vis Beijing
79. Japanese PM's visit reaffirms salience of bilateral ties with India at a time of geopolitical ferment
80. Needed, an Indian Legislative Service
81. Teachable moments
82. On India's education and healthcare: Mind, body & growth
83. Changing the jurisprudence of scarcity
84. A solution in search of a problem: on 10% reservation
85. India's complex position on Islamophobia
86. Dial down the security dilemma that sets vicious cycle in motion
87. Buyers' power: India depends on Russian arms. But Russia depends on Indian arms purchases. That gives Delhi leverage
88. When West Weaponizes Sanctions
89. Russia's offer of cheaper oil is tempting, but India must be cautious
90. An 'atmanirbhar' India can look the world in the eye
91. Sealed justice: On sealed cover jurisprudence
92. TWO FREEDOMS AND THE HIJAB IN OUR MIDST
93. The controversy over the proposed Mekedatu water project
94. Fighting TB with lessons learnt during Covid pandemic
95. This is a criminal attack on privacy
96. Any data extraction law must pass a privacy test
97. Identity and privacy: On Prisoners' identification Bill/ Why the Criminal Identification Bill overreaches
98. Building faith in India's investigative agencies
99. A parliamentary Bill the ICAI needs to take note of
100. An unhelpful response to accountancy scandals
101. The folly of an 'atmanirbhar' internet
102. Hindu as minority: Government's affidavit is consistent with the Constitution
103. Quota and data: On Vanniyar quota verdict
104. We need to talk about autism
105. 7 Lessons From The Pandemic
106. Towards affordable healthcare in India: 'Jan Aushadhi' to 'Jan Upyogi'
107. On CUET: Centralising tests
108. Common University Entrance Test won't solve the real problems
109. Fixing the service: Recruiting more IAS officers is necessary, as is a real merit system and trimming of government
110. BIMSTEC after the Colombo summit
111. Cohesion and co-operation: On power imbalances in BIMSTEC
112. Bridging the bay in quest of a stronger BIMSTEC
113. A subregional grouping that must get back on course
114. Taking The BIMSTEC Route To Prosperity
115. An opportunity to repolish India-Nepal ties
116. India can act today to shape tomorrow's terms of connectivity with Pakistan
117. India and Australia are finally acting like the natural partners they are
118. A missed chance for Indo-China relations
119. Aid Sri Lanka's economy and not Rajapaksa's grip
120. Economic crisis in the island nation has provided an opportunity for Sri Lanka and India to deepen their relationship
121. Explained: What's behind the new anti-India campaign in the Maldives?
122. The move to ease voting for overseas citizens

General Studies - 3

1. Waste Pickers need policy report
2. Tackling the plastic problem
3. Liberalise, do not bureaucratise
4. An atmanirbhar flight plan for fighter jets
5. Is DRDO To Blame for India's Acute Import Dependence?
6. Reporting Cyberattacks
7. GoI Will Have To Keep Buddha Smiling
8. Find space for new science, its ethical dilemmas
9. Gaining heft – On e-NAM's trade effectiveness
10. RBI ought to take a balanced view on cryptocurrency
11. Our Politicians in denial of climate change
12. IPCC report makes a case for building people's resilience to climate crisis. It will require multi-pronged efforts at all levels
13. Planning for resilience in a warming world
14. Looking for an effective alternative to LPG
15. Rich nations must step in
16. Here's Why its V not K
17. Conflicts and a settings change for social media
18. Pumped storage hydro projects can help meet our energy goals
19. Strengthen environmental clearances
20. Risks of imported energy gets real
21. An alternative export strategy
22. Water Management needs a Hydro Social Approach
23. Insolvency proceeding deadline problem
24. Why society gains when start-ups fail
25. Managing the rupee
26. Addressing uncertainty – Necessary changes in GST must be made in time
27. Unshackling the creative sector
28. Shock-proofing the economy: Quality jobs the best possible safety net
29. Shutdown this misguided energy policy
30. Why special situation funds are necessary
31. GoI tracks the money trail: How PFMS will pull plug on spending slippages
32. LESSONS IN OUR HICCUPS OVER SELLING AN LIC STAKE
33. Monetising surplus land held by state is a good idea, it needs to be done with transparency, sensitivity to public interest
34. Will a services exports-driven economic growth strategy work for India?
35. Electric vehicles can't go too far in reducing our use of fossil fuel
36. Why 'de-dollarisation' is imminent?
37. Clean energy should use the battery of a circular economy
38. Let's enforce age gate rules to secure children on the internet
39. Shoring up the Northeast frontier: How rebranding the discourse on connectivity is imperative to meet the China challenge
40. Tapping the usefulness of non-bovine milk
41. Food processing potential
42. India trails other countries in researchers
43. GET THESE WRINKLES OUT OF SOUTH ASIAN TEXTILE STORY
44. The complexities of introducing african cheetahs to india

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

45. Heartening milestone: On India's overseas shipping record
46. On boosting exports: Beyond \$400 billion
47. Whither unemployment benefits
48. One nation one software
49. Heavy taxes are fine for quasi-assets like crypto
50. Ask the right questions for Ease of Doing Business 2.0
51. World Water Day: Are we ready for the thirsty future?
52. A blow to equitable access to essential medicines
53. Phasing out coal-based plants: The way forward
54. Recycling heat generated by datacentres
55. A blow to equitable access to essential medicines
56. It may be time to revive Keynes' idea of a global reserve currency
57. The worsening hunger problem of India's poor
58. Global uncertainties, India's growth prospects
59. The effect of farm sector changes on agrarian movements in India
60. Technology can make policing better — and also more dangerous
61. Our Farm reforms deserve another chance
62. Budgeting for a well-fed, self-reliant India
63. On TRIPS waiver: Profit over public health
64. A contributor, not consumer
65. Atmashakti over atmanirbharta: Learn right lessons from Russia sanctions
66. Globalization is dying: Long may the phenomenon live
67. Between BRICS and Quad
68. The phenomenon of coral bleaching
69. The Start-up India initiative
70. Lifestyles for climate justice
71. Race to the bottom for gig workers
72. India's food response as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'
73. Is the fuel pricing policy problematic?
74. India's lithium dependency worries
75. Centre does well to withdraw AFSPA from many districts in the Northeast. It must carry on working in this direction
76. Explained: AFSPA and the Northeast
77. Thinking hard on AI
78. How to survive and grow in a warming world

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

General

Studies

Paper - 1

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.



General Studies - 1

GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN RELATED ISSUES

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

1. Prisoner of Gender

Source: This post is based on the article “**Prisoner of Gender**” published in **Times of India** on **4th Mar 2022**.

News: According to a recent Pew Survey, 79% of men and 82% women in India agree that it is very important for women to have the same rights as men. However, the anomaly is that this rarely translated into specific behaviours, relationships, freedoms.

How different surveys highlight the discriminatory attitudes towards women in India?

India is ranked second among 61 countries when it comes to completely agreeing that when jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women.

Among 34 countries, Indians are the third most likely to say that marriage is more satisfying when the husband provides for the family while wife takes care of the house and children.

How this affects the society and the economy negatively?

In other countries rising education and income levels and falling fertility rates have led to rising shares of women in jobs, but female labour force participation in India has dropped even in the same opportune conditions.

Data from NFHS and other surveys points out that specific discriminatory attitudes are a major factor in fettering women’s access to paid work.

GS1 – SOCIETY – URBANISATION

URBANISATION AND RELATED ISSUES

2. Winds of Change in Urban India that demand close investigation

Source– This post is based on the article “**Winds of Change in Urban India that demand close investigation**” published in **Live Mint** on 26th Feb 2022.

News: A recent analysis has shown that wind speed in major Indian cities has been slowing down consistently and significantly over several decades. The average wind speed has fallen by 47% in Hyderabad, 47% in Bengaluru, 46% in Kolkata

What are the causes of this decrease?

While the exact explanation of this phenomenon is not clear, some scientists say it is happening (along with other atmospheric changes) as a result of an increase in surface roughness, attributed to land-use changes. This they claim can be due to urbanization, or even forest growth.

Most global studies indicate that urbanization is the major factor that can explain weakening winds in urban regions.

Why is urbanization a major reason?

Urban areas are characterized by urban 'heat islands', altered rainfall patterns, increased fog, haze and reduced evaporative cooling. This explains why urbanization may well be the main driver of falling wind speeds.

This is also supported by the fact that **the rate of** wind speed fall in some of the less-rapidly urbanizing districts is relatively slow.

Although it may yet turn out not be the main factor behind reduced wind speeds, urbanization is certainly a compounding factor.

What are the implications of Slowing wind speed?

Slow winds cannot carry moisture for long which will result in **altered rainfall patterns**.

Agriculture depends crucially on **transpiration** (a plant's exhalation of water vapour), which in turn needs evaporation which is dependent on wind speed.

Wind-dispersed plant species also depend on wind speeds for survival. They also affect **natural disasters and ocean dynamics**.

This also means **that air pollution in cities** will take longer to get dispersed, exacerbating public-health problems.

Falling wind speed also has huge implications for the **wind-energy sector and thus for the clean energy sector**. Typically, a 5% fall in wind speed can lead to an almost 17% fall in wind energy in an average turbine.

What has been the global trend?

Scientists have found that wind speeds have been declining globally since the 1960s which they refer to as "**global terrestrial stilling**". Although this drop may not seem like much but over long periods of time, it can have significant consequences.

What is the way forward?

Natural phenomena need to be scientifically investigated for their implications to broader **socio-economic and cultural outcomes**. There is a need for an **informed understanding** of these winds of change so that we can formulate adaptation strategies.

GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN ISSUES

Abortion care and related issues

3. New guidelines on abortion care will help prevent more than 25 million unsafe abortions: WHO

Source: This post is based on an article "**New guidelines on abortion care will help prevent more than 25 million unsafe abortions: WHO**" published in the down to earth on 11th march 2020

Syllabus: GS-II Social Sector (Health Sector)

Topic: Reproductive rights, Abortion Laws

News: The WHO released more than 50 recommendations that include clinical practice, health care delivery and law and policy interventions to support quality abortion care. The WHO also presented new guidelines on abortion care.

What were the reasons that compelled the WHO to bring these guidelines?

Globally, between 13,865 and 38,940 lives are lost yearly due to the failure to provide safe abortion.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Around **97%** of unsafe abortions are done in developing countries. As per records, 53.8%, 24.8% and 19.5% of all unsafe abortions happened in the Asia (mainly in south and central Asia), Africa (mainly in eastern and western Africa) and in Latin America and the Caribbean respectively.

Abortion related laws in different countries

Most countries allow **abortion** under certain circumstances. About 20 countries do not provide any legal basis for abortion. More than 3 out of 4 countries mandates legal penalties for abortion like long-term imprisonment or heavy fines for people who perform or assist with the procedure for the abortion.

Why should the political barrier be removed?

The unsafe abortions occur more in those countries where abortion laws are highly restrictive than in those countries where laws are less restrictive.

It is because political barriers lead to critical delays in accessing treatment. Therefore, it put women and girls at a greater risk of unsafe abortion, etc.

Restricting access to abortions does not reduce the number of abortions. In fact, it pushes women and girls to resort to unsafe practices. For example, in countries where abortion is mostly restricted, only 1 in 4 abortions are safe, whereas, in countries where the procedure is mostly legal, almost 9 out of 10 abortions are safe.

What are the new guidelines for abortion care?

It includes many simple interventions at the **primary care level**. Such interventions will improve the quality of abortion care provided to women and girls.

These include **task sharing** by a wider range of health workers; and making ensure that accurate information on care is available to all those who need it.

It includes providing **safe abortion services** to women like ensuring access to **medical abortion pills**,

It proposes **telemedicine** for abortion and family planning services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It proposed removal of **political barriers to safe abortion**, such as criminalisation, mandatory waiting periods before receiving a requested abortion, third-party authorisation for abortion, restrictions on which health workers can provide abortion services.

What benefits can be accrued from the new guidelines?

It will support interested countries to strengthen as well as ensure better implementation of the national policies and programmes which are related to contraception, family planning and abortion services.

The WHO claimed it would prevent more than 25 million unsafe abortions annually.

Conclusion: New guidelines can help provide the highest standard of care for women and girls

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

4. MORE WOMEN IN POLITICS WILL STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

Source: This post is based on the article "More women in politics will strengthen democracy" published in the Indian Express on 08 March 2022

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

News: After Covid-19, the position of role of women is strengthening in the political and civic life of democracy in South Asia.

Trends of Women Role in Politics

Global level: women leaders, such as Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand), Tsai-Ing Wen (Taiwan), Sanna Marin (Finland) and KK Shailaja (Kerala) has shown superior performance in handling the pandemic.

Local level: The panchayat sarpanches and health officials such as Roorkee's Daljit Kaur, Singhwahini's Ritu Jaiswal and the mayor of Chandannath municipality in Nepal, Kantika Sejuwal, among many others, have also performed very well.

What are the issues?

Paradox Situation in South Asian democracy: On one side, a strong women leader such as Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Indira Gandhi, Khaleda Zia, Sheikh Hasina, and Benazir Bhutto have been in the power in South Asia. On the other side, women's condition in society at large, continued to be appalling.

Underrepresentation of Women in political parties as members of key decision-making bodies. For instance, India has fallen several places in the *Inter-Parliamentary Union's* global ranking of women's parliamentary presence, from 117 after the 2014 election to 143 as of January 2020. In fact, India is currently behind Pakistan (106), Bangladesh (98) and Nepal (43) and ahead of Sri Lanka (182).

Some good developments towards political empowerment of women

Strength of Women Member of Parliament in India Has Increased: Currently, women make up 14.6% of MPs (78 MPs) in the Lok Sabha. It is a historic high.

Winnability of Women Politician is high: For example, BJP women candidates won at a strike-rate of 7% as opposed to their male counterparts at 66 per cent. Additionally, 27 of 41 women MPs were able to retain their seats as well.

Voluntary Parliamentary Quotas for Women: In the 2019 general elections, West Bengal under Mamata Banerjee and Odisha under Naveen Patnaik fielded 40 per cent and 33 per cent women candidates, respectively.

High Female Voter Turnout in 2019: Women are increasingly asserting their citizenship rights. For example, in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, women's participation exceeded that of men for the first time.

Influence of growing turnout of women voters: For example, The TMC ran many women-centric schemes like Swasthya Sathi, Kanyashree Prakalpa and Rupashree Prakalpa, that potentially played a central role in their victory.

Suggestions for improvement

Passing of the Women's Reservation Bill.

Inspirational From Some States like West Bengal and Odisha must be replicated in other states.

Promoting Women Voter Turnout: It could influence political parties' programmatic priorities and improve their responsiveness to women voters' interests, preferences, and concerns, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

Ramoni, a 15th century Bengali poet, a low-caste washerwoman, sang, “*I’ll not stay any longer in this land of injustice/ I’ll go to a place where there are no hellhounds*”. We will need to sympathise with this which is also the voice of the present generation of women.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

5. India’s gender empowerment enigma

Source: This post is based on an article “**The India’s gender empowerment enigma**” published in **Business Standard** on **09th Mar 22**.

Context: International Women’s Day was celebrated. But, the focus on gender inequality has not been adequate in the country.

What are the steps taken to tackle gender inequality?

The government has made reforms which mandated longer maternity leave for women, the provision of better child care facilities in workplaces, the subsidized cooking gas distribution scheme, and the legislation to ban triple talaq among Muslim women of Indian Society.

Status of Indian Women

India slipped 28-rank in the World Economic Forum’s latest Global Gender Gap.

A sharp decline in female **labour force participation rate (FLFPR)** and there is growing **female unemployment**.

Reasons for poor performance of India in the global ranking

India’s score fell sharply on account of the “**political empowerment**” dimension. The study only takes into account the **representation of women in Parliament**, not women’s participation at the level of local self-government, in which India performs very well.

India also stands at rank 114 in terms of **educational attainment** and in health and survival it stands at 155.

India ranks among the worst performers in terms of **economic participation** and access to opportunity. It means women have a low chance of finding jobs.

What are the ultimate causes behind poor status of Women in Indian Society?

Patriarchal Society: It is validated by the troubling resistance to criminalising marital rape.

Disempowerment of women across Indian society. Indian society thinks that men have priority in terms of access to job opportunities and are viewed as principal bread-earners. It adds burdens of housework and childcare on working women and discrimination and/or harassment in the workplace.

The performance of Indian economy: It has shrunk steadily since 2017. It took unemployment rates to new highs. It was impacted by demonetisation and the goods and services tax reform measures. It was worsened by Covid-19. It slowed down the economy, and narrowed the scope for women to participate in the economy. It can continue longer if the Russia-Ukraine war is prolonged and fourth wave of the virus lashes the country.

Way Ahead

An **expanding economy** automatically enlarges the job market and eventually creates conditions in labour markets that compel businesses to overcome their gender prejudices and hire women.

Government Policies: The gender-focused government policies can serve to complement the expanding economy process

6. If women are not empowered, the economy loses

Source: This post is based on the article “If women are not empowered, the economy loses” published in **Indian express** on **9th Mar 2022**.

News: Women in India have been in top positions in almost all the sectors like politics, administration and financial sector as well. However, despite this progress, we have a long way to go before we could say that there is complete gender equality in every respect. Glass ceilings are beginning to shatter, but there is a lot more to be done.

How giving equal opportunity to women can help Nations advance in their journey of growth?

Economic Growth: It has been proven time and again that when more women enter the workforce, economies grow faster. Studies conducted in various nations have proven that there is a direct correlation between greater gender diversity and higher GDPs.

Poverty eradication: Empowerment of women helps in poverty eradication.

Human Capital: By empowering women, we increase their right to economic resources, as well as their decision-making powers. This, in turn, benefits their households and their communities. Women begin investing more in their children’s education, and thus the quality of human capital improves, which leads to economic prosperity.

Also, If women are not empowered, the nation’s economy loses. A recent study by the World Bank found that countries lose \$160 trillion in wealth due to the differences in lifetime earnings between men and women.

What is the situation in India like?

According to **World Bank Women’s participation in the workforce** in India is still among the **lowest** in the world at 19.9%. Only 3.7 per cent of the leadership positions in corporate India are occupied by women.

What is the way forward?

The traditionally male-dominated sectors like mining need to improve not only in terms of their gender representation, but also in terms of the **work culture**.

It is the culture at the workplace that determines not just whether a woman gets a seat at the table, but also whether her **voice is heard**.

7. Reaping the potential of the female workforce

Source: The post is based on article “Reaping the potential of the female workforce” published in “The Hindu” on 8th March 2022

News: The large-scale adoption of digital and smartphone technologies and the increased need for personal care for the sick, elderly and children have opened up employment opportunities, especially for women.

Status of Participation of Women in the Workforce of India & Comparison with other Countries

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

In 2019, 21% of women were either working or looking for work, compared to 32% in 2005 in India.

India's female labour force participation (FLFP) rate is lower than some of its neighbours in South Asia such as Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

India's FLFP rate is the lowest among the BRICS countries

Why Women Employment is Very important?

Demographic dividend: India's population is among the youngest in the world. In 2020, the median age in India was about 29. Women and girls form a significant part of India's demographic dividend.

Further, Increasing FLFP in India is crucial for **economic growth, inclusive growth** and **achieve the Sustainable Development Goals**.

Lesson from other countries: Countries like China, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korean achieved fast-paced economic growth due to reaping of the demographic dividend.

What are the potential sectors for creating employment for women?

The care service sector: The **health, education, and other personal care services** are **labour-intensive** sectors. As per the **ILO Report on Care work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work: Key findings in Asia and the Pacific (2018)**, increased investment in the care economy has the potential to generate a total of 69 million jobs in India by 2030. For example, the child care services can be provided in office complexes through collaborative models

Digital Platforms and The Gig Economy: Due to increasing use of smartphones, the low cost of Internet and other initiatives like Digital India campaign, the work from home has increased in India. It provides job flexibility which are particularly important for women. Digital platforms that allow remote work are, in principle, accessible to men and women in any location.

What are the suggestions to improve FLFP rate?

Closing digital accessibility gap: according to the GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report, only 25% of women owned smartphones compared to 41% of men in India in 2020. It can be significant in giving boosting women's employment in the gig and platform sector.

Greater investment in better **health and care facilities** can lead to more employment opportunities for women.

Providing access to **higher education** (beyond secondary education): It can be done by motivating women and their families through incentives such as scholarships as well as transport and hostel facilities.

Skill training: It should be aligned to the gig, platform and care sectors as well as other emerging sectors such as those covered under the Production Linked Incentive Scheme. Online skill training can be provided. It is because they had to face constraints in physical mobility due to social norms, domestic responsibilities or concerns over safety.

Enabling women to acquire physical assets (through credit facilities, revolving funds, etc.)

Involvement of All Stakeholders: Governments, skill training partners, private firms, corporates and industry associations as well as civil society organisations all need to come together to create enabling measures for women.

Cooperative federalism: Constant dialogue and engagement with the States on action strategies will be required. It may include Inter-ministerial coordination.

8. Women and Indian society

Source: This post is based on the article “Women and Indian society” published in Business Standard on 7th March 2022.

News: Recently, Pew research Survey highlighted India’s low female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) and few reasons behind that.

FLFPR has worsened with the slowing of the Indian economy before the pandemic came. an FLFPR of 33.1 per cent in 2011-12 slipped to 25.3 in 2017-18, coinciding with a 45-year high in unemployment, and further to 20 per cent now, among the lowest in the world.

What can be the possible reasons behind low FLFPR?

Many theories have been given as a reason behind India’s low female labour force participation rate (FLFPR). Some of those are the following:

First, women typically exit the workplace when unemployment is high, to make way for the male workforce.

Second, many females step out of the workforce to educate themselves.

Third, as per Pew Research study, the deep-seated conservatism of Indian society is the reason behind India’s persistently low FLFPR.

What are the findings on conservatism of Indian society on FLFP?

The Pew Survey showed that more than half the Indians think men should get job preferences when jobs are scarce.

Fully 80 per cent of the Indians with college education believe women must obey their husbands.

As per UN Global Attitudes Survey (2019) a quarter of the Indians surveyed favoured the traditional family dynamic of the wife taking care of the house and children.

What are the effects of conservatism?

Following are the proof of effect of conservatism on the Indian workforce:

- According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), women accounted for 10.7 per cent of the workforce in 2019-20. However, they accounted for 13.9 per cent of the job losses in April 2020, during lockdown.
- During the three months ended September 2020, the unemployment rate among women touched 15.8 per cent against 12.6 per cent among men workers.

Some of the employments are considered “suitable” for women, such as tourism, retail, housekeeping services, and so on. These sectors have borne the brunt of pandemic the most.

As a result, on the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index, India has been ranked, 140th among 156 nations. India is third-worst performer in South Asia, ahead of just Pakistan and Afghanistan.

GS1 – SOCIETY – POPULATION RELATED ISSUES

ELDERLY POPULATION OF INDIA

9. A new Vision for Old age care

Source: This post is based on the article “A new Vision for Old age care” published in **The Hindu** on 10th Mar 22.

News: According to the UN World Population Ageing Report, India’s ageing population (those

aged 60 and above) is projected to increase to nearly 20% by 2050 from about 8% now. Also currently, as India becomes increasingly urbanised, families are breaking up into smaller units which has led to several homes for the elderly coming up in various cities.

How capable are the old age homes for taking care of the needs of elderly?

Typically, such homes are run by NGOs, religious or voluntary organisations with support from the government, or by local philanthropists. But as there is a **lack of regulatory oversight** the quality of service is not uniform.

Basic Healthcare– Some recent research has pointed out that these homes lack in fulfilling even the basic health needs of their elderly residents.

These health issues though if properly taken care of require some very basic treatment, but if left unaddressed can be the cause of problems like depression in the patient.

Our **homes, buildings and social environment are not built keeping the elderly (or people with disabilities) in mind**. In such scenario, in order to prevent them from injury, their mobility is reduced. This reduces their sociability, their sense of independence and well-being — all leading up to mental health issues and depression.

What can be done to make elderly care better?

Screening–There is need for basic health screening at homes and public health facilities. This can include screenings for blood sugar, blood pressure, periodic vision. Such interventions hardly require some big sum of money, but go a long way in identifying health issues and offering support.

The next step would be to build **formal pathways** to address any health issues that such screenings identify.

There is also a need for **robust public policy** to support homes for the elderly. A comprehensive policy will guide elderlies to make their facilities, buildings and social environment elderly- and disabled-friendly.

GS1 – SOCIETY – URBANIZATION

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY - INFRASTRUCTURE

10. Rethinking the 100 new cities plan

Source: This post is based on article “**Rethinking the 100 new cities plan**” published in the **Business Standard** on **07 Mar 2022**

News: The idea of creation of 100 new cities in India has not taken off. It was an important mission launched by the public authorities in 2014 which included the **Smart Cities Mission**.

Why new cities are needed in India?

Economic Growth and Job Creation: Urban real estate development is a part and parcel of economic development and job creation. Therefore, it has to be properly focussed.

Very little land is needed to build new cities: For example, top 10 most populous cities occupy only about 0.2 per cent of the national land mass. Even urban areas as a whole occupy 4 per cent of the land base in India.

Only Few Cities Developed in India: India is a huge country with 28 states and eight Union Territories. Only a few new cities have come up since 1947

Low Level of Urbanization: The urban population in India still remains very low. It is at about 35 per cent which is very low in comparison to China (65 per cent)

What are the challenges in the development of cities?

The Land Acquisition Act, 2013: It makes acquisition difficult and costly. An Attempt to amend the 2013 Act has also been failed. However, there is still a way out.

A variant of Inspector Raj was abolished in manufacturing sector but its variant remained in the urban real estate sector: The private sector is still not allowed to provide infrastructure for the much-needed additional real estate development on a large scale.

Demand Supply Mismatch in Cities: There are unsold inventory of apartments built up in several cities. It is because real estate developers keep their supply limited relative to the demand. They build costly apartments. However, the demand for low-cost apartment is high which remains unmet. Therefore, the market price of urban real estate is high.

Inadequate Availability of funds for Mission of 100 Cities: A huge amount of finance or funds is required for development, or the planning and the implementation machinery.

Way Ahead

Participation of private players: There is a need to have an appropriate long-term policy framework to incentivise the participation of big private real estate companies in making the mission of 100 new cities real. They can be involved to plan, raise resources, construct, marketing, for instance, the development of much of Gurugram is an example.

Abolishing a variant of the **licence-permit-quota Raj** in the real estate sector:

Promoting construction of all variants of property: At substantially lower prices, we have massive demand. The construction in this segment is important.

It is imperative that we have several new cities, and not just extension of existing cities, which can be a messy and costly affair.

GS1 – Society – Effect of Globalization on Indian society

GLOBALIZATION AND RELATED ISSUES

11. WESTERN MNCs HAVE WEAKENED GLOBALIZATION BY TAKING SIDES

Source: This post is created based on the article “R Western MNCs have weakened globalization by taking sides”, published in **Live Mint** on **14th March, 2022**.

News: Recently McDonald’s closed its outlet in Moscow. This could be bad news for the global economy.

Why is this move of MNCs against globalization?

Firstly, It reflects that MNCs are not neutral, furthermore, it is being advertised as **corporate virtue signaling or their good moral values**. It has undermined the argument that companies are geopolitically neutral. Present MNCs have gone against the examples set by MNCs of the 1990s and 2000s. They never cared about domestic criticism for their political neutrality in foreign countries.

Secondly, Policymakers will now perceive **foreign companies as extensions of foreign governments:** For instance – what will be the difference between TikTok and Huawei (seen as instruments of the Chinese state) and other Western firms such as YouTube (acting in accordance with US’s foreign policy).

Third, This can lead to **limiting foreign investments:** This will compound the challenge of global economic recovery in light of the US-China trade war and the pandemic.

Fourth, This can lead to a situation of **Economic Balkanisation:** restricting access to technology, energy, food. Along with greater regulations of critical sectors such as defense, finance, telecommunications, media.

Global cooperation in tackling climate change, energy transition, and combating pandemic will become much harder.

Need for globalization:

A world dominated by economic nationalism cannot escape political conflict. The free movement of goods, capital, people, ideas have actually helped in maintaining world peace. Globalization helps by giving countries what they want, without the use of force.

What should India do?

India must champion the cause of global economic reconnection. It should focus on high economic growth for national interest, by:

1. Positioning itself as a stable, secure, prospering economy to attract foreign investors.
2. Creating a middle path between impoverishing autarky and risky laissez faire.
3. Promoting competition and preventing market domination.
4. Broadening trade with energy and defence suppliers to mitigate political coercion.
5. “Bubbles of trust” with countries of common interest and values can help manage geopolitical risks.

GS1 – SOCIETY – CASTE SYSTEM

SANSKRITIZATION

12. Sanskritisation

Source: The post is based on an article “Sanskritization” published in the Hindu on 15th march 2022

Context: A long-drawn phenomenon that is not restricted to caste hierarchy, but also encompasses a wider social and cultural process.

Concept of Sanskritization

It was coined and popularised by M.N. Srinivas, an eminent social anthropologist in his book *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* (Oxford, 1952),

Initially, ‘Sanskritization’ referred to the lower castes’ adoption of the “Brahmanical” ways of life. But gradually, the process also involved the adoption of the practices and rites of the locally dominant caste in a particular region. It included non-Brahmin castes which were politically powerful, socio-economically influential and ritually higher in the local caste hierarchy.

It allowed the mobility in caste positions/roles for certain castes.

What are the limitations of the Sanskritization Phenomenon?

The process itself do not always result in higher social status for the lower castes. For example, it did not guarantee higher social stature and did not lead to improvement in the everyday life of Dalits.

It is because other factors such as economic well-being, political power, education, establishment of historical evidence for their affiliation to/descent from a particular caste/caste lineage were also important for their aspirations for higher social positions

Multiple angles about the nature of Sanskritization

First viewpoint: Sanskritization' was a civil campaign of dissent, resistance and challenge against the hierarchical and hereditary nature of the caste structure in Indian society

Second viewpoint: Multiple developments in Indian socio-polity opened up a range of socio-political issues/changes in India not entirely related to Sanskritization. For example, modernity, political independence, social reform movements, agrarian class relations, anti-caste struggles, globalisation, etc. These developments have indicated the problems in assessing and analysing caste relations and the Hindu social structure through the exclusive prism of Sanskritisation.

What are various issues in the study of the phenomenon of Sanskritization alone?

Although, Sanskritization movement allows social mobility within the Indian society. But it encompasses a number of problems: These are

It reinforces the **graded inequalities** and practices in the name of caste in Indian society. It does not offer a strong critique and denunciation of the caste system as a whole.

It ignores the existence of a **pre-/non-caste, egalitarian society** that used to be present in Indian society.

It ignores the **role of anti-caste struggles** which did not follow the cultural-ritual trajectory of Sanskritization. Unlike the Sanskritization model, which reinforces caste relations, anti-caste politics emphasises the destruction of the caste system. It advocates the destruction of other undemocratic/inegalitarian values, customs and institutions associated with it. The approach advocates for 'casteless humans.

Way Ahead

Indian society continues to witness movements of both the types – **Sanskritization** as well as **Anti-caste struggles**.

Therefore, both the processes require a separate and integrated study and analysis, taking into consideration socio-economic, cultural and political factors.

GS1 – HISTORY – ART AND CULTURE

MERGING OF FILM AND MEDIA UNITS WITH NFDC

13. 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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

– 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.

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

14. 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, Ayushmani Scheme in West Bengal, Chiranjeevi Yojana in Assam and Gujarat and Manta Friendly Hospital Scheme in Delhi, etc.

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

About the mortality ratio

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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

15. 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

16. 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**

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

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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.

GS1 – SOCIETY – INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

ISSUES RELATED TO LGBTQI+

17. **NALSAR University shows how meaningful action can be taken for LGBTQI+ inclusivity: By listening to students**

Source: The post is based on an article “**NALSAR University shows how meaningful action can be taken for LGBTQI+ inclusivity: by listening to students**” published in the Indian Express on 29th March 2022.

Syllabus: GS1 – Indian Society

Relevance: Gender Justice

News: NALSAR University of Law in Hyderabad released a **draft Policy on Inclusive Education for Gender and Sexual Minorities**.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

The University will allow one of the floors in a hostel to be a gender-neutral space for students who self-identify as LGBTQI+.

In 2018, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences had established a gender-neutral space in its girls' hostel. In addition, the Ashoka University inaugurated gender-neutral washrooms in its premises.

Background

The Supreme Court judgment in the **NALSA v Union of India Case (2014)** recognised transgender people as the “third gender”

Consequently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issued a circular in 2015 to the vice-chancellors of all universities that “Transgender -friendly infrastructure like washrooms, restrooms etc” be built.

What is stated in the draft policy?

It will ensure that students get “reasonable accommodation in alignment with their preferred gender identity”

It also states that name and pronoun changes shall be available to anyone.

In addition, there will be a **self-attested declaration** for recognition of gender identity and sexual orientation in the university.

What is the significance of the move?

This move can lead to changes that will **create inclusive, safe public spaces** for gender and sexual minorities.

The move shows the **importance of participatory approach** in place of the top-bottom approach. For example, it was the active engagement with the student community at NALSAR University that led to this draft Policy.

NALSAR University has **set a good example** which can be replicated in other educational institutions across India.

GS1 – SOCIETY – CASTE SYSTEM

CASTE SYSTEM AND RELATED ISSUES

18. Caste analysis and it's reading today

Source: The post is based on an article “**Caste analysis and it's reading today**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd April 2022**.

News: The caste is an important institution in Indian society. The institution of caste saw a new orientation during the '**Mandal decade**' of the 1990s. However, the understanding of the caste institution is further being changed, and it is witnessing a new orientation after the **novel coronavirus pandemic**.

Why is the study of OBCs important for studying caste dynamics?

First, the OBCs led to the recognition that the **upper castes** were only a minority rather than the 'general' or universal category.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Second, they invited closer attention to the **notion of backwardness** because they were an **intermediate group**.

Third, the OBCs were subjected to creamy layer and non-creamy layer categorization. Therefore, they highlighted the pros and cons of categorisation in the reservation system. Further, the challenge of internal disparities within large groupings was also highlighted by the OBCs.

Fourth, they have a large population base that is distributed nationwide. Therefore, they played an important role in state politics and **coalition politics** at the national level.

What were the changes in the caste system over the last two decades?

The **upper caste group** has also entered into the game of caste and the benefits associated with it.

The **internal differentiation** has taken place within each **large caste grouping**. The major factors behind such dynamics were economic status, livelihood sources, regional location and electoral influence. For example,

(1) In Uttar Pradesh, '**Non-Yadav OBCs**' and '**Yadav OBC**' have emerged as two subgroups within OBCs in Uttar Pradesh.

(2) The **upper castes** have seen division into the **non-rich, rich** and **super-rich classes**.

What were the factors that have led to changes in the caste system?

Firstly, the groupings were far too big to remain coherent. This has led to an **exponential increase** in the **complexity** of the **caste system**.

Another most important factor is **neoliberalism**. It has reoriented the role of the state and the market in India since 1991.

Other factors include the **ongoing restructuring of federalism in India**; and finally, the change in the **ecosystem of official statistics**.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

General

Studies

Paper - 2

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.

 ForumIAS

General Studies - 2

GS2 – POLITY – CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES

ROLE OF A GOVERNOR AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Lines and roles: On Governors

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Lines and roles: On Governors**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd March**.

News: Recently, Kerala witnessed tussle between Governor, Arif Mohammed Khan and Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan. These confrontations are very common in different states.

The major source of conflict among these 2 offices is the way they understand their own powers. The problems arise due to the ways they understand their own powers.

How powers of Governors are balanced by Constitution?

Powers of the governor are limited by the ‘aid and advice’ clause, given in the constitution.

A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court laid down in 1974 that the President and Governor shall “exercise their formal constitutional powers only upon and in accordance with the advice of their Ministers save in a few well-known exceptional situations.

Exceptional situations are also illustratively listed

What are the issues linked to powers of Governors?

Some Governors are using the discretionary powers available to them to control the state governments.

There have been many instances of some Governors not acting upon requests to grant clemency or assent to Bills. For instance, in Tamil Nādu, governor showed the reluctance to reserve the bill for President’s consideration, even though the bill expressly required so.

What are the sources of this conflict?

Firstly, [Article 163](#) empowers Governors to choose what is in their discretion and what is not.

Second, the Constitution does not set any time frame for Governors to act on the requests of state government.

Third, Constitution bars Courts from enquiring into acts of Governors.

Fourth, the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State relations also recommended not to change this scheme.

What are the suggestions?

Provisions relating to the Governor’s role should be amended to make the following changes:

- Identifying areas of discretion,
- fixing a time-frame for them to act, and
- Cabinet advice should be mandatory to act upon in dealing with Bills.

M.M. Punchhi Commission’s recommendation of ending the practice of burdening Governors with the office of Chancellor in universities should be implemented

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

2. Where Are Our Qiaos & Wangs?

Source: This post is based on the article “Where Are Our Qiaos & Wangs?” published in the **Times of India** on **2nd March 2022**.

News: Former Indian foreign secretary and China expert Vijay Gokhale, in his recent book on Tiananmen, made the observation on **military power and intellectual power**. He mentioned it is the intellectual power that Beijing is most afraid of as a challenge.

In this regard, the author of the article advocates scaling up strategic thinking capabilities in India among the senior strategic and military leadership.

Why does India need to develop strategic thinking capabilities?

Afghanistan and Ukraine have presented significant challenges for India’s strategic leaders.

Now, India’s strategic planners need to analyze the impacts of Russia’s steps in Ukraine on China’s strategies

How did China develop its strategic capabilities?

Two PLA colonels, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, published a book Unrestricted Warfare: China’s Master Plan to Destroy America in the open domain in 1999. It formed the basis of China’s evolving Grey Zone and Hybrid Warfare tactics.

It led to the development of an intellectual community within the Autocratic CCP. They absorb ideas from around the world and adapt them to suit Chinese characteristics and requirements. Further, China’s Academy of Military Sciences cooperates with civilian think tanks such as the Academy of Social Sciences to create the template of Comprehensive National Power.

Examples of using strategic capabilities in India

One such example from India was the work of General Sundarji and K Subrahmanyam, who wrote about the likely path of nuclear deterrence. It was adopted well before India’s nuclear arsenal was operationalized. That was a fine demonstration of India’s strategic community working in unison towards a ‘big’ strategic outcome.

Which strategy should India adopt?

India should give greater intellectual depth to our strategic and military thinking. It should devote more time thinking about the problems of the future, rather than expending energy running present agendas. India should embrace the knowledge and attempt to continuously reinvent itself with confidence, curiosity, and humility by challenging subordinates to come up with better ideas.

DATA GOVERNANCE

3. A world Fragmented by divergences in data regulation

Source– This post is based on the article “**A world Fragmented by divergences in data regulation**” published in **Live Mint** on **26th Feb 2022**.

News: In the current times, Data is the new oil, and across the globe, various countries have been using very different approaches to manage this resource. Justice Srikrishna Committee Report of 2018 also mentions this divergence between the US, European and Chinese approaches, which is only increasing with passing time.

What are the different approaches used across the world for data management?

Status of Data-

US has always had a **laissez-faire approach** to data regulation. It tends to look at **personal data as property** and believes that anyone who has a legitimate claim over data also has the right to alienate it.

In **China**, although the tech companies are regulated in the same laissez-faire manner but here **data is also perceived as an asset** that the **state can use** to secure the country's financial and economic stability.

Europe has taken a **rights-based approach**, conferring on all natural persons a set of statutory rights, which ensure that the consent they provide doesn't extinguish their rights over personal data. The EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) sets out these rights along with the legal mechanisms that can be deployed to enforce them.

Cross Border flows of data–

US supports the **unrestricted flow of data across borders**; the Trans-Pacific Partnership is an example of this which requires participating parties to commit to promote cross-border data transfers.

China has adopted perhaps the **hardest line of all**. Two decades ago, it built the '**Great Firewall of China**', a massive surveillance and censoring system that it uses to **control the movement of data** packets across its borders.

Europe prioritizes data flows to countries whose legal systems meet their high **standard of adequacy**—requiring all other countries to go through a set of additional hoops if data is to be transferred to them.

What are the implications of this divergence?

As our world becomes increasingly dependent on data, this divergence will have **costs and complications**.

As the US companies have global reach, they exert an influence well beyond the sovereign territory of the US.

China with its Great Firewall has aggressively enforced its sovereignty over data within its land borders. It is also increasingly through initiatives like the Digital Silk Road has begun to export this uniquely Chinese approach to any other country looking to replicate its state-centric approach.

Europe has chosen to strictly enforce its fair business conduct regulations on all international tech companies that operate within its sovereign territory—requiring them to comply or pay hefty fines.

What is the best alternative for India?

The **Srikrishna Committee** analysed the three dominant approaches to data governance with a view to **proposing a fourth path for Indian data governance**. It proposed a framework that rather than focusing solely on the protection of personal data also allows this **data to be used for empowerment**.

What is the way forward?

There is an urgent need to **find common ground** between these different approaches so that we can come up with a common framework for governance that **everyone agrees upon**. This then can be integrated into our technical and regulatory systems.

India also needs to align its data governance framework with the common principles shared by other governance models around the world.

RUSSIA – UKRAINE CONFLICT

4. Weaponised economies, beyond the theatre of war & more

Source: This **post** is created based on the article “Weaponised economies, beyond the theatre of war & more” published in Business Standard on 5th March 2022.

News: Time and again developed countries have weaponised the global economic system. Every time countries have taken a lesson and changes have taken place.

25 years ago, IMF forced many **east Asian countries** facing **foreign exchange shortage** into conditions that Indonesia faced a near collapse. So, the East Asian countries since then took a lessons and accumulated mountains of foreign currency reserves.

Same situation was faced by India, when **US weaponised wheat supplies** against famine-stricken India in 1960s, as a punishment for criticizing the Vietnam invasion. India took a lesson and pushed ahead with the Green Revolution to become self-reliant in wheat production.

Thus, countries have a tendency to overlook the peace-time benefits of trade, when they are confronted with blackmail. Russia has been put into same situation after Ukraine invasion, west has weaponised global trade against it. So, there will be repercussions.

What can be repercussions of weaponizing trade against Russia?

Sanctions **may leave Russia weakened** and its defence industry possibly unable to maintain its cutting edge. Its sanctions-hit economy could also become an unreliable supplier to India.

There is a possibility that Russia accepts a Chinese embrace or even form a military axis with Beijing and Islamabad.

What are the options with India?

Accepting western rules, even if they are selective against non-Western societies. However, with India’s long memory of racism and colonialism and cultural autonomy, it will be difficult to accept rules framed elsewhere.

Focusing on self-reliance. However, there is a trend that inward-looking economies don’t do well. Also, it won’t be easy due to:

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

1. Lack of alternative to the dollar-based supply chains.
2. India is import-dependent for energy.
3. West dominates all major international institutions.
4. Even India's indigenously developed weapons systems require significant import content. For example, Tejas's engine is made by General Electric, the navy's ships have engines from Ukraine

Although, India has developed some indigenous technological solutions like Unified Payments Interface, but it is not that significant.

Russia has tried to build a "fortress economy" in response to sanctions since 2014, but remained vulnerable. The alternative of selective integration may work better by creating mutual inter-dependence of countries.

5. US not ready for a solo space ride

Source: This post is created based on the article "US not ready for a solo space ride" published in **Business Standard on 5th March 2022.**

Syllabus: GS – 3- Science and Technology

News: Ukraine crisis is threatening the US-Russia space cooperation. It will have implications for the space programs of US.

The Russian-American space cooperation started with the first Apollo-Soyuz mission in 1975. This area of cooperation withstood the Cold War and several other geopolitical differences between the two nations. International Space Station (ISS) is a shining example of this achievement. However, the recent Ukraine crisis is threatening this cooperation. Following the American sanctions, Russia has decided to stop supplying rocket engines to the US. It might result in some big problems for US Space programs.

What are the dependencies of US on Russia in Space programs?

Rocket Engines: Russia has delivered 122 RD-180 engines to the US since the 1990s. US used 98 engines to power Atlas launch vehicles, which are crucial to the launch of Department of Defense payloads and NASA missions.

ISS Program: Roscosmos and NASA are key partners in the ISS programme, besides the Canadian Space Agency, the European Space Agency, and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

The ISS is divided into two orbital segments — American and Russian. The US and Russia keep the science laboratory continuously staffed with astronauts and cosmonauts. The Russian segment is responsible for guidance, navigation, and control of the entire complex.

Also, Russia's cargo craft provide periodic orbit-raising boosts for the ISS. It ensures that it doesn't sink too low into Earth's atmosphere. The American space agency is far from self-reliant in this aspect.

It will be almost unviable for the US to maintain ISS alone. The space industry will be "confronting the very real possibility of a space station gap in this case. It means US will be ceding the control of Earth's lower orbit to the Chinese, who already have a space station in the development stage.

Transporting astronauts: From 2011 to 2020, the US relied solely on Russia to fly astronauts to the ISS. According to a 2019 Tass report, Nasa purchased \$3.9 billion worth of seats from Russia to transport its astronauts to and from the ISS since July 2011.

6. India's tea industry is on tenterhooks as Russia wages war on Ukraine

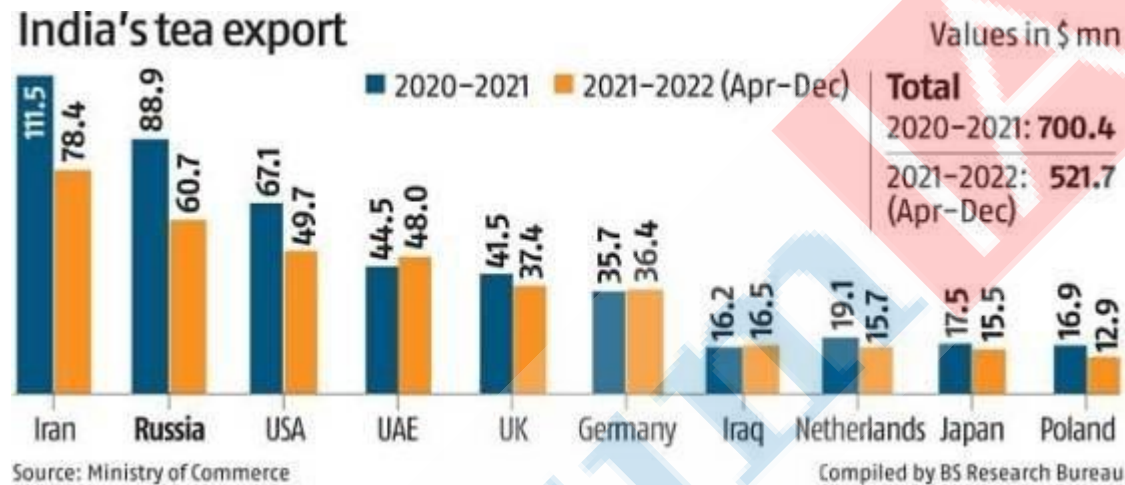
Source: This post is based on the article “India's tea industry is on tenterhooks as Russia wages war on Ukraine” published in **Business Standard on 5th Mar 2022**.

Syllabus: Gs – 3 Transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

Relevance: To know about Russia Ukraine crisis on India's tea exports.

News: The Russia-Ukraine crisis has impacted the Indian tea exports to the region into disarray with port disruptions and payment delays hitting shipments.

About India's Tea exports to Russia



Russia is among the top two buyers of Indian tea (the other being Iran) accounting for about 18% of the total tea exports.

However, Indian tea exports to Russia are impacted due to **a)** inability expressed by shipping lines to deliver the cargo to war-hit or countries facing sanctions and **b)** banks refusing to accept payments.

This disruption has mostly affected the South Indian Region, as substantial tea exports take place from this region during this time. (South India accounts for about 18% of total tea production in India).

Moreover, this conflict has broken out at a time when tea exports are yet to recover from the blow dealt by Covid-19.

How will this impact the domestic tea industry?

The Indian tea industry largely caters to the domestic market. Yet, exports are vital to keeping the domestic demand-supply in balance. For instance, if exports are impacted then more tea will be available in the domestic market and that will lead to an oversupply situation, causing prices to crash, a situation that will pile pressure on a troubled industry.

What is the Indian Government doing to overcome this impact?

The Indian government is now reportedly exploring the option of allowing the rupee-ruble trade to bypass the impact of sanctions on Russia following the war on Ukraine. That has rekindled hopes for an increased offtake from Russia.

7. The Strain When You Abstain

Source: This post is created based on the article “The Strain When You Abstain” published in Times of India on 5th March 2022.

News: India has decided to abstain from voting against Russia in United Nations Organizations. India stand is based on its own security interests.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict in Brief

What are the justifications for India’s stand on conflict?

India’s dependence on Russian military supplies is widely acknowledged. Indigenization requires time and diversification is also not possible immediately because for diversification, it requires India to have choices in advanced military technologies. Only Russia has been willing to share technologies with India thus far.

Why India should reconsider its stand on Ukraine crisis?

First, previously neutral European countries, including Germany have joined international action against Russia.

Second, many Western observers have started raising question whether India will indeed be a like-minded partner in upholding the rules-based-order, after its stand on Russia.

Third, supporters of India in US for a waiver from sanctions under Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act ([CAATSA](#)) will find it difficult to justify their stand now.

Fourth, Convergence between Russia and China is growing. Furthermore, Pakistan PM’s recent visit to Moscow has created uncertainty among Indian policy makers over their stand for Russia.

Fifth, the Chinese challenge for India in Indo-Pacific might increase after Ukraine crisis, as it might embolden China. In this case, India might need US and its allies for securing the Indo-Pacific security order. On the other hand, Russia dismisses Indo-Pacific as a US strategic construct.

Sixth, Ukraine’s crisis will result in a surge in crude prices and growing global inflation could reduce the flows of foreign portfolio investment in India. It will have severe implications for the already suffering Indian economy from covid.

Seventh, Furthermore, the European Union is India’s third-largest trade partner. India is also negotiating an FTA with it. India’s stand on crisis might become a hurdle in both trade growth and FTA.

Lastly, India’s stand is diluting its own stated values of respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations.

8. Will Russia’s war spur trade diversification?

Source: This post is based on the article “Will Russia’s war spur trade diversification?” published in **Business Standard** on 3rd March 2022.

News: Building a resilient economy, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic became important. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine gave a boost to this ideology.

Why is it important to build a resilient economy?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

After World War II, economic actors had put faith in broad-based international commitment to open a global economy. But tensions, fiction, and blockages in global supply chains during the pandemic began to erode this faith. Countries like China and United States have erected barriers to foreign tech firms and market access, citing national security concerns.

Economic and financial sanctions have become a foreign policy weapon for countries like the USA. This can be seen in the Ukrainian crisis, where the NATO response has been economic. EU countries are experimenting with excluding Russia from the SWIFT financial system.

Why economic sanctions on Russia are difficult?

Russia supplies 40% of Europe's natural gas. Therefore, there was resistance by major EU countries to exclude Russia from SWIFT. Only selected banks were targeted.

Russia also depends on Europe to continue purchasing its gas. This translates into economic mutual assured destruction. Therefore, the Italian president had commented that Europe should look to diversify its supplies.

What should be done to ensure greater diversification?

Though Japan is entirely dependent on the import of fossil fuels, it maintains a highly diversified supply. Japan acquires oil from several countries in the Middle East and natural gas from Australia, Malaysia, Qatar, Russia, and the USA. Europe can adopt similar supply sources.

Countries should also diversify their markets, as market access can also be cut by large economies like the USA. Given these factors, it is important to ensure diversification for a resilient supply chain and global economy.

9. Escaping the global sanctions net

Source: This post is developed based on the article "Escaping the global sanctions net" published in **Indian Express on 2nd March 2022**.

News: Western countries have put several types of economic sanctions on Russia. However, the effectiveness of these sanctions is debatable.

The way of expressing global dominance and hegemony is changing. Now, it is expressed through financial sanctions, instead of troop presence. Most recently the method has been adopted against Russia.

First, financial manipulations from afar in the form of sanctions. In Afghanistan, financial sanctions gave the US government the ability to exercise control over a government or its activities or both. Furthermore, it also controls those countries or corporations trading with or investing in Afghanistan.

Second way of exerting control from afar is confiscation of foreign exchange reserves in American banks. For example, the US froze Afghanistan's foreign exchange reserves of \$7 billion deposited in the New York Federal Bank, after its withdrawal.

What were the implications of sanctions on Afghanistan?

Role of private sector: These sanctions are designed by government and implemented by both profit-making and non-profit private enterprises, domestic and international NGOs (including the United Nations).

China's chance to build dominance: This move gave China with the chance to unite its investments in Afghanistan and Pakistan, isolating India. Furthermore, it gave economic lever of Afghanistan in the hand of China in the form of rich mineral resources.

What are the implications of sanctions on Russia?

Unlike Afghanistan, Russian economy is more isolated, protected and less reliant on international funding. So far, the possible impact of sanctions on Russia is estimated at a 1 per cent loss in GDP.

Banning Russia from the SWIFT system of international payments is a problem for the global financial system. The impact of any disruption in Russian exports of oil, gas, palladium, wheat, and fertilizer will have repercussions for the global economy, recovering from covid shock.

Lastly, the Ukraine incident shows a cooperation between Russia and China in the form of division of labour. While China is focusing on the economy, the Russia is attending the political and the military aspects of keeping the US out of Eurasia.

10. The Ukraine war, India and a stand of non-alignment

Source: This post is based on the article **“The Ukraine war, India and a stand of non-alignment”** published in the **The Hindu** on **2nd Mar 2022**.

News: World is criticizing Russia over its actions on Ukraine.

What are the concerns of Russia?

It is clear that NATO expansion to Russian borders is a legitimate security threat for Russia. President of Ukraine should have been more careful in devising a formula to lean towards the west and ease Russian concerns at the same time.

But none of these justifies Russian invasion of Ukraine. It has been condemned by west and United Nations.

How it is difficult for India to choose a particular side?

India US relationships are continuously growing especially in the defense sector. Both are also the members of the Quad grouping which will help India to contain China in the future if needed

Russia is India's principal source of military hardware and is willing to share the technology also. Russia has also helped India in the United Nations on many occasions. For example, Russia stalled action in the UN for several days at the time of the 1971 Bangladesh war to enable India to 'finish the job'. India may also need Russian support in the future if Pakistan brings up the Kashmir issue in the world organization.

India's Policy in Russia-Ukraine Issue

At present, the Indian government policy of maintaining a kind of neutral position is the continuation of **Nehruvian policy of non-alignment**.

Jawaharlal Nehru even called it a selfish policy because it is motivated by the principle of national interest.

11. Ukraine's situation, India's national interest

Source: This post is based on the following articles

“Ukraine's situation, India's national interest” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd March 2022**.

“Standing against Putin's imperialist project” published in **Indian Express** on **3rd March 2022**.

News: Russian president announced military action in Ukraine to protect Russians from genocide and for de-Nazification and demilitarization of Ukraine.

Why Russian belief is not correct?

Allegations of Nazism can't be held against Ukraine as there is no evidence of genocide and the Ukrainian president himself is a Jew. Thus, this allegation stems from the ideology that Russia thinks Ukraine has no right to exist.

Also, Putin is trying to revive Czarist Russia and not the Soviet Union. This would involve making Belarus and Ukraine satellite states. But this narrative is now being challenged in Ukraine with the revival of Ukrainian nationalism.

How did the world countries react to Russia's attack on Ukraine?

Germany, which earlier was friendly with Russia, has now come out with a strong response and five-pronged strategies. It involves military solidarity with Ukraine, punitive measures against Putin's Russia, commitment to European collective defense through NATO, German rearmament, and a reduction in Germany's energy and economic interdependence with Russia.

Many other European countries also closed their airspace to Russia. Countries are isolating Russia on multiple fronts, including football, which is a sacred ritual in Europe. Some European countries have started to help Ukraine by supplying arms and offering significant economic and humanitarian assistance. The EU also plans to buy \$550 million worth of arms for Ukraine.

What does the BRICS Delhi Resolution say?

New Delhi BRICS Declaration commits to resolve all disputes by peaceful means and is opposed to unilateral use of force against any state. Members also oppose the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

But with the Russian attack on Ukraine, BRICS is losing its credibility.

What should India do in the present scenario?

India should suggest Russia to withdraw its armed forces from the entire Ukraine according to the Delhi Resolution of BRICS. If Russia is not paying attention to India's suggestion, then India should announce its consideration of the U.S. proposed Draft Resolution in the UN General Assembly. It should adopt any reasonable amendments proposed by the UNGA.

India should also urge the United States to re-structure the objectives of [Quad](#), outline a clear strategy to achieve the objectives, and mobilize the resources required.

12. Debunking Russia's international law justifications

Source: This post is based on the article "**Debunking Russia's international law justifications**" published in **The Hindu** on **1st Mar 2022**.

News: Russian invasion of Ukraine is not justified under any circumstance. Russia has disrespected the UN charter and many other international laws.

What is the belief of Russia?

Russia has relied on a **theory of remedial secession**. The theory provides for the unilateral secession of a territory from the parent state in the most extreme cases.

However, the theory was most relevant in the case of decolonisation. It could have been used by Russia in case of severe violations of human rights and systemic oppression. But none of the allegations could be proved.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

It first declared provinces in Ukraine, independent and then sent its forces as peacekeepers. The peacekeepers were sent to protect ethnic Russians. Ukraine has moved to the International Court of Justice to counter allegations of the genocide of Russians.

Coming to the independence of breakaway provinces, Ukraine agreed to the [Minsk accord](#) to recognize the independence of Luhansk and Donetsk. But Russia unilaterally declaring them independent is a clear violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.

Why the Russian actions are not justified?

Violation of UN Charter: Russian missile strikes and Russian forces invading Ukraine are a violation of **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter**. **Article 51** recognizes the right of self-defense but Ukraine has not attacked Russia. Further, the right to collective self-defense under article 51 exists only for states, and Donetsk and Luhansk are not states under international law.

Humanitarian intervention: Russia has invoked a controversial doctrine of right to protect or **Responsibility to Protect (R2P)**. This principle has often been used to justify use of force by third states in territory of a state which has failed to protect its citizens. Such actions may or may not be authorized by even Security Council. For example the 2011 military intervention in Libya received UN authorization while 1995 NATO bombing of Bosnian Serbs did not. In the present case, there is no evidence that ethnic Russians in Ukraine are facing atrocities.

Why International Criminal Court is unable to exercise its jurisdiction?

Russian actions can be defined as crime of aggression as stated under Article 8bis (2) of Rome Statute. However, [ICC](#) can not exercise jurisdiction until both the aggressor state and victim are party to the Rome statute.

What should global community do?

Russia believes in sphere of influence and notion of some countries having limited or partial sovereignty. Russia views Ukraine as possessing limited sovereignty.

This also is a threat to the rule based order created after World War II. Russia has used cultural and civilizational exceptionalism to over ride rule of law. For example, Russian Constitutional Court can invalidate any judgement by Human rights mechanisms.

The global community should come together to check the rise of arbitrary state power and check the imperial rise of power.

13. Western Sanctions: Impact & Ways Around Them

Source: This post is developed based on the article **“Western Sanctions: Impact & Ways Around Them”** published in **“Times of India”** on **28th Feb. 2022**.

News: Western countries have put several type of sanctions on Russia against invasion of Ukraine.

In one of the more severe sanctions, Russia’s assets worth \$300 billion have been frozen. These assets are held abroad in the Federal Reserve (US central bank) and the European Central Bank (ECB).

Other sanctions might be excluding Russian banks from the SWIFT network.

About SWIFT

SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) is a global messaging system that enables safe transfer of funds and allows banks to communicate with each other in a secure manner.

It has 11,000 international banks as members and is based in Belgium.

How exclusion from SWIFT will affect Russia?

It will disconnect Russian banks from the international financial system. It will hinder their ability to operate globally, which means **Russia will not be able to pay for its imports or get paid for its exports** through the normal payment routes.

It is very important considering the fact that **overall exports** of Russia amount to nearly 30% of its GDP.

Last time, **Iran was excluded from SWIFT** and it lost almost half of its oil export revenues and 30% of foreign trade.

How all these developments will impact India?

Even though neither Russia nor Ukraine are major trading partners, there will be macroeconomic repercussions:

- First, due to hinderance in Russia's ability to oil exports, **global crude oil prices** will rise further. It will have consequences for India, considering the high dependency on imports for oil and high retail inflation, which is already at 6%.
- Second, it will negatively affect the \$11. 9 billion **India-Russia bilateral trade**.
- Lastly, **Russia is India's biggest arms supplier**, accounting for more than half of India's total arms imports. De-swifiting will potentially impact defense deals between India and Russia.

What are the suggestions?

The following are a few ways that can be used to bypass the sanctions:

- Firstly, countries could use their **respective currencies for trading**. A part of India-Russia trade already takes place in Indian rupee and not in US dollars.
- Second, Russia has been developing its **own alternatives to SWIFT**, called SPFS (System for Transfer of Financial Messages). Indian banks could register on this network for carrying out financial transactions.
- Third, **new digital currencies** can be brought into use.

However, India must be cautious in bypassing the sanctions, as it could attract punitive measures from the US and Europe.

14. A pragmatic tightrope walk

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

"Abstain, But Get Stronger" published in the **Times of India** on **28th February 2022**.

"A pragmatic tightrope walk" published in **Business Standard** on **27th February 2022**.

News: India decided to abstain, along with China and the United Arab Emirates, from a UNSC resolution which is for condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

What does the Indian move in UNSC signify?

The move has enabled India to maintain its long-standing diplomatic stance on respecting territorial sovereignty without compromising its relations with Russia. India chose a path which

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

is originally defined by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and further refined in changing geopolitical contexts by his many successors.

Henry Kissinger expressed his disappointment when Nehru decided to remain neutral during the Berlin crisis of 1961. Later, Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao followed India's middle path after USSR collapsed. He clarified that the middle way does not need two powers. It means there is no place for **absolute assertion**. The Indian government's latest vote at the UNSC on Ukraine also reflects this perspective.

How does the West react to the Russian attack on Ukraine?

Sanctions have been imposed on Russia's largest bank and Russian elites and their families.

Restrictions have been imposed on purchasing US military items, including those produced by foreign nations using US software.

Germany has stopped the certification of the [Nord 2 pipeline between Russia and Germany](#).

What are the things which shape the Indian foreign and strategic policy?

Geography: There are no security concerns for India, keeping in view India's geography vis-à-vis Eurasian landmass. It is up to Germany, France, and the European Union to define and defend their national security.

Strategic: There is a view that challenge from China requires India to keep good relations with NATO powers and sacrifice the relationship with Russia. This view is not correct, as Western support for India is a strategic option that benefits both the West and India. The US-India relationship, like the Russia-India relationship, is and will always be based on mutual benefit and national interest.

What are the suggestions for India?

India's national integrity, unity, and sovereignty can only be protected, defended, and preserved by Indians. This is where 'Atmanirbharata' comes into action. India requires indigenous scientific, technological, cyber, space, and defense manufacturing capability and capacity. No major nation can defend its sovereignty by depending on another.

Rather than surrendering to external pressure and choosing one side or another in the new East-West conflict, India should focus on renewing its capabilities and building international relationships that strengthen our domestic capacity.

15. The anatomy of India's Ukraine dilemma

Source: This post is based on the article "**The anatomy of India's Ukraine dilemma**" published in **The Hindu** on **28th February 2022**.

News: India abstained from a [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) resolution which is for condemning the Russian military action against Ukraine.

What are the available options in front of India?

India has four options in front of it: 1) Condemn Russian aggression 2) Support Russian aggression 3) Stay silent on Russian aggression 4) Express displeasure and call for diplomacy.

Among these options, the first one will pit India against Russia, the second will pit it against the U.S. and its allies. The third option will mark it as pro-Russia, and the fourth option, which it has taken, is the least harmful.

India has taken a pro-Russian stand in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, despite passionate appeals by the Ukrainian ambassador to India. This tilt is also shared by the Indian strategic community. This is seen as a product of time tested friendship and also a geopolitical necessity

What are the reasons behind India's pro-Russia position?

First, India's tilt towards Russia is based on a calculation that India needs both USA and Russia to counter China. With the weakening of the USA-led global order and the assertive rise of China, it is important for India to have Russia by its side.

Second, there is **emerging dualism** in India's security calculus. India needs Russia to manage continental space, which is under threat from China, Pakistan, and Taliban. Maritime space provides an opportunity to break this. And it is here in Indo-Pacific that the USA and its Allies present an opportunity to balance the Chinese threat through QUAD.

How does the war in Ukraine have major implications for India's strategic interest?

First, Russian action in Ukraine neglecting the concerns of the rest of the international community including the U.S. will also encourage China and its territorial ambitions.

Second, the new sanctions regime may have implications for India's defence cooperation with Russia

Third, the longer the standoff lasts, China and Russia will come closer, which is not good for India.

Finally, the more severe the U.S.-Russia rivalry becomes, the less focus there would be on the Indo-Pacific and China, where India's interests lie.

What does the Indian move in UNSC signify?

India's response to the Ukraine crisis exposes the vulnerability of India, given its hostile neighborhood.

This may diminish India's projection as **major power** or **swing state**.

It also shows that when it comes to geopolitics, India will choose its interests over principles.

The move shows India's adherence to strategic autonomy and safeguarding its own interests.

16. With Russia-Ukraine conflict, comes inflation challenge

Source: This post is based on the article **"With Russia-Ukraine conflict, comes inflation challenge"** published in the **Indian Express** on **28th February 2022**.

News: With the Russia-Ukraine conflict going into a war, global commodity prices, especially that of crude oil and gas, are likely to see a strong surge. This poses a challenge for India and the world to contain inflationary pressures.

How does the Russia Ukraine conflict affect the economy?

At 6%, [India's consumer price index \(CPI\)](#) inflation crossed the upper limit of RBI's tolerance band in January 2022. The [wholesale price index \(WPI\)](#) is rushing at more than double that rate (12.96%). In the US, inflation is at 7.5%, which is almost a 40-year-high. Economists also believe that the Federal Reserve will not be able to curb inflation soon.

High inflation imposes a large **"inflation tax"** on the public, with bank savings that earn an interest of less than 1%. India is also affected by this tendency. Most of the major banks, including the State Bank of India, offer interest rates between 3-4% to depositors. With CPI

inflation at 6% and WPI inflation at 13%, Indian depositors are losing the real value of their money because of this **hidden “inflation tax”**.

Even, the upper limit of RBI's tolerance band is biased against depositors and is in favour of entrepreneurs. The inflation rate must be below 3 percent, which must ensure positive real rates of interest.

How can India ensure lower rates of inflation?

There is a need to **control food inflation as food has a weight of more than 45%** in CPI in India. India imports roughly 60% of its consumption of edible oils. Global prices of edible oils have gone up by more than 50% over the last year. To control inflation, the **Centre has imposed stock limits** on traders and lowered import duties, and imported more pulses. It also imposed stocking limits on domestic oil/oilseed traders.

The Center can further control food inflation by unloading the excess grain in the open market. FCI could help in bringing down food inflation substantially as rice and wheat have a high weightage in CPI.

Adopting the growth-oriented policy: It has been seen that political party promises freebies before elections. They promise loan waivers and free power to farmers, unemployment allowances to the youth, and income support to women, laptops, smartphones, etc. This amounts to misusing taxpayers' money to get into power. There is a need to stop this competitive populism to make the Indian policy-making growth-oriented.

Reform in grain-management-cum-food-subsidy system: There is a need to bring reforms in this system. This should be combined with raising productivity and producing more nutritious food while protecting the environment.

GS2 – POLITY – POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES

DEMOCRACY IN 21ST CENTURY

17. The dividends of democracy are worth the requisite investment

Source: This post is based on the article **“The dividends of democracy are worth the requisite investment”** published in the **Livemint** on **3rd Mar 2022**.

News: The world is seeing a continued rise of authoritarianism in countries such as Brazil, Turkey, and Russia. There is a need for urgent global action to fight it and to put democracy in action.

What does the research data suggest?

There is a growing aspiration for democracy among ordinary people seeking greater freedom and dignity. **Pew Research survey of 17 advanced economies in 2021** shows disaffection of people with the lack of individual freedom in authoritarian states. According to the survey, a median of 74% of people in these countries had no confidence in Putin doing the “right thing in world affairs.”

How is democracy important?

Democracy is a key ingredient for economic advancement, as creating space for decent democracy nurtures innovation and consequently economic flourishing. Except for China, economic progress stalls in countries that are guided by religious fundamentalism or authoritarianism.

While many justify democracy as a means, **democracy is an end in itself**. Even if democracy slows economic growth, it brings equality which is vital for an equitable society.

India is the best example of how democracy can bring growth. Despite many economic mistakes, India's investment in its education is bearing fruits today. Pickup of India's democratic growth after the 90s is also an account of democratic dividend.

What is the USA's role in strengthening democracy?

A recent study by the **Roosevelt Institute** points out how America's neoliberal economic policies fuelled discrimination and inequity in many countries. Moreover, it intervened in countries like Chile, Cuba, and Central America to protect US corporate interests and not to support democracy.

Providing leadership to isolate authoritarian regimes requires the USA to take leadership.

18. Democracy ought to get the better of autocracy

Source: This post is based on the article "**Democracy ought to get the better of autocracy**" published in **the Live mint** on **28th Feb 2022**.

News: Although the USA has imposed a lot of sanctions, it seems it does not affect the motives of Russia.

Do countries fear sanctions?

Sanctions have been unable to enforce a regime change as has been exemplified in the case of Iran. So while the USA has implemented half-hearted sanctions, it is unlikely to force Russia to change its plan. Russia's access to SWIFT and hydrocarbons was left intact in fear of global disruption.

Do autocracies work?

In a protracted battle, the Russian state is likely to sustain leadership because though there are elections, the opposition has been crushed by the Russian ruling regime. This is further exemplified by the rule in Iran and China. The example of China shows that autocracies may even be able to bend global rules. Chinese economic model uses economic feedback for a self-correction like democracies use elections.

However, the most pressing issue with an autocracy is its **structurally low sensitivity** to actual needs. It is governed by a **command economy**, not aware of the market and consumer needs. It also covers criticism and runs propaganda in the guise of information. This is why autocracies like the Soviet Union crumbled. Thus, democracy can be seen as the best bet.

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

HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES

19. The systemic problems that have kept Indian schooling ineffective

Source: This post is based on the article "**The systemic problems that have kept Indian schooling ineffective**" published in the **Livemint** on **3rd Mar 2022**.

News: The article talks about the causes behind why children are not able to learn what they should at their school.

What are the causes?

Design of schooling system: The design like having a primary school within 1km has creates difficulties. Every primary school only has a small number of children between classes 1 to 5. Thus there is only one teacher or two. This has meant a greater teaching load for children.

Inadequate investment in public education: It results in inadequate or poor-quality resources. With roughly 3% of GDP as our public expenditure on education, India has been short of its commitment of 6%. This underlies many of the problems like **a)** an inadequate number of teachers, **b)** Inadequate staffing, **c)** lack of basic facilities in schools, **d)** deteriorating nutritional standards of the mid-day meal.

All of this affects the motivation and efficacy of teachers and the school atmosphere and children's engagement.

Dysfunctional teacher education system: The National Education Policy 2020 talks about the issue of corrupt teacher education systems in India. 9 million teachers have undergone a B.Ed or D.Ed program of very poor quality. Many colleges sell degrees, without students even attending classes.

Design and culture of the education system: Indian education system is rigid and centralized. Many problems impact the education quality like **a)** uniform norms across the state, **b)** cookie-cutter training (*training which lacks any distinguishable characteristics*) for teachers irrespective of their actual needs, **c)** an 'inspectorial' regime rather than a problem-solving one.

All these make the teacher unsupported, demotivated, and disempowered.

Administrative leadership and management: Administration often assigned teachers to other duties like election duty, anti-malaria campaigns, etc. Their priorities are continually and rapidly changed, thus disorienting and distracting them from their main role. Further, policies related to education are typically not implemented effectively.

Weak capacity of key institutions: [Flaws in Indian higher education system](#)

MEDICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

20. Bitter pill, again

Source: This post is based on the article "Bitter pill, again" published in **Times of India** on **5th Mar 2022**.

News: As the situation in Ukraine has worsened, some 20,000-odd students who had gone to Ukraine for medical education have returned back.

However, one big question is how they'll continue their interrupted education, especially if the Ukraine crisis doesn't ease in the near term.

What leads to students opting for foreign education esp. medical education?

The foreign degree options are extremely affordable.

There is a huge demand-supply problem in India that is some 16 lakh students take NEET for only 90,000-odd seats.

What is the way forward?

India needs to expand its medical education, which will immensely benefit its students and health care system.

Although the common licensing exam for all MBBS graduates that's scheduled to start in 2023 is a positive step, but there is **need for newer medical colleges** with quality faculty, hospital linkages and other high-grade resources.

21. No quick fix: On the state of medical education in India

Source: This post is based on the article **“No quick fix: On the state of medical education in India”** published in **The Hindu** on **28th Feb 2022**.

News: Many Indian students are pursuing medicine in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine highlighted the need to strengthen medical education in India.

About PM's remark on Indian medical education

The Prime Minister, on Union Budget announcements on the health sector, stated that many young Indians were going to “small countries of the world for medical education.” He also urged the government **a)** To encourage the private sector, **b)** To set up more medical colleges and hospitals locally, along with cooperation from States, so that such aspirants remain in India.

About medical education and Indian students abroad

The most sought-after international destinations – for medical education are the U.S., the U.K. and a few West European countries. But these countries are too expensive for most Indians.

In the last few decades, Russia, China and Ukraine with their historical commitment to public health care have been able to offer more affordable, yet quality, medical education.

What is the challenge faced in medical education in India?

1) India's huge population still continues to be predominantly rural, so make most of the trained medical doctors, paramedics and nurses gravitate towards cities, **2) Nature of medical education:** Medical education requires significant infrastructure — land, equipment, and trained faculty at the postgraduate level — all of which are in short supply and unevenly spread across India, **3) Low spending on health:** For several years, India's spending on health care has consistently lagged behind several countries comparable to its size. For this reason, there is barely one doctor for every 1,000 Indians and specialists often a tenth of what is required.

For these reasons, there is an increase in young Indians seeking affordable, quality, health-care education in other countries. Without correcting these deficiencies, India cannot expect to dramatically increase the availability of medical personnel.

What should be done to revive medical education?

Encouraging private establishments to start medical schools might repeat the engineering fiasco. I.e., a plethora of colleges without adequately trained faculty or infrastructure that churn out students who need further skills upgrade to be employable.

The Government must **1)** Make health care the centrepiece of its economic rebuilding, **2)** Provide long-term commitment offering necessary training and post-graduate education, **3)** Ease procedures for establishing medical colleges, **4)** Spend more on infrastructure, and **5)** Provide incentives for a health-care ecosystem to develop in rural areas.

Over time, this will facilitate the growth of private and public medical colleges that could stem the outflow of students aspiring to be doctors.

GS2 – POLITY – ELECTORAL ISSUES

OPINION POLLS AND RELATED ISSUES

22. What to make of Indian opinion polls and our pollsters

Source– This post is based on the article “**What to make of Indian opinion polls and our pollsters**” published in **The Hindu** on **26th Feb 2022**.

News: State assembly elections for several states have been completed recently. Now, attention **has been shifted to the exit polls** conducted by different pollsters. However, exit polls over the years have also attracted some negative reactions for their wrong predictions.

Why are opinion polls and their prediction viewed with apprehension?

This is due to the **opacity around the methodology they use**. No pollster other than Lokniti-CSDS provides details of its methodology. For example -How they conduct their surveys, what the margin of errors for vote-shares are, and the assumptions made while converting vote-share estimates into seat predictions all remain hidden.

The **lack of disclosure around their funding** only serves to heighten those suspicions.

What is the situation globally?

Opinion polls can go wrong even in countries with a long tradition of polling like UK and USA but their wrong forecasts are seen as errors. While in India, a wrong forecast by a pollster is seen as evidence of fraud or a scam.

This is because these countries have greater transparency and self-regulatory institutions that lend greater credibility to their pollsters.

Despite these shortcomings why are they still useful?

Exit polls are a **statistical estimate** so are subject to uncertainty.

Their **findings carry more weight than** newsroom or drawing-room **speculation**.

Also, since the 1980s, **exit polls have had a better record than pre-poll surveys** in India, and they have been largely correct in predicting election winners.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

DEATH PENALTY AND RELATED ISSUES

23. A negation of the individual and a collective moral decay

Source: This **post** is based on the article “**A negation of the individual and a collective moral decay**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd Mar 2022**.

News: Recently, a designated fast track in Gujarat decided the fate of 78 accused in the 2008 blasts in Ahmedabad. 49 people were convicted. The Court Sentenced 38 of 49 people to death.

According to a report by Project 39A at the national law university (Delhi), a total of 488 prisoners in India were on death row. This is an increase of 21% from 2020. This judgment has added 10% more to this number.

It is a reflection of the increasing trend of **retributive justice**.

How does it reflect retributive justice?

Debates on the death sentence focus on its **efficacy or constitutionality**. But the issue that it provides the state with the monopoly of violence or retribution is ignored.

This monopoly is justified by arguments that this prevents crime or is a measure of long-due justice. But this punishment under the rarest of rare doctrine is a reflection of retributive justice.

Rarest of rare doctrine allows the use of public sentiment as a judicially reliable standard in giving death sentences.

As Justice Bhagwati had pointed out in **Bachchan Singh versus State of Punjab(1980)** that discretion under doctrine is a poor substitute for principles. When an institution can kill someone using any standard, it defeats the moral imperative to do no harm.

How lack of standards was displayed in the current verdict?

Following are the criticisms put forward by the authors in the article:

First, the court orally convicted several accused 'en masse', instead of declaring charges separately. Out of 78 accused, 49 were convicted, consequently, the role of each accused was not indicated.

Second, the defense was directed to commence sentencing argument without access to written judgments. Even it was unknown, which accused are awarded the death sentence. It crippled any possibility of making a proper mitigation argument.

Mitigation requires going into the humanity of the accused, which itself is subjective. It is therefore important that that penalty should be also seen from the angle of retributive Justice.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE AND RELATED ISSUES

24. The growing scourge of anti-microbial resistance needs urgent attention

Source: This post is created based on the article “The growing scourge of anti-microbial resistance needs urgent attention” published in Indian Express on 3rd March.

In the past few years, alarmingly high resistance rates in pathogens of public health importance have been reported from Indian hospitals. Thus, it becomes important that the issue of AMR be given due importance.

Findings of GRAM(Global burden of bacterial antimicrobial resistance in 204 countries and territories in 2019) report

1. 95 million people died from drug-resistant bacterial infections in 2019. AMR directly caused at least 1.27 million deaths.
2. Majority of the deaths from AMR are associated with bacteria E coli, followed by K pneumoniae, S aureus, A baumannii, S pneumoniae, and M tuberculosis.
3. Lower respiratory infections associated with resistance accounted for more than 1.5 million deaths.
4. Data specifically for India was not sufficiently available, but as per few available reports AMR burden in India may not look very different from the global estimate.

What are the reasons behind increasing AMR?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Firstly, unnecessary prescription of antimicrobials is increasing the already high levels of drug resistance.

Secondly, the major impediment to AMR containment is that the most affected countries have the least data on the burden posed by AMR. In India too, hospital information systems in most public sector funded healthcare facilities are inadequate.

Third, National Action Plan for AMR was approved in 2017. However, its results proved to be dismal. It faced many issues such as missing governance mechanisms and absence of funding

What are the suggestions to tackle the AMR problem?

A multipronged and multisectoral approach is required to tackle AMR.

Firstly, promoting the judicious use of existing antimicrobials.

Secondly, Developing new antimicrobial drugs.

Third, creating effective AMR containment plans by fixing responsibility and monitoring progress at the highest levels.

Fourth, some of the measures that have been proved effective must be used as much as possible, for example;

- Utilization of quality diagnostics and laboratories.
- Educating people about antimicrobials.
- Infection control in communities and hospitals.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – RESERVATION IN INDIA

RESERVATION IN INDIA

25. Counting those who qualify as EWS

Source: This post is based on the article “Counting those who qualify as EWS” published in **Indian express** on 4th Mar 2022.

News: Supreme Court has sought clarification from the Government regarding the basis for the income cut-off for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).

Government in 2019 issued a circular, which guaranteed 10 per cent reservations in civil posts and services of the GoI to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the society. These sections were not covered under the reservation scheme for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBC).

What are the criteria used by the Government to identify EWS candidates?

GoI used two criteria for the definition of the EWS:

- **One**, the gross family income from all sources — agriculture, business, professional, etc. — for the financial year preceding the application should be less than Rs 8 lakh;
- **Two**, if the family owned or possessed assets of a certain limit.

The family includes those who seek the benefit, their spouse, parents, siblings, and children below 18 years.

What does the PLFS data suggest about the household earnings in the country?

PLFS provides a good estimate on the issue as its geographical coverage is the entire country, except for villages in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and it covers all sectors of the economy.

Based on data on non-SC/ST/OBC, it was found that 99% of rural households and 95% of urban households had **monthly earnings less than Rs 66,667**, which would translate to approximately Rs 8 lakh annually.

But PLFS data is based on the current weekly status; there is a possibility that the household had positive income at other times of the year but not the week preceding the survey. Therefore, the earnings data is an underestimate.

More than 90% of rural and urban non-SC/ST/OBC households had **monthly earnings less than the cutoff** set by the GoI for EWS income criteria.

So in this scenario, analysis reveals that more than 90% of rural and urban non-SC/ST/OBC households will meet the EWS criteria.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL ORG AND GROUPINGS

RULES-BASED ORDER

26. The 'global rules-based order' is an idealistic myth

Source: This post is based on the article "The 'global rules-based order' is an idealistic myth" published in the **Indian Express** on **3rd March 2022**.

News: Unexpected Russian military intervention in Ukraine is the latest example of an underlying cause of decay in the **international 'rules-based' order**.

Where did the idea of an 'international rules-based order' originate?

Diet of Westphalia (then Holy Roman Empire) in 1648 established the principle of 'sovereignty'. For a long time, it has been the founding principle behind the UN Charter. It established wars of aggression illegal under international law and liable to be punished by the international community via the UN Security Council.

To what extent does a rules-based order really exist?

There is a lot of debate on this amongst IR scholars. **Whether or not we actually live in an international society of states**, where a community that feels like one accepts a set of common guiding principles and is willing to operate according to rules/norms of behavior.

Another is **whether international society is still merely a system of states**, In which individual actors, adhere to global 'rules' to the extent convenient to them or bend and break those rules when core national interests are involved.

In the second interpretation, states are engaged in rational-utilitarian cooperation, competition, and even conflict, depending on the particularity of each situation.

Why a rule-based order is merely a convenient illusion?

In the absence of effective enforcement of rules, the notion of rules is an empty idea. Because it hardly has any compelling power to affect the actual foreign policy choices made by states. As we can see in the case of five permanent members. They make use of veto whenever there is the possibility of global action against themselves.

UN Security Council intervention in an international crisis has only been possible in the rarest of rare exceptions when all five permanent members happened to agree. As we can see, Russia and China veto American, French, and British resolutions and vice-versa.

Does rule-based order really exist?

Russian intervention in Ukraine is an example of the erosion of the belief that [HYPERLINK "https://blog.forumias.com/rules-based-order-rbo/"](https://blog.forumias.com/rules-based-order-rbo/)rule-based order exists. All the great powers, including during and after the Cold War, consists of largely self-interested countries, driven by a desire for national security and glorification.

What is the source of stability in the international system?

It is the **nuclear weapons** that are capable of destroying human civilization. The notion of 'mutually assured destruction' created a tension that prevent warfare even between two nuclear-armed rivals.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

DRAFT INDIA DATA ACCESSIBILITY & USE POLICY

27. Why draft data accessibility policy is dangerous

Source: This post is created based on the article “US not ready for a solo space ride” published in Indian Express on 5th March 2022.

News: Government has released Draft India Data Accessibility & Use Policy 2022.

The policy would **govern, “all data and information created/generated/collected/archived by the Government of India”**. State Governments will also be free to adopt the provisions of the policy.

What are the concerns associated with the policy?

- 1. Privacy related aspects:** With the digitization of every aspect of life, the intensity of data collection has increased manifolds. For example:
 - a. Linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts and mobile connections.
 - b. [Agristack](#) in agriculture
 - c. [e-SHRAM portal](#) for unorganized laborers
 - d. [Aarogya Setu](#) and ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission) for health sector
 - e. NDEAR (National Digital Education Architecture) for school children and teachers

This Public data is now viewed as a prized asset of the Union government that it can freely share with the private sector for profit. All this may lead to mandatory collection of even most personal data and that too for a longer period of time.

Even past experiences in data sharing are not encouraging. For example, the transport ministry had to scrap the bulk data sharing policy, 2019 citing potential misuse of personal information and privacy issues.

- 2. Making data open by default:** Draft policy has used phrase “open data”, without mentioning its objectives. As per World Bank benefits of open data is that it supports “public oversight of governments and helps reduce corruption by enabling greater transparency”. These principles were recognized in the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy, 2012.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Out of the 13 listed objectives, only one is relevant to transparency and the majority are linked to commercialization.

- 3. Detached from the constitutional framework:** Draft policy does not contain any proposals for the creation of a legal framework that governs data sharing. It makes it a part of a larger trend of **policy-based administration detached from our constitutional framework.**

As per the Supreme Court's Puttaswamy judgment on the fundamental right to privacy, the first ingredient to satisfy constitutionality is the existence of a legal, more often a legislative, basis. Without a law, there is absence of defined limits to data sharing that are enforceable and contain remedies.

- 4. Unsatisfactory anonymization tool:** Policy is trying to ensure privacy preservation through anonymisation tools. However, as per Luc Rocher and co-authors at the Oxford Internet Institute even heavily sampled anonymised datasets are unlikely to satisfy the modern standards for anonymisation set forth by GDPR.

Few suggestions that can be implemented

Independent regulatory body, to monitor and impose penalties, should be constituted.

The draft should go through thorough Parliamentary scrutiny, because public money would be spent to enrich datasets of public data. It will help bring accountability.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – ISSUES RELATED TO CHILDREN

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – COVID AND ITS IMPACT

IMPACT ON HEALTH

28. Care informed by data: On children orphaned by the pandemic

Source: This post is created based on the article published in The Hindu on 4th March 2022.

News: Some reports have suggested a high increase in COVID-19-associated orphanhood.

Lancet estimates of COVID-19-associated orphanhood put the number at over 19 lakh children orphaned. Globally it estimated 52 lakh children had been rendered orphans by the pandemic. However, Lancet report has been refuted by Indian government.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights data put the number of children orphaned during COVID-19 in India far lower, at 1.53 lakh.

Orphanhood has been defined in the report as the death of one or both parents; or the death of one or both custodial grandparents. It is time for the government to take some effective measures to deal with the menace of orphanhood.

What are the measures that the government should take?

Orphaned children are vulnerable to poverty, violence, destitution, and lack of access to education and health care. Thus, **Government should include childcare into any COVID-19 management program.**

Many programs have been launched by the government for children forced into orphanhood by COVID-19. Programs include provisions for adoption, foster care, education, and health care. **It is time to update the status of such programs,** and information on the number of cases where intervention has occurred, and where it is pending, must be put out in the public realm.

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

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – EFFECTS OF POLICIES AND POLITICS OF DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

MEDICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

29. Why India may not get a sizable role in post-war reconstruction of Ukraine

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why India may not get a sizable role in post-war reconstruction of Ukraine**” published in the business standard on 09th March 2022.

Context: After Ukraine crisis, major international bodies will be framing world order. India might not be a participant in decision making due to its weak presence on international institutions.

After World War II, the Global Reconstruction was handled by newly created international organizations, like the United Nations (UNs), the IMF, and the World Bank. Later Specific continent-based development banks, like the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank, also joined.

However, the approach of reconstruction was guided by the nations holding pole positions in these institutions. Voting rights, for instance, became important in this context.

This global power play will become active again after the end of Russian invasion of Ukraine. In this context, it is important to note that India has not been in senior secretariat positions in any of the major global institutions. Thus, India’s modest presence in these multilateral organisations may devoid it of any active role in decision making.

As a result, India, the **world’s sixth largest economy, will be** obliged to follow the rules set by most of them.

What are the other reasons behind India’s weak position in major multilateral organizations?

No Major institution in India: India does not host any major global institution.

Not part of few important rule making institution: India is not a member of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS sets rules for marine and maritime activities. Whereas Pakistan is a member country.

India’s strategy: India develops deep partnerships with a number of countries to gain positions at the high table. For example, the Quad Grouping in which India is a significant member. But this is not a viable option because multilateral institutions are more important in global power play.

Some positive developments in the recent past

Indian bureaucrats now also feel that the **weaponization of the global financial system** to target countries, has made it essential that India sits in positions of authority at the rule-making bodies.

India has chairmanship of the G20 at the end of this year.

India is advocating for combining the issue of Special Drawing Rights with enhanced voting rights at IMF. India argues that those nations that provide the support should also get larger voting rights.

India is also keen to secure the chairmanship of the **Heads of State Council** of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** India is a keen supporter of a **new G10 grouping**.

30. What ails medical education in India

Source: The post is based on an article “What ails medical education in India?” published in the Indian Express on 10th March 2022.

Context: India’s medical education system has attracted a lot of adverse attention due to the medical students being evacuated from Ukraine. There are issues like delay in post-graduate counselling because of reservation-related litigation. Also, Tamil Nadu legislating to opt out of NEET.

Issues in Indian Medical Education

A serious demand-supply mismatch: The MBBS degree continues to be an attractive option and there are inadequate seats in terms of population norms. The seats in the private college are priced between Rs 15-30 lakh per year.

Paucity of Faculty: The government’s initiative to open new medical colleges has run into a serious faculty crunch. All that the new colleges do is poaching faculty from a current medical college.

Academic quality continues to be a serious concern. There are loopholes of ghost faculty and corruption.

Salaries of Faculty: In many states’ government-run and private colleges, the faculties are low and private practice is common. This ruins the academic atmosphere.

A complete disregard for students’ welfare: The private institutions do not treat students and their parents who come for counselling in a well way. The system is designed for non-resident and other wealthy Indians to capture the seats left unfilled due to their high prices. This is done using a percentile system for defining eligibility and not per cent, so that students with money and low scores can get through.

Mushrooming of dental colleges of dubious quality: Many students who don’t get seat in medical colleges settle for a Bachelor in Dental Surgery degree. Such colleges in number and of poor quality. Thus, India produced far more dental surgeons than were in demand.

Middlemen problem: The aspiring students are bombarded with offers from agencies ensuring seats in Nepal, Mauritius, Ukraine, Russia, China and so on. Many students who get admitted, often fail to clear the foreign medical graduate examination (pass rate of 15%).

Corporatisation of the health sector: The health sector is treated like a service industry with a profit motive, medical education provides human resources — like business managers.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Universal need and information asymmetry are among the many reasons often cited to make the case for the exclusion of market forces in health services and medical education.

Increasing need for specialisation: It leads students to prove their worth at every level or pay through their noses. This explains the decline in attraction for the MBBS among a section of students.

So, what needs to be done?

Increasing Medical seats: It can be done by converting district hospitals into medical colleges through private-public partnership model (NITI Aayog seems to be moving in this direction).

A functional regulatory framework: Recent efforts by the National Medical Council (NMC) to regulate college fees is a step in the right direction.

Subsidising medical education: The government can do so even in the private sector, or look at alternative ways of financing medical education for disadvantaged students.

Quality assessments of medical colleges should be regularly conducted, and reports should be available in the public domain. The NMC is proposing a **common exit exam** for all medical undergraduates as a quality control measure.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the current scaling up efforts, which are most welcome, are re-envisaged to focus on quality and societal needs along with commercial viability.

31. What the plight of students in Ukraine reveals about medical education in India

Source: This post is based on article What the plight of students in Ukraine reveals about medical education in India published in the **Indian Express** on **8th Mar 22**

News: Odisha's CM requested PM of India, to ensure uninterrupted education for medical students coming from Ukraine. He has requested him to enable their admission to Indian medical colleges.

Almost 18,000 Indian medical students have come back from Ukraine's war zones. Such a situation also arose post-Partition, when the refugee medical students had migrated from medical colleges located in the newly-created Pakistan.

Why Indian students go abroad to pursue their medical education?

Less number of seats available for medical education in India: Number of aspirants who want to become doctors after 12th are more than seats. For example, only 89,875 out of 1.6 million students who appeared in NEET-2021, were selected for 596 medical colleges in the country.

Thus, the remaining students are left with the option to either enrol in non-medical courses in India or seek admission to foreign medical colleges.

Problems faced by returning Indian medical students

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Dilemma: It is unlikely that students may go back to Ukraine even if situation normalise. However, they also won't be able to get direct admissions into Indian medical colleges due to regulatory and social issues. Thus, they will have to go through qualifying exam to get admission.

Qualifying Exam to Intern in India: On return, they need to pass a qualifying examination to intern in the medical institutions recognised by the National Medical Commission (NMC).

Poor passing rates: Mostly below 20% due to several reasons: (a) Varying Training standards across foreign institutions, (b) The language of instruction other than English and (c) Different curriculum in foreign colleges, for example, a student training in Russia or Ukraine is unlikely to learn much about kala-azar or malaria.

Vast Syllabus of Screening Examination: Syllabus encompassed the entire gamut of medical education.

What can be done for overall improvement in the medical education in India?

Don't hand over district hospitals to the private sector. It will exacerbate inequities in healthcare and disconnect secondary care from primary health care (PHC) which is organized by the government

Upstream and Downstream Linkages of the District Hospital: link downstream to primary healthcare services and upstream to tertiary care hospitals to provide the students with a full range of clinical exposure while functioning as the main centre of education.

Online Classroom Teaching: Common classrooms can be created by virtually linking several of the medical colleges in a state

Financial Assistance to State governments: It is to be done for transformation of district hospitals.

Reduce urban-rural disparities in healthcare: For example, a centrally sponsored scheme aims to set up 157 new medical colleges attached to existing district/referral hospitals in areas that do not have any medical college.

Paramedical Training: Nursing colleges and allied health professional training centres may also be added to district hospitals to create a multi-layered, multi-skilled health workforce.

As an ultimate solution, the government can enroll the returning students in a **BSc (Public Health) program**. The National Health Policy of 2017 calls for Public Health Management cadres to be established in every state. Thus, it can lead to initiation of a programme for large-scale training of public health professionals.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES

32. A safety net for students abroad

Source: This post is based on the article "A safety net for students abroad" published in Indian Express on 7th March 2022.

News: Recently, the issue of higher education as under discussion due to evacuation of students from Ukraine.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Before the pandemic, more than 7,50,000 Indian students were studying abroad, spending \$24 billion in foreign economies. It is around 1% of India's GDP. The number is expected to rise to around 1.8 million students, spending nearly \$80 billion outside India.

Indian students are going abroad for education?

Around half of the population of India is under the age of 25. Thus, demand for quality education is increasing. None of Indian universities come in the world's top 100. Demand- supply gap of quality education in India is on increase.

What are the challenges facing Indian students in abroad?

Armed conflict: The most recent example is the Ukraine in this category. After Russian invasion of Ukraine, around 20,000 Indian students were stranded.

Crackdown on bogus colleges: In Canada, recently, some colleges were abruptly closed, due to bankruptcy. It led to protest by 1000s of students.

Similar thing happened in UK, when hundreds of 'bogus' colleges being closed.

Closure of borders can result in stranded students in or outside the host country. Most recently, borders were closed due to covid pandemic.

A considerable number of students who study abroad are not from wealthy families. They take expensive loans from institutional and non-institutional sources to finance their education. Thus, all these difficulties endanger the future of students.

Why must students studying abroad be supported by the government?

India can be benefitted by Indian students abroad in terms of soft power, knowledge transfer and remittances.

Former External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj referred to Indians abroad as **"brand ambassadors"**. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson call Indians in the U.K. the **"living bridge" between both countries**.

Achievements of Indians like Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella abroad has **increased the country's goodwill manifolds**.

Indian students can significantly contribute to India's development by transferring advanced knowledge and best practices, if a proper ecosystem is given to them by the government.

What steps can the government take to ensure the welfare of students abroad?

India is currently negotiating many international agreements. These **agreements must include some provisions that oblige host countries** to ensure the welfare of Indian students during times of crises and contingencies.

Provisions should include a **mandatory student insurance scheme** as well as the responsibility of foreign countries for the welfare of students in their country. It is possible because higher education is an attractive export for many countries. For example; the U.K. is generating £28.8 billion in revenue from education export.

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

33. Phygital education can prove transformative for the country

Source: This post is based on the article “**Phygital education can prove transformative for the country**” published in **Live Mint** on **7th March 2022**.

News: Government’s vision of a digital university to reach all students across the country is a landmark step.

However, there are many challenges associated with these digital only courses.

What are the challenges of teaching students in a digital only mode?

Students hardly complete their ‘digital only’ courses. This has been the case with many top global universities.

Students struggle in their transition to online learning, feel demotivated in the absence of a mentor or peer group, and also struggle with tests and assignments.

Teachers, on the other hand, struggle with producing online content and find it difficult to keep children engaged.

Are there any better alternatives?

Phygital model of learning that **combines online course instruction with weekly or fortnightly in-person educational sessions** can be a better alternative.

It makes it easier for students to transition to learning online and also helps teachers keep students engaged, read behaviour patterns among them that may be of relevance, and tailor their delivery accordingly.

What is the way forward?

Apart from the Phygital approach, there is need for some foundational steps.

- **Making Learning more accessible:** Language barriers are a key challenge to online learning in our country, as videos and frequently asked questions (FAQs) are primarily in English.
- Content for digital learning need to be made available in prominent regional languages. There is also the need for making these courses accessible for people with disabilities.
- **Helping in adapting to e-learning:** Students should be helped to build their digital literacy. This can be done through simple, concise learning modules on how to operate a device or by providing on-call support with minimum wait time via call centres.
- **Create engaging, immersive learning experiences:** Teaching-learning experiences that have dipped because of the use of a virtual interface can be rebuilt by promoting a spirit of competition. This can be done by holding periodic contests and weekly in person interaction between teachers and students.

Peer Network: One of the big challenges in digital education is the absence of a peer network. Students cope with the difficulty of studying alone, coupled with the boredom of online education, which can lead to discontinuity and drop-outs. This can be overcome by creating peer learning communities which will lead to healthy competition and cross-learning.

Improve the quality of instruction on digital platforms: Teachers face unique challenges with infrastructure required to teach online. There is need to support educators to create quality content.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

POLICIES RELATED TO MEDIA

34. Disruption@gov.in

Source: This post is based on the article “**Disruption@gov.in**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th Mar 22**.

News: State government of Bengal has ordered an internet shutdown in a few districts for a week in order to curb cheating in the ongoing State board exams.

How frequent are the internet shutdown in India?

According to Access Now, a non-profit which advocates for digital civil rights, from about 155 global shutdowns it documented in the year 2020 109 were from India.

What are its negative impacts?

Internet is a **commercial and social lifeline**. The telecom industry estimated it loses Rs 2.4 crore an hour in every circle area where there's a shutdown.

Apart from this, the losses incurred by other businesses that increasingly rely on the internet go unnoticed.

What is the legislation that governs internet shutdowns in India?

The umbrella legislation governing this area is **Indian Telegraph Act**.

However, problem arises due to a **new set of rules** introduced by GoI in August 2017 to provide statutory cover for temporary suspension of telecom services. These rules identify **public emergency and public safety** as ground for imposing internet shutdowns.

As these terms don't have any particular description they are many a times **interpreted subjectively** by the executive and may also lead to their misuse.

What have been the Supreme court's observation in the case of internet shutdowns?

The shutdowns imposed by states are inconsistent with a relevant Supreme Court verdict.

In January 2020, the apex court said that the freedom to carry on trade over the internet enjoys constitutional protection under **Article 19**. Therefore, any restriction has to meet the **test of proportionality**.

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

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

35. On resumption of international flights: Skies wide open

Source: This post is based on the article “Skies Wide open” published in **The Hindu** on **12th Mar 22**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.

Relevance: Tourism sector, aviation, Pandemic.

News: Government from next month will allow scheduled commercial international flights to resume operations. This will come as a big relief to the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors, which have been among the hardest hit by the pandemic.

How has been the tourism and aviation sector been affected by the pandemic?

The tourism and hospitality industry supports the aviation sector for its earnings and jobs growth, which was hit hard due to the COVID-19 and the accompanying curbs on overseas travel and domestic mobility.

According to the Official data show that in just nine months from march 2020 to December 2020, 21.5 million jobs were lost in tourism.

How will the Ukrainian crisis impact the tourism and aviation sector?

Oil prices have been soaring due to fears of disruptions to global energy supply chains.

– As a result, aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices have also jumped by almost 60% year-on-year. Fuel costs typically constitute about one fifth of a global airline’s operating expenditure and will definitely hurt the profit margin available to airlines.

A range of commodities have seen a sharp jump in prices, this will lead to high inflation across the globe and will also affect the cost of overseas travel.

Economic uncertainty triggered by the conflict in Eastern Europe and the residual fear among travellers of new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus will make revival of tourism and aviation sector tough.

What is the way forward?

Although restoring visitor confidence through enforcement of COVID-19 protocols and widening vaccination coverage is a positive step.

Government must also consider lowering ATF prices by cutting duties.

36. A fresh blow to globalisation

Source: This post is based on the article “**A fresh Blow to globalisation**” published in **Business Standard** on **10th Mar 22**.

News: There are two broad possibilities that may arise as an effect of the present Ukraine crisis – one is the **reordering of international relations**, and the other is **declining globalisation**.

How the western countries have responded to the Ukraine Crisis?

The West has imposed what are supposed to be the harshest sanctions ever faced by any country.

The US has **banned oil and gas imports from Russia**.

The UK is curtailing oil imports.

Russia has been **cut off from the SWIFT messaging system**. Select Russian banks have been **barred from the payments system**.

What, as per experts, led to the Ukraine crisis?

Majorly, the narrative that has been commonly accepted and which the western world is also supporting is that conflict in Ukraine has happened because **Russia wants to recreate the Soviet empire**.

An alternative narrative is that Russia sees the **inclusion of Ukraine in NATO as an existential threat** and the intervention in Ukraine as necessary to prevent a nuclear conflagration in the near future. This view was earlier also proposed by thinkers like **Henry Kissinger** who had warned that conflict with Russia was inevitable if the expansion continued.

How the present crisis can negatively affect world trade and globalisation?

Foreign entities are facing issue to access Ruble payments parked with Russian banks, and repayment of dollar-denominated Russian bonds are also in doubt.

Although Russia has not yet curbed the oil and gas supplies, however, there **prices are still rising**. Due to this the world will have to suffer the costs of **higher inflation and lower growth**.

Rising protectionism, concerns about national security and the Pandemic had already slowed the momentum of world trade and investment flows. The **current crisis will deliver another blow to globalisation**.

What are some key lessons for India from this emerging scenario?

Russia is facing severe restrictions on its **access to its central bank foreign currency reserves parked in the West**.

This raises questions about Nations parking foreign exchange surpluses with central banks in the West. This has led many to point out that **greater integration with the outside world makes an economy more vulnerable** to external pressures and could compromise a nation's sovereignty.

37. Navigating economic uncertainties caused by Ukraine war

Source: This post is based on the article “**Navigating economic uncertainties caused by Ukraine war**” published in the **Indian Express** on **09th March 2022**

Context: The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia is going to have a significant impact on emerging market economies, including India. The main concern largely comes from the impact of higher crude oil prices which has hit crude \$139/bbl.

Present Macroeconomic situation of Emerging Countries including India

They are running current account deficits. They have witnessed depreciating currency and a hardening of interest rates.

Problems being faced by Emerging Market Situation (Apart from the consequences of Present Oil Prices)

US dollar is appreciating and US treasuries are strengthening. The US runs the largest current account deficit in the world (23 times higher than that of India). But, by this logic, US treasuries should now have been at all-time lows (But it is not so, because of Triffin paradox).

Triffin Paradox

The US current account deficit is purely a reflection of the US supplying large amounts of dollars to fulfil the world’s demand. There is also a “saving glut” i.e., emerging economies were accumulating foreign exchange reserves in dollars, and diverting domestic savings to buy US treasuries.

Analyzing Possible Solution

Global Analysis: the dominance of the US dollar is inevitable in the global financial architecture. The dollar’s dominance will not decline ever in future as 90% of global trade is dollar-denominated. Also, the Renminbi and the Euro do not find a larger space in the foreign reserves’ basket of an emerging market economy today.

Domestic Analysis: We must find domestic solutions by managing our government finances better

Challenges in Domestic Solution

Although heavy interventions by the RBI in the foreign exchange market could pull the rupee up from the record lows. But the larger concern is how the government and the RBI will do so now. Because now the government is doing record government borrowings, and how to prevent domestic interest rates from hardening.

Way Ahead

First, the government and RBI may **spread the borrowings** of the government over **four quarters** of the financial year, instead of the traditional approach of completing 60 per cent of the borrowings in the first half of the year.

Second, The RBI and the government can induce market players to buy bonds in this uncertain time. Further, a higher proportion of short-and medium-tenor securities can be offered in the

initial months of the year, while longer tenor securities can be offered in the second half of the year.

Third, the **small savings collections** are an important part of the government borrowing. Therefore, the government can encourage fresh registration in the small savings schemes such as the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY)

Fourth, The Life Insurance Company (LIC) which holds a large share of government bonds. As a result, LIC's listing should signal positively for the bond market. It is because the insurance behemoth may be forced to invest a larger portion of its inflows in safer domestic assets. The current market volatility could push investors readjust their exposure to countries like India.

Conclude

In such a scenario it is best to follow unconventional policy measures as those listed above to ensure that the government's borrowing programme passes through with the least disruptions.

38. THE MACROECONOMIC FRAMEWORK THAT CAN GUIDE OUR POLICY CHOICES

Source: The post is based on the article "**The macroeconomic framework that can guide out policy choices**" published in the Live mint on 09th March 2022.

News: Indian policymakers have been gradually rolling back the Covid-19 pandemic stimulus, given since 2020. The ongoing Ukraine Crisis-2022 will have multiple economic implications for policymakers now.

Upcoming Challenges to due to Ukrainian Crisis

International Crude Oil Prices: Since Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine. International prices of crude oil have gone up sharply up to \$140 a barrel.

Inadequate Forecasts in India: RBI's inflation forecast as well as the budgetary calculations of the Union government have been made assuming crude prices at \$75 a barrel.

Balance of Payment: The higher energy import bill will put pressure on the Balance of Payments. India is nowhere near unmanageable stress in its balance of payments, as a comparison with 2013 will show.

Headline Inflation: The prices of other industrial commodities have also gone up in tandem with energy prices. It will also influence headline inflation.

Government budget: The effect on budget will depend on the extent to which the government passes on higher oil prices to consumers and how much it absorbs through reductions in excise duty on petrol or higher fertilizer subsidies.

What should be the policy Reponses?

The **Australian economist Trevor Swan** gave a very good framework to understand how a country should respond to various combinations of internal and external imbalances in its economy. The **Swan framework** provides clues that are relevant even today, depending on where a country is in the *macroeconomic space*:

Fig: The Swan Diagram

Internal balance: When there is full employment or economic growth is at potential or when inflation is not accelerating.

External balance: When an economy has neither a large current account deficit nor surplus.

Interactions between Internal and External balance: study of the interaction between them is most closely identified with the work of international economists such as James Meade and Harry Johnson. J.P. Morgan.

Macroeconomic spaces:

Following are the 4 macroeconomic spaces that are depicted in the diagram above:

1. A current account deficit with growth below potential.
2. A current account deficit with rising inflation.
3. A current account surplus with rising inflation.
4. A current account surplus with growth below potential.

Combined Responses for external and internal balance:

Any country that seeks to maintain **an internal and external balance** at the same time has to **maintain a balance between the levels of real exchange rate and the domestic demand.**

Changes in the real exchange rate (on the Y-axis) which affect the composition of demand between imported goods and domestically produced goods in an economy. It may include the depreciation of the real exchange rate to reduce the current account deficit or appreciation to bring down a current account surplus.

Changes in monetary and fiscal policies (on the X-axis in diagram) to affect the size of domestic demand, or expenditure control in the domestic economy. Meanwhile, interest rates and net government spending have to be calibrated to manage domestic demand.

India will thus have to adapt its mix of fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies to maintain a balance in case global turbulence persists for an extended period of time. It will ensure that neither internal nor external imbalances get out of hand.

39. Global stagflation risk

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Global stagflation risk**” published in The Hindu on 9th March 2022.

News: Russian invasion of Ukraine is set to halt the global economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic.

IMF had already reduced the global growth outlook due to the Omicron variant to 4.4%, now after the Ukraine crisis situation has become much worse.

How Russian invasion of Ukraine is affecting the global economic scenario?

Sanctions on Russia have led to a drastic **fall of more than 60% in the value of the Rouble** (Russian currency).

Prices of several commodities like wheat and corn, nickel, aluminum, oil, and gas have surged due to conflict. For example, the price of Brent Crude is 29% higher than before the invasion began on February 24.

An embargo on energy supplies from Russia could result in soaring electricity prices in European and other dependent countries. It is notable that Russia supplies Europe about 40% of its gas requirements, roughly a quarter of its oil and almost half its coal needs.

How would it impact India?

In a 2019 paper on 'The Impact of Crude Price Shock on India's Current Account Deficit, Inflation, and Fiscal Deficit', 2 senior RBI researchers gave an idea of the impact of oil price rise.

They estimated that a \$10 increase in the price of oil from a \$65 level would raise headline inflation by about 49 basis points (bps) or widen the Government's fiscal deficit if it decided to absorb the entire oil price shock.

Thus, Indian policy makers will have to make a tough choice between revenue shortfall in case they cut the fuel taxes and higher inflation plus slow economic growth i.e. stagflation.

40. How invasion of Ukraine could transform nuclear landscape of Asia

Source: This post is based on the article "How invasion of Ukraine could transform nuclear landscape of Asia" published in the Indian Express on 08th March 2022

News: Putin's nuclear sabre-rattling in Ukraine has triggered a consequential debate on the importance of atomic weapons in deterring Chinese expansionism in Asia.

Geopolitical Impact of nuclear threats and Ukraine developments in other parts of the world

(a) In **Japan**, Ex-PM of Japan, Shinzo Abe, called for a national debate on hosting American nuclear weapons on Japanese soil, (b) In **South Korea**, Presidential runner Yoon Suk-yeol talked of strengthening Seoul's nuclear deterrence against both Pyongyang and Beijing, (c) In **Taiwan**, a nuclear-powered submarine is being reportedly developed, and (d) In **Australia**, nuclear-powered submarines are being built while working with the UK and the US to build.

Why China's eastern neighbours are taking a fresh look at the nuclear option?

American Commitment does not cover Taiwan: The current US policy does not explicitly state that its armed forces will come to the rescue of Taiwan if it is attacked by China.

Legal Guarantees Are Not Substitute for nuclear weapons: In 1994, Ukraine agreed to give up the nuclear weapons that it inherited from the Soviet Union in return for guarantees on Kyiv's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Whether US Nuclear umbrella or the so-called extended deterrence will work: For example, The US actively discouraged Taiwan, South Korea and Japan from developing nuclear weapons in return for American security commitments, including the shelter of the American "nuclear umbrella".

Threat of China emulating Russia: China has been giving signals of following the policy of great-power chauvinism and territorial expansionism. For example, China appropriated the territories of its neighbours in the South China Sea, and forcibly absorbed Hong Kong completely.

Growing China-Russia Alliance: Recently, an “alliance without limits” was unveiled by both Russia and China at a summit meeting in Beijing. They agreed for the unprecedented commitment to stand by each other.

What are the possible solutions?

Developing a nuclear arsenal: Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan have significant technological capabilities. But it would be the last and most politically risky option.

Strengthening the military alliance: These countries could develop an alliance with the US and boost national defence capabilities including advanced missile systems.

Nuclear Sharing Agreements: Japan and South Korea talking about potential nuclear sharing arrangements with the US. In Taiwan and Australia, the emphasis is on developing nuclear-powered submarines.

IMPACT OF UKRAINE CRISIS (GS3 – ENERGY)

41. How to handle impact of Ukrainian crisis on India’s energy sector

Source: This post is based on the article “**How to handle impact of Ukrainian crisis on India’s energy sector**” published in **Indian Express** on 7th Mar 2022.

News: Ukrainian crisis will result in negative effects on Indian energy sector. The article explains how would it effect the Indian economy.

Read – [How high oil prices will affect the Indian economy?](#)

In addition to the factors mentioned in the previous articles, uncontrolled increase in crude oil prices will have following impacts on Indian economy:

Exports: It will negatively impact our earnings from petroleum products (diesel, petrol, naphtha). In 2021, these products accounted for the highest share of export earnings.

India’s assets in Russia: ONGC has stakes in many holdings in Russia. After the Ukraine conflict, the value of these assets has eroded sig significantly. Similarly, in India, Rosneft (the Russian national oil company) operates the 20 mtpa refinery in Vadinar through Nayara Energy. Now, Indian traders will face difficulties in looking for alternatives.

What are the significant factors that are changing global energy scenarios?

First, Energy cooperation between Russia and China is increasing after conflict. Only in the last week, an agreement has been signed to build a second gas pipeline to China christened “Power of Siberia 2”.

Second, the US, as the largest producer of oil in the world, will be able to make up for the shortfall, however, the energy sector in the US is controlled by profit-maximising private corporations. Supplies will head towards the highest bidder.

Third, Saudi Arabia (SA) has significant spares, low cost, producible capacity (approx 3 mbd) of crude oil. However, the US, even after pressurizing SA, has not been able to get this done.

Fourth, China is holding significant amount of rare earths, minerals and components that are required to make the transition to clean energy possible.

What are the lessons for India from the current energy crisis?

India needs to understand the supply, demand and geopolitical trends to understand the trajectory of the energy market. The following points can be taken into account while framing the energy policy:

1. India should frame its policies with the expectation of energy market volatility in the future.
2. Strategic reserves should be built to safeguard against the unexpected.
3. Reviving the negotiations with Turkmenistan and Iran about a transnational gas pipeline.
4. Strong efforts are required to decouple the supply chain dependence on China for the minerals and components required for the clean energy transition.

42. Risks Rise Above Earth Too

Source: This post is based on the article “Risks Rise Above Earth Too” published in Times of India on 7th **March** 2022.

News: The Ukraine crisis will have affects for space programmes globally, and also harsh lessons for India.

Read – [US not ready for a solo space ride](#)

Other than the International Space Station Program, the risks to space cooperation could come in three ways: First, due to sanctions. Second, due to physical destruction or control of aerospace facilities in Ukraine. Third, potential attempts by either side to disrupt the other’s use of space for military purposes.

How the present developments hinder India’s space program?

Due to sanctions: Sanctions are likely to place limitations on India’s ability to work simultaneously with Russia, the EU, and the US. India’s Gaganyaan human spaceflight project, which relies on Russian cooperation, will probably experience delays. For example, in 2014, the US placed restrictions on two Russian military-linked outfits that work on space technologies.

However, this situation can turn positive for India, as Russia may offer more favorable terms of cooperation to India. India can also jump into the business of launching satellites stranded due to sanctions.

Due to destruction in Ukraine: India’s own collaborative projects with Ukraine are under threat. For example the development of semi-cryogenic engines that could have allowed ISRO to launch heavier payloads into geostationary orbit.

Furthermore, even if Ukrainian capacity is not destroyed, it will be subject to political equations.

Warfare in space: Present crisis may lead to conflict among powers in space because they will be able to deny other parties the intelligence and power space provides.

What should be done by India?

First, India should start making its own efforts to defend its assets in space. The Tri services Defense Space Agency was formally set up in Bengaluru in 2019 but it has made little progress.

Second, Besides capacity building, India should publish a military space doctrine that clears the air on how it will respond to any attempts to contest its use of space.

Third, India must reduce risks to itself by diversifying its space partnerships and encouraging foreign direct investment into its private space sector.

Finally, India must develop the capacity to defend its ability to use space for its own prosperity and security.

43. Do economic sanctions work as a deterrent?

Source: This post is based on the article “Do economic sanctions work as a deterrent?” published in **Livemint** on **7th Mar 2022**.

News: The US, UK, and the EU have imposed several types of sanctions on Russia for going to war against Ukraine. This could prove to be detrimental to the country.

What do you mean by economic sanctions?

Economic sanctions are penalties or bans that are levied against a country to push it to modify its strategic decisions. Sanctions can be of the following types:

- 1) **Full sanctions:** It includes withdrawal of customary trade and financial relations. It could result in cutting economic ties in every respect including terms of trade, financial assistance, transit support, travel bans, asset freezes, and trade restrictions.
- 2) **Targeted sanctions:** It includes restricting transactions with certain businesses, groups, or individuals.

How do sanctions impact an economy?

Supply chain disruptions due to import restrictions. It can cripple the economy which is dependent upon imports of critical raw material.

It becomes very difficult to reach out to the export markets.

What are the economic sanctions against Russia?

Assets of some major Russian banks have been frozen and they have been banned from the SWIFT financial messaging service.

Sanctions have been levied on the Russian Direct Investment Fund and some Russian wealthiest people.

How India managed curbs after Pokhran-II?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

The government appealed to Non-Resident Indians for assistance to replace India's external assistance of more than \$100 billion. As a result, NRIs' subscription to government bonds was more than double the annual foreign assistance.

Furthermore, none of the scientists involved were trained abroad, thus India was able to show its scientific and economic independence.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – ISSUES RELATED TO PUBLIC HEALTH

CONSUMPTION OF TOBACCO

44. Revive tax increases, stub out tobacco product use

Source: The post is based on the article "Revive tax increase, stub out tobacco product use" published in the Hindu newspaper on 09th March 2022.

Context: Apart from COVID-19 pandemic (which is reported to have killed half a million Indians over the past two years), tobacco is a silent killer in our midst that kills an estimated 1.35 million Indians every year.

Impact of Tobacco Consumption

Tobacco Related Death: 3,500 Indians die every single day, as estimated by scientific studies.

Economic Burden: It comes with an economic cost of ₹1,77,340 crore to the country or more than 1% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

How pricing and taxation determines Tobacco Consumption?

Research shows that a **price increase** induces people to **quit** or **reduce tobacco** use as well as **discourages non-users** from getting into the habit of tobacco use. Taxation is one of the most cost-effective measures to reduce the demand for tobacco products.

Challenges in Discouraging Tobacco Consumption in India

Inadequate Taxation: There has been no significant tax (GST) increase on any tobacco product for four years, barring a minor increase in the National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD) during the Union Budget 2020-21 which only had the effect of increasing cigarette prices by roughly 5%.

The Union Budget 2022-23 also didn't hike tax on any tobacco product. ITC stocks gained by more than 6% and outperformed most other stocks.

Cess applied on cigarettes has remained unchanged for four years in the face of increasing inflation.

Consequence of not increasing the taxes on tobacco products

Loss of Revenue: Absence of hike of taxes on tobacco product means foregone tax revenues for the Government. In fact, Government of India is looking forward to increasing the share of public

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

spending on health. For example, in the recent Union Budget, it has budgeted 2.2% of the total expenditures towards health.

Making Tobacco Products Affordable: The lack of tax increase in a country makes all tobacco products increasingly more affordable.

Increase Tobacco Users Base: It is known that more affordable tobacco products could attract new users, especially among the youth.

Suggestions

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council should raise either the GST rate or the compensation Cess levied on tobacco products.

Expanding the Tobacco Products under Taxation Domain: Bring in *bidi* under taxation as it does not have a Cess levied on it under the GST while all other tobacco products attract a Cess.

GS2 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

INDIA'S CHINA RELATED POLICY

45. Clear signals: On India-China ties and the new global currents

Source: This post is based on the article “Clear Signals: On India-China ties and the new global currents” published in the Hindu newspaper on 09th March 2022.

News: The Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi claimed that the **U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy** is aiming to create “**an Indo-Pacific version of NATO**”. His statement has deeper interpretations for India.

Challenges in India-China Relations?

Revival of QUAD (called as “**Asian NATO**” by China) having Australia, Japan, U.S. and India as member.

However, apart from this, U.S. is also **Strengthening the Five Eyes** (An intelligence alliance), formed other exclusive clubs like **AUKUS** as well as the USA is also tightening bilateral military alliances.

How these developments impact India-China relations?

China is continuously situating India as a part of the U.S. “**exclusive club**” by targeting Quad.

Beijing's also making aggressive moves along the LAC in 2020 as a warning sign to deter India-U.S. relations.

Some experts view China's aggressive moves along the LAC in 2020 as a warning sign to deter India-U.S. relations.

Consequences of ongoing geopolitical developments

How has India responded to China?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

New Delhi has rejected the claims of China about India. India's External Affairs said "interested parties" were making a "**lazy analogy of an Asian NATO**" and India was not a U.S. treaty ally.

In response, India has been continuously deepening ties not only with the U.S. and the Quad but also other Indo-Pacific partners to underline it will not be swayed.

Russia being common friend of both China and India: Both Russia and China claimed to have "**rock solid**" relationship on a summit on February 4. China backed Russia on its concerns on NATO's eastward expansion in Europe, and Russia returned the favor with both criticizing the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

DRAFT INDIA DATA ACCESSIBILITY & USE POLICY 2022

46. An open data policy won't work without earnest implementation

Source: The post is based on an article "An open data policy won't work without earnest implementation" published in the Live mint" on 11th March 2022.

News: On 22 February, India's ministry of electronics and information technology (MEITY) released its draft India Data Accessibility and Use Policy 2022 for public consultation.

Need for bringing the draft Data Accessibility and Use Policy 2022

Utility in delivery of public services: The data generated through routine administrative processes is important for the better delivery of public services.

Already in practice in other countries: Such policies exist in many countries being used for an efficient use of such data in improving services.

Demands of academia and other stakeholders: i.e., large volumes of such data have remained unutilized.

What are the challenges associated with the policy?

Conflict of interest: There are chances of misuse of such data for commercial or political purposes. It is because data is "the new oil". Thus, the monetization of valuable public sector data without adequate safeguards can be counter-productive.

Issues of data integrity: As public data is a by-product of government administration; its quality is only as good as that of the administration.

Administrative control over data has also been used to thwart attempts by users and citizens to obtain data for public use. For example, the Right to Information (RTI) Act, has been diluted over the past decade like many RTI activists losing their lives.

What are the benefits associated with policy?

It can lead to realizing the potential of this large volume of data. It can be shared across various ministries and between central and state governments. It can be used to encourage better utilization of large-scale data collected by the government machinery.

Public data can be complementary to a systematic evaluation of administrative functioning and independent surveys and research.

Challenges in using public data as complementary to other evaluating measures

Public data is being used to discredit independent credible surveys: For example, Data from the EPFO and E-Shram portal used to argue that jobs are being generated, as against separate evidence from the Periodic Labour Force Surveys of the National Statistical Office (NSO).

Public data used to suit a political narrative: Assault has been made on NSO data on open defecation, access to potable water, and so on. Even a basic exercise such as our decennial population census has become political, e.g., It is being linked with a National Population Register.

What are the suggestions to tackle issues?

The data accessibility-and-use policy has to be completed by a comprehensive data protection framework.

The data integrity: Our statistical system needs strengthening. Public data can be verified independently, i.e., open databases for public scrutiny and academic analysis. For example, social audits being used in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. Its social audit has not only raised the quality of data available on this job programme's functioning, but also helped improve the scheme itself.

Protection from unnecessary attacks: It is needed to be protected from the very institution that generates it, i.e., administrative machinery as well as the political leadership.

GS2 – POLITY – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

HIJAB ROW IN KARNATAKA

RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION

47. Treating values of individual freedom as trifles

Source: The post is based on an article “Treating values of individual freedom as trifles” published in **The Hindu** on **17th Mar 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Significant Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Essential Religious Practices and Freedom of Conscience (Article 25)

News: Recently, The Karnataka high Court has given its judgment in the hijab controversy case (or the **Resham v/s State of Karnataka Case (2022)**), wherein a ban imposed on the use of hijabs by students in classrooms across the State (Karnataka) was upheld.

What has the High Court said in its judgement?

The High Court's judgement is based on the following three conclusions:

- The wearing of a hijab is **not an essential practice** of the Islam. Therefore, the right to freedom of religion is not impinged;
- No substantive right to free expression and privacy can be claimed within the confines of a classroom. The court classifies the classroom as **“qualified public space”**, where individual rights cannot be asserted to “the detriment” of “general discipline and decorum”.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

– The government’s order does not by itself ban the use of a hijab, it is neutral, and therefore, there is no discrimination aimed at Muslim women students.

The judgment holds that any accommodation in the uniforms defeat the very purpose of uniforms.

The Court ruled that the individual’s rights could be abridged in the interests of public order, morality or health.

What are the issues with the judgement?

Ideals of the Constitution of India: As per The Preamble, the state has to secure to all citizens, liberty, equality and fraternity which were called as “**a union of trinity**” by Dr. BR Ambedkar. Divorce one from the other defeats the very purpose of democracy.

Enforcing popular morality: In *Resham vs State of Karnataka Case (2022)*, the Karnataka High Court (HC) has enforced the popular morality of the day. It has given a blow to the B.R. Ambedkar’s union of trinity.

Court’s use of Precedent: The court referred to only those “essential religious practices” which are enjoying constitutional protection. These did not cover wearing of a hijab as a legitimate exercise of religious freedom. Similarly, the SC did the same Tandav Dance / Ananda Margis faith related case in 2004.

Free choice and state action: In this case individual freedom was not at odds with group rights. Here, the exercise of **free choice** has been curtailed by state action.

In this case, the wearing of the hijab was pleaded to be a matter of “**freedom of conscience**” guaranteed in **Article 25 of the Constitution**. Unlike this case, In the **Bijoe Emmanuel Case (1986)**, SC protected the freedom of conscience i.e., right of a student of not singing of the national anthem.

In the present case, the **onus to prove** that the petitioners conscientiously believed in the necessity of the hijab was **put on the students**. However, the onus should have been on the state to establish that students were not wearing the hijab out of a sense of conscience.

Choosing to wear the hijab is merely exercising a form of identity relatable to the rights to freedom of speech and privacy.

Ignoring the test of proportionality: Court ignored determining when and how the right to free expression can be legitimately limited

What is the way forward?

There could have been “reasonable accommodation in this case. For example, Kendriya Vidyalayas(KVs), allow for hijabs within the contours of the prescribed uniforms i.e., even within the existing dress code, many accommodations can be made.

Judiciary should act as a “**sentinels on the qui vive**”. It should prevent any effort to undermine social democracy.

48. May all mothers live: on Maternal Mortality rate

Source: This post is based on the article “**May all mothers live:**” published in **Live Mint** on **15th March 2022**.

News: India’s maternal mortality ratio has decreased from 122 to 103 (maternal deaths per lakh

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

live births) between 2015-17 and 2017-19, shown by SRS data. India's SDG target is to bring its MMR below 70 by 2030.

What can be done to improve further?

Understanding disparities: Need for different state or region wise solutions. For instance:

- **Kerala** – MMR improved from 42 to 30, showing pushing up standards from already high levels.
- **Uttar Pradesh** – MMR is 167, but it has delivered a dramatic 49 points improvement from 216.
- **West Bengal** – MMR worsened from 94 to 109.

Centre can assess different schemes objectively and increase investment or introduce reform wherever needed.

Collect data on how pandemic has hurt reproductive care services:

- Need to prevent reversal of gains as major interventions such as Institutional deliveries and access to Asha workers was reduced.
- Need to ensure these services are back on track as Covid deaths drop.

Beyond this, India should take inspiration from countries that have already brought their MMR down to single digits – like Belarus, Poland and the UK.

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

RUSSIA – UKRAINE CONFLICT

49. Looming fertilizer shortage

Source: The Post is based on an article “**Looming fertilizer shortage**” published in the **Business Standard** on **16th Mar 22**.

News: The Ukraine war has disrupted the supplies of fertilisers in the international market. It could impact India too, as it depends heavily on imports for meeting their burgeoning requirement of fertilizers. For example, India's import dependence is about 25% for urea, nearly 90% for phosphates, and 100% for potash.

Why the supplies of fertilisers have shrunk?

It is due to interruption from the war-hit Black Sea region as well as reduction in exports by many European countries and China. For example, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine meet a sizeable part of India's plant nutrients requirement, especially that of DAP and MOP.

What is the likely impact on India?

Inevitable surge in fertiliser subsidy: The subsidy bill is bound to outstrip the budget amount of Rs 1.05 trillion for 2022-23 by a huge margin if the government intends to shield the farmers against the high cost of imported fertilisers by raising the price discount (subsidy) on decontrolled phosphoric, potassic and mixed fertilisers

Any decline in fertiliser use is bound to **impact the crop** yields in the next season. It may affect farmers' income, push up prices of agricultural commodities, fuel inflation and result in the black marketing of fertilizers in several states.

Exploring other markets: Many **private importers** have already begun exploring possibilities of buying the stuff from Canada and other countries.

What measures have been taken by India?

The government invoked the **Fertiliser Control Order** to penalise hoarders and others indulging in malpractices,

The local output of urea is likely to improve due to revival of the defunct fertiliser plants at Ramagundam, Sindhri, Barauni and Gorakhpur. But the same cannot be said about phosphatic and potassic fertilisers.

What is the way forward?

Discovery of some phosphate deposits: It has been found in different parts of the country, notably Rajasthan, Central peninsula, Hirapur area in Madhya Pradesh, and Cuddapah basin in Andhra Pradesh.

India needs to intensify its ongoing efforts to become self-sufficient in urea and explore means to reduce import dependence on phosphatic and potassic fertilisers.

50. THE ECLIPSE OF SOVEREIGN EQUALITY

The Ukraine crisis has shown the weakness of International law and especially given a blow to 'Principle of **sovereign** equality'.

What is principle of sovereign equality under international law?

It is juridical in nature i.e., all states are equal under International law. Despite the differences between military power, economic clout, population, geographical size etc. It is a fundamental principle of the UN.

The UN Charter states that the primary objective is to protect successive generations from scourge of war. To meet this end: principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, collective security, non-aggressive and peaceful settlement of disputes are regarded as fundamental.

What is an act of aggression under international law?

International law defines aggression as any use of armed force in international relations. In certain cases the use of aggression is permissible such as:

- Defensive necessity
- International authority (Ex – collective action by UN)
- Consent of state in which force is used.

However, in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, none of these defenses apply. Hence, it is a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty.

Provisions regarding aggression in the UN Charter:

1. **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter** states the principle of non-aggression:

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

2. "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."
3. **Article 39** contains the **Doctrine of Collective Security**:
4. Wherein the Security Council determines that there is any threat or breach of peace, or an act of aggression. Accordingly, the Council makes recommendations or takes measures to restore International peace and security.

Challenges in the UN system:

1. **Oligarchy in UN:** The Permanent 5 (P5) members of the UN Security Council (US, UK, France, Russia, China) represent an undemocratic and oligarchic system.
2. **Against the principle of sovereign equality:** For instance, Russia vetoed a draft UNSC resolution regarding criticism of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. This veto rendered futile the vote given by 80 countries in favour of Ukraine.

The Ukraine crisis reflects the 'might is right' world order, one where some are equal but some are more equal than others. There is a need for 'rule-based international order' based on sovereign equality and collective security.

51. Fragmenting world order, untied nations

Source; The post is based on an article "Fragmenting world order, untied nations" published in the Hindu on 15th March 2022

News: The Russian war on Ukraine is going on and it has become three weeks long conflict. Therefore, it is going to have various consequences:

Consequences of Russia Ukraine war

The global order has broken down: The Ukraine crisis is a bigger blow to the post-World War order than any other conflict such as the US Iraq Invasion in 2003, Israel's bombing of Lebanon in 2006, and the Saudi coalition's attacks of Yemen in 2015. It violates every line of the UN Charter preamble. It has exposed the **ineffectiveness of the UN system**. For example, An UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution that decried Moscow's actions, was brushed off. Also, **UNSC** proved ineffective in even condemning Russian aggression.

Emergence of Alternative trading arrangements and Non-Dollar System: Russia can explore alternative trading arrangements with countries such as China, India, and much of Eastern Hemisphere. For example, New Delhi used a rupee-rouble mechanism and banks that were immunised from the U.S.'s **CAATSA** sanctions (or Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) for advance payments in the S-400 missile defence deal. There is a possibility that Russian banks can now use the **Chinese "UnionPay"** for online transactions. Gradually, the world may see a **"non-dollar"** system emerging which would run banking, fintech, and credit systems separately from the "dollar world".

Nuclear safeguards have been withered: The nuclear non-proliferation regime's credibility has been challenged, for example, Ukraine & Libya willingly gave up nuclear programmes. In fact, in this conflict, Ukrainian Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant are being attacked by the Russian military. On the other hand, Iran and North Korea could defy the global order because they have held on to their nuclear deterrents.

Rise in the role of non-state actors: For example, Pro-Russia armed militia are operating in the Donbas regions. Also, the Ukrainian President, has invited all foreign fighters to voluntarily

fight from the Ukrainian Side. It reminds us “International Brigades” in the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, comprising foreign volunteers from about 50 countries.

Cultural isolation of Russia: The Western countries have imposed a comprehensive boycott of Russia. Russia is going to be socially and culturally isolated. For example, Russian-owned, Russian-controlled or Russian-registered planes have been banned from EU airspace. The Russian channels have been banned in Europe. Such an “isolation” extends to art and music. Therefore, it brings to memory Churchill’s famous speech, “The Sinews of Peace”, when he first referred to the “**Iron curtain coming down**” between Soviet Russia and Western Europe.

52. The war’s cold facts and what India needs to glean

Source: the post is based on an article “**The war’s cold facts and what India needs to glean**” published in the Hindu on 15th March 2022

Context: As the Ukraine-Russia war nears the end of three weeks, it is time for India to learn lesson from this war and find its position in the real world of geopolitics.

What is the lesson to be learnt from the Ukraine-Russia War?

First, a **nation’s vital interests** can be protected **only by that nation itself**. For example, in this war Ukrainians alone are facing the brunt of the Russian military might. The West is only supplying arms and intelligence inputs.

Similarly, during the 1962 India-China war, Moscow had no time for New Delhi and the Americans offered only moral and logistic support despite New Delhi’s request for military help.

Therefore, after the 1965 and 1971 wars, India re-armed itself in a big way. Later, in 1974, and 1998, India demonstrated its scientific capability through a ‘peaceful’ nuclear explosion and India became a nuclear power.

Is status of nuclear power nations enough for India?

A country cannot only be **nuclear power**, it also needs to be **conventional power**. Nuclear weapons act as a deterrent between two nuclear powers only in the nuclear realm, it cannot be a substitute for ‘conventional’ power. It is because **conventional Power** provides strategic autonomy in matters of national security.

India lacks independence in this area. India has been heavily dependent on Russia and US for arms.

Russia: India purchased MiGs, Sukhoi’s, S-400, etc. from Russia. Therefore, India had to abstain on Ukraine in United Nations (UNs) resolution.

West: After the end of Cold War, India **diversified its arms purchases** to dilute its dependence on Russia for arms. But now India has also become heavily dependent on the West. For example, India purchases from the West include the American C-17 and C-130J Super Hercules aircraft, Chinook and Apache attack helicopters, Boeing P-8I long range aircraft for maritime surveillance, The Indian Army’s M777 artillery guns, the IAF’s Rafale and Mirage fighters from France, Jaguars from Britain and a multitude of drones from Israel;

India has signed three ‘foundational’ agreements with the U.S. such as Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) etc.

Way Ahead

There is no other way out but to make India self-reliant in defence sector. Therefore, self-sufficiency in defence research and development and manufacturing is an inescapable imperative.

53. Ukraine invasion and the great geopolitical reset

Source: This post is based on the article “Ukraine invasion and the great geopolitical reset” published in **Indian Express** on **15th Mar 2022**.

Context: Article explains the global dynamics after Russia-Ukraine war.

Major wars have significant consequences for the internal and international politics of the combatant nations. For instance, **Indo-Pak war of 1971:**

- Liberated Bangladesh
- Altered balance of power between Delhi and Islamabad
- New Pakistani Constitution in 1973 to democratize a nation that was dominated by the Army.

However, in 1977 the army made a decisive comeback when General Zia-Ul-Haq seized power. He accelerated Pakistan’s nuclear weapon program and institutionalized a strategy of cross-border terrorism against India.

Similarly, other great wars were also not without consequences;

Consequences of wars between great powers

The Napoleonic wars led to:

- Start of the Concert of Europe that limited local conflicts
- Sustained a regional balance of power for a century.

The First World War led to:

- Collapse of the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian empires
- Created new nations in Europe
- Boosted nationalism in the non-Western world

The Second World War led to:

- Defeat of fascism and the rise of the US and USSR.
- Accelerate the decolonisation of the global South.

Cold War led to:

- The defeat of Communism
- Breakup of the Soviet Union
- Setting the political stage for economic globalization.

Can the Russian war against Ukraine turn into a global war?

Presently, Biden has said that the US will not fight Russia in Ukraine. French President Emmanuel Macron has said that Europe is “not at war” with Russia.

However, Russia has begun to bombard the western part of Ukraine that borders NATO. Putin has signaled that the use of nuclear weapons is not off the table. This could lead to the sharpening of the conflict.

Will Ukraine's invasion produce fundamental changes in the international system?

Presently, Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine is triggering some major geopolitical changes across the world. Such as:

New dynamism in the great power triangle between the US, Russia, and China:

- Earlier the US hoped to distance Russia from China and focus all of America's energies on the Indo-Pacific.
- Now, the US has reached out to China — to restrain Russia before the invasion.
- China has provided “rock-solid” support to Moscow. However, it is under some pressure to balance between Russia and the West due to its deep economic interdependence with the US and Europe.

Restoration of US primacy amongst the great powers by show of strategic unity by the West.

American disciplining of Europe: Especially Germany, where soft power has given way to rearmament.

EU's Russia dilemma due to dependence on Russia in the energy domain. To reduce this dependence, America is reaching out to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela to fill the gap.

Adapting Asia:

- Japan is rethinking its nuclear abstinence.
- South Korea wants to strengthen ties with the US, and explore potential cooperation with the Quad.
- Countries in the ASEAN region are waking up to the dangers of Beijing's rise.

What should India do?

Use the opportunity to increase its heft in the changing global balance.

More immediately, Delhi should move on a war-footing towards a rapid modernisation and expansion of its domestic defence industrial base to sustain India's strategic autonomy.

54. Ukraine invasion, global wheat supply and India's opportunity

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ukraine Invasion, Global Wheat Supply and India's opportunity**” published in the Indian Express on 14th March 2022

Topic: **Economic** opportunity for India in wake of Ukraine Crisis 2022

News: the Russia-Ukraine war continues to be at the centre of the world debate and recently, the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has denied insisting on NATO membership which was one of the reasons for Russian invasion of Ukraine.

What are the negative effects of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict?

The **energy, gas prices** are surging and **wheat prices** are skyrocketing. For example, wheat prices in exporting countries like the US shot up to \$525/tonne, Australian wheat export prices touching \$395/tonne, Argentina at \$425/tonne, etc.

The US and its western allies may not compromise on the matter. They can put the strictest sanctions on Russia.

Russia-China Relation: China has openly indicated that it will stand firmly with Russia, it may not be good news for either NATO or India.

What are the opportunities for India in the wake of the crisis?

Read – [How much do Russia and Ukraine contribute to Wheat exports?](#)

Wheat Export can reduce India's **food subsidy bill** as well as compensate for the **higher costs of imports of crude oil**.

Structural Reforms: There are a number of issues, like state wise variation in procurement prices, for example, Punjab has 8.5% mandi fee/cess/ arhatiya commission while in most other states, it hovers around 3-4 per cent. Therefore, central government and states like UP, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh being the largest contributors to the central pool can take lead.

Way Ahead

To tap wheat window, the buffer stock of Food Corporation of India (FCI) can be used for exports of wheat.

Scaling down the target of procuring wheat in the coming marketing season: It can be done by letting the private sector buy wheat at competitive prices.

Procurement reforms: There should be symmetry in procurement costs. like the FCI can put a ceiling on procurement expenses (including arhatiya commissions/fees) to be no more than 3% of the MSP in all states.

Promotion of the private sector companies: state government can promote private players to build export lines, storage silos with grading, packaging and processing facilities.

PDS beneficiaries in wheat-growing states: they can be given an option to get grain or cash in lieu of grains.

55. RUSSIA'S MISADVENTURE IN UKRAINE SETS OFF EUROPEAN RE-ARMAMENT

Source: This post is created based on the article **"Russia's misadventure in Ukraine sets off European re-armament"**, published in **Business Standard** on **14th March, 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – International Relations – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

News: Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine has been described as a turning point in the modern history of Europe. It has catalyzed European re-armament, rejuvenated NATO, caused Germany to reassert European leadership, and galvanized tentative Japanese militarism.

Situation before Russian invasion:

NATO countries, except USA and UK, were reluctant in spending at least 2 percent of their GDP on their militaries. It was suggested to ensure the alliance's readiness to face any military challenge.

Just two months ago, Germany flatly declined to supply Ukraine with lethal weaponry. It also forbade other NATO countries from sending German-made weapons to Ukraine.

How Ukraine crisis has restarted the European armament?

Firstly, Germany immediately sent anti-tank weapons and Stinger anti-aircraft defense systems to Ukraine. Berlin also revoked its block on European Union (EU) countries that were supplying German-made equipment to other countries. This was accompanied by a huge rise in military spending.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Secondly, Former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe suggested that Japan should assume responsibility for nuclear defense and that it should consider a NATO-style nuclear-sharing arrangement with the US.

Third, The share prices of European and American defense industries have risen sharply. For example – Lockheed Martin's share price saw a rise of 12.16 per cent.

Fourth, The Russian advance in Ukraine is moving close to Polish borders (NATO borders). Here, the US has dispatched soldiers to bolster NATO forces, creating a potential flashpoint.

How could it impact India?

Positive: For certain Indian micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that are a part of the supply chains of global aerospace and defence (A&D) companies, this event could trigger a significant increase in orders.

Negative: Shift towards **seller's market** can give a blow to **"Make in India"** →

Earlier, New Delhi was pushing the big western defense corporations to set up production in India under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat**. It was calling shots in the buyer's market. Now, their priority would be re-arming Europe and setting up corporations there.

Who is set to benefit?

Beijing is the biggest beneficiary of this crisis → The Russian advance has shifted the focus of the USA from China to the European theater. Along with increasing Russian dependence on China.

56. NO OVATION FOR INDIA'S STAND ON UKRAINE WAR

Source: This post is created based on the article **"No ovation for India's stand on the Ukraine war"**, published in **The Hindu** on **14th March, 2022**.

News: The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine has put moral responsibility on India as one of the world's largest countries and its populous democracy. At present, the Indian government has abstained in the UN Security Council vote on Ukraine. It has refused to condemn the violation of rights of the Ukrainians.

What are the arguments justifying India's stance?

"Principle of National Interest" – In international affairs a country must be guided by its national interest. In the present situation, India's interests have been clearly spelled out as:

- High dependence of India on Russia for defense equipment.
- India need of Russia for support on the Pakistan issue in the Security Council.

"East-West Conflict" – the Russian invasion and the West's reaction is a conflict between the east and the west and India should stay out of it.

Historical Precedent – This is not the first time that such a line has been taken by India. Based on the same principles, India has previously abstained from voting in the UN on the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956.

What are the arguments against India's stance?

National interest lies in following International Principles: India presently is facing territorial aggression from China. If India doesn't want to see itself as a victim of territorial aggression in

future, it must condemn Russia's action. Hence, India should base its decision on international principles of "peaceful co-existence" and "territorial sovereignty."

Defence supply agreement: It is not evident that anything supplied by the Russians cannot be sourced from the global arms market. For example, India has brought guns from Sweden, ships from the UK, aircrafts from France.

Difference between 1956 and now: Unlike in the 1950's, the West doesn't unconditionally support Pakistan vis-a-vis India. Presently, Russia encourages Pakistan.

looking at this situation through an "East v. West" lens **Narrow approach** is not correct. This situation shows "unprovoked aggression" by a strong country towards an Independent country. It is against the Indian principles of "**Vasudev Kutumbakam**" and its aim of becoming a "**Vishwaguru**".

Lastly, at present, India should stand in the company of Russia and China, which are not democracies as understood. India needs to rethink on the lines of its democratic principles and Panchsheel.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

57. 'BHARATNATYAM' IN INDIAN DIPLOMACY

Source: This post is created based on the article "Bharat Natyam' in Indian diplomacy" published in The Hindu on 16th March 2022.

This term was coined by Jyotindra Nath Dixit, who was a former Foreign Secretary. '**Bharatnatyam**' in Indian diplomacy means that – "you may appear in different forms to others but after you have first secured your interests." The following events can be regarded as an example:

- 1.) Republics and Moscow** – After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, India accepted the challenge. It started to build new relationships with newly formed republics in Central Asia, South Caucasus, Central Europe. While maintaining its traditional ties with Moscow.
- 2.) Israel** – In 1992, India established a full diplomatic relationship with Israel, leading to one of India's most significant strategic partnerships.
- 3.) Nuclear deal** – In 1992, India and US bilateral meeting it was decided that the countries need to have frank exchanges on issues that divided them during the Cold War. This ultimately led to the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement in 2008.
- 4.) ASEAN** – Establishment of 'Look-East' policy in 1992. Since 2002, this relationship has strengthened as an annual India-ASEAN summit.
- 5.) China and Taiwan** – In 1993, confidence building measures were initiated. Such as Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in India-China border areas. Simultaneously, India and Taiwan negotiated to open economic and cultural centers.

Use of similar strategy by India during Ukraine-Russia war

The Dixit principle is visible in India's stand on the Ukraine conflict in the UN. The Indian government has chosen to 'abstain' based on its core interest. 'Abstaining' reflects a grey zone. It can either be seen as a sign of helplessness or create space for diplomatic maneuvers. In this

case, both West and Russia should feel satisfied that India is not giving into Russian or western persuasion respectively.

INDO-PAK RELATIONS

58. A MISFIRING AND ITS TRAIL OF POOR STRATEGIC STABILITY

Source: This post is created based on the article “A misfiring and its trail of poor strategic stability” **published** in The Hindu on 16th March 2022.

News: Accidental misfiring of Indian missile and the analysis of mechanisms available to avert such type of crisis.

The accidental misfiring of an Indian missile to Pakistan highlights the sorry state of bilateral mechanisms for crisis management between two nuclear adversaries. Such accidents are known as “**broken arrows**” (accidents that involve nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons components, but do not create the risk of nuclear war).

Why were the responses from both countries not aggressive?

Despite this lack of bilateral mechanism, both countries responded maturely to the accident. Pakistan did not allege that it was done intentionally by India and Indian sides owned up the mistake and ordered for inquiry.

This can be because in the subcontinent, unlike the Cold War, neither side keeps its nuclear forces on high alert. In case of India:

- Warheads are separated from delivery vehicles
- Nuclear weapons are de-alerted
- No presence of tactical nuclear weapons
- No pre-delegation of nuclear launch authority to local commanders, even during a crisis.

The situation in Pakistan is different i.e., there is presence of tactical weapons and reports of pre-delegation to forward commanders. However, like India, its nuclear forces are also not on high alert.

Is South Asia prepared for dealing with such accidents?

South Asia is hardly prepared for dealing with such crisis due to following reasons:

1) “Pre-Notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missile Agreement” is insufficient as it does not cover cruise missiles. In this incident also the missile that was misfired was a cruise missile (suspected to be BrahMos).

2) Confidence Building Measures (CBM) are weak: Two sides have not held structured meetings on nuclear and conventional CBMs for years now. There is a need to revive such dialogue mechanisms. Such as, started by Cold war adversaries after the 1962 Cuban Missile crisis.

3) Refusal of China to engage in strategic stability discussions with India and Pakistan – even though today China is involved in the Indo-Pak conflict even more.

What should be done?

1.) Setting up of **Nuclear Risk Reduction Centres:** These can provide a faster mechanism to communicate sensitive information during a crisis. This should have the objective of timely communication and proper implementation of already agreed mechanisms. A case in point could be ‘**Permanent Indus Commission**’ (Resolving disputes under Indus Water Treaty).

2.) Use of existing hotlines in case such an accident happens. In this case, the Indian Director General of Military Operations didn't use the hotline to inform Pakistan about misfiring.

New Delhi should devise ways to provide assurances to Pakistan and to improve strategic stability between two countries.

59. BrahMos can't be mistaken for nuclear-tipped missile

Source: The post is based on an article "**BrahMos can't be mistaken for nuclear tipped missile**" published in the Business Standard on 15th march 2022

News: There has been an accidental launch of supersonic Brahmos cruise missile from India into Pakistani territory

India's Response

India officially admitted that "in the course of a routine maintenance, a technical malfunction led to the accidental firing of a missile".

India has ordered a **high-level Court of Enquiry (Inquiry)**. It said "While the incident is deeply regrettable, it is also a matter of relief that there has been no loss of life due to the accident."

Pakistan's Response

Islamabad has criticised Indian "**security protocols and technical safeguards against accidental or unauthorised launch of missiles in a nuclearized environment**". It wants India to explain its procedures to prevent accidental missile launches and the particular circumstances of this incident.

Why is Pakistan's argument that India has launched a Strategic nuclear weapon is incorrect?

First, as per **India's nuclear launch posture**, the strategic weapons (commonly referred to as "nukes" or nuclear-tipped missiles) are invariably delivered via ballistic missiles, never via cruise missile. It was a cruise missile (named Brahmos). Therefore, it was not a strategic nuclear weapon.

Second, the cruise missile had been launched from near **Sirsa**, which is home to a major **air force base**, not from any Army Brahmos units, which are related to the strike corps.

Thirdly, launch of a strategic, nuclear-tipped ballistic missile require a two-person launch protocol, whereas, the Brahmos Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) was launched from a Sukhoi-30MKI fighter.

60. On the Issue of Accidental Indian missile drop in Pakistan

Sources

1. The post is based on an article "Hit and Miss" published in the Business Standard on 13th March 2022.
2. The post is based on an article "Truly Scary moment: IAF must thoroughly investigate accidental missile launch" published in the Times of India on 13th March 2022.
3. The post is based on an article "Unguided missile: On a malfunction and Pakistan's probe demand" published in the Hindu on 14th March 2022.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

News: There was an accidental launch of an IAF cruise missile that landed 124 km inside Pakistan. The missile did not carry any warhead. Thus, there was no loss of lives.

What could have been the impact?

India's global image and reputation of being a responsible nuclear power is challenged by the incident.

India and Pakistan do not have any robust risk-reduction protocols or mechanisms to deal with such mishaps. If Pakistan had air defence systems, it could have easily judged it as a hostile attack and retaliated. Also, the reaction time in the event of missile launches is only a matter of minutes.

It could have resulted into escalation between two nuclear-powered countries which are undergoing strains in their relations in recent years.

How was the potential crisis averted?

A potential crisis was averted by right diplomatic responses from both sides. Indian side admitted to a "**technical malfunction**" that led to the accidental firing of a missile.

A "high-level" enquiry has been ordered to investigate the incident and recommend appropriate action to prevent a repeat.

Argument by Pakistan

Inadequate explanation from Indian Side: The Indian government has not revealed either the nature of the missile, nor the location from which it was fired, nor which of the services fired it. It is Pakistan which claimed that an unarmed supersonic missile was fired from the Sirsa Air Force Base. It could have been the Brahmos cruise surface-to-air missile.

Pakistan has alleged that the incident "indicates many loopholes and technical lapses of a serious nature in the Indian handling of strategic weapons".

Enquiry into the incident: Pakistan has demanded for a joint probe to investigate into the incident. It has also requested that the international community be involved to promote "strategic stability in the region".

India's Stand against Pakistan demand

Indian government has rejected the Pakistani demand for a joint probe. Further, it has refuted the claims that it was a Brahmos missile. Indian side stated that all Brahmos trials take place in the eastern part of India or on the Andaman & Nicobar Islands of India.

Status of Missile Regime in India

India became a member of the **Missile Technology Control Regime in 2016**. Thus, India is seen as a **reliable defence partner** that is capable of handling its strengths and contributing to global security. India is developing more missile systems, including a hypersonic variant.

Suggestions for the way ahead

Indian side must give information on the incident as inadequate explanation leaves scope for Pakistan to shape the narrative on this incident if Indian inputs are not provided.

New Delhi and Islamabad must work out a risk-reduction protocol that can help diffuse the misunderstandings and prevent hostile responses to any kind of accident or false alarm.

If it was due to human error: In this case the **operational, command and control procedures** must be reviewed.

If it was due to a technical glitch: It cast doubts over the weapon system itself, especially at a time when India is looking to export BrahMos to countries like the Philippines. For example, in 1983, during the cold war, the nuclear early warning radar of the USSR reported the launch of intercontinental ballistic missiles from the US. But the Soviet officer Stanislav Petrov prevented the WWII by rightly judging that the warning was false due to malfunctioning detection systems.

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

CHILD EDUCATION

61. Our weak educational outcomes have a wide set of societal causes

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Our weak educational outcomes have a wide set of societal causes**” published in **Live Mint on 17th March 2022.**

News: There are various societal reasons due to which children are not achieving appropriate learning outcomes in schools. This article describes the societal reasons. **Overall governance and administrative culture**

Low prioritization of education – as manifested in budget allocation and human resources.

Failure to recognize that education is a matter of deep expertise: Key decisions are taken by people who have almost no background in the field.

Lack of continuity of direction and action: Education interventions require 10-15 years to show changes. However, in India priorities and directions change rapidly.

Socio-political trends

Considering the private sector as a panacea: India has lost two decades due to this. Wherein over 30% of children go to private school but learning outcomes have still dropped.

Notion that technology will solve problems: This has been debunked during the pandemic which has seen tragic learning losses. But still, too much of our little resources got diverted.

Effect of sharp and deep inequalities: The children of the well-to-do have more access to more resources at school and home. But the vast majority of other children do not receive such facilities.

Effect of poverty

Poverty means poor nutrition: It hinders physical and social development along with causing day-to-day implications. Such as → Lack of concentration and frequent illness causing absenteeism.

Poverty means lack of adult care: Children do not get the same adult support and care as in middle class families, which are critical for learning.

Lack of resources to support the learning environment: As there is shortage of books, learning resources, adults are also insufficiently educated.

As a society we regard education as a panacea. Despite this we treat education and our educators poorly. We need to re-calibrate our expectations from education.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES

62. Towards inclusive education

Source: This post is created based on the article “Towards inclusive education” published in **The Hindu** on **17th March 2022**.

News: Recently, the draft accessibility guidelines and standards for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Universities were released by the Universities Grants Commission (UGC).

How can the guidelines be further improved?

Correction of Procedural flaw: The public notice preceding the guidelines was inaccessible to persons with visual disabilities. The document was poorly scanned, instead a **digital document** would have been fully accessible.

The guidelines have a wide scope but can be more realistic. Each chapter of the guidelines can be followed by a checklist that distils the key action items contained in that chapter. Checklist can divide these items into ‘immediately implemented’ and those which can be ‘implemented progressively’.

Powers to UGC with regards to checklist should be given: UGC should monitor such compliance of HEIs with the checklist. It should also be empowered to take disciplinary action in case of non-compliance.

Requirement of assessment of disability based needs

- **An annual or biannual assessment** should be conducted of persons with diverse disabilities. This can equip the institution to take specific **need based intervention**.
- **Each HEI should maintain data of students with disabilities.** It should contain information regarding application, enrollment, retention, participation of students in academic and non-academic activities.

Grievance redressal mechanism

- Provision should be provided for redressal along the lines of **Rights of Person with Disabilities Rules, 2017**.
- **District Education Officers** can be empowered to deal with any violations by the HEIs.
- Provisions of **time-bound redressal** of complaints can be provided.

For disabled, high quality education can lead to meaningful participation in society. If modified suitably, these guidelines can serve as a catalyst towards an inclusive society.

63. Fixing Indian Higher Education is the ideal way to rescue students

Source: The post is based on an article “Fixing Indian Higher Education is the ideal way to rescue students” published in the Livemint on 16th march 2022

Context: Ukraine Crisis has brought the issues faced by Indian students going abroad for education

Problems faced by Foreign University Studying Students?

Crisis Situation: like the covid pandemic forced India to carry out largest rescue operations from China and the current war situation in Ukraine forcing Indian students to stand at a loss.

Impact of crisis situation: The abrupt discontinuation of foreign education takes a severe toll on students. They had to suffer on educational, economic, mental health and physical fronts.

Status of Indian Students Studying Abroad

There are over 1.1 million Indian students studying in 99 countries across the world.

What is lost in case of Indian students studying abroad?

Monetary Loss: India's budget for higher education is estimated at ₹1.04 trillion for fiscal year 2022-23. But Indian students studying abroad spend more than ₹2 trillion for their education which is lost by the Indian exchequer.

Loss of human resources: India's gross enrolment ratio (GER) for higher education is just above 27%. The National Education Policy 2020 envisages achieving a GER of 50% by 2030.

Inadequate Infrastructure: Our present education infrastructure is inadequate even for handling demand at a GER of 27%.

What measures should be taken to arrest this drain of wealth and human resources?

One, increase the supply of public and private institutions. Promote and incentivize private entities to set up educational institutions.

Two, rationalize the country's current **caste-based reservation system**. Introduce a '**creamy layer**' criterion for Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe candidates. It could also enforce the **seat reservation-limit** that was mandated by a Supreme Court ruling.

Three, there is a need to standardize the **curriculum** across universities. For example, facilitate inter-disciplinary learning and promote research-oriented education.

Four, start scholarships and on-campus jobs such as those for research and teaching assistants, etc.

Fifth, facilitate loans for education.

Conclusion

The plight of Indian students is not merely an issue of a large gap between demand and supply. A good-quality education can lead to the creation of better human resources and will be an asset for the country over the long term.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

INDIA'S COVID VACCINATION PROGRAM

64. Let an open market for vaccines fulfill demand

Source: The post is based on an article "Let an open market for vaccines fulfill demand" published in the **live mint** on **16th March 2022**

News: India's state-run covid vaccination drive was primarily aimed at pandemic mitigation for public health.

Outcomes/Impressive coverage of the India's Vaccine Program

A vast proportion of our adult population has got one or more shots, for example More than 1.8 billion doses have been administered so far.

The Children aged 15 years and above were made eligible for covid jabs in the later stages of the programme (Also, the 12-14-years age group will be covered)

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

The co-morbidity conditions have also dropped for people above 60 year who had a booster shot to supplement the usual double-jab regimen.

Average of daily infections is under 4,000, and the virus has lost virulence. It has lessened the risk.

What are the challenges in India's vaccine programme?

The government has a **limited capacity for immunizing the population of India**. For example, there was a low outlay for this.

Slow pace of expansion of eligibility: Some parents also want under-12s immunized (as kids aged above 4 are eligible in the US),

Individuals aged under 60 who were vaccinated in early-2021 might have lost immunity gained from the jab. They are in need of boosters too.

Way Ahead

Allow the open vaccine market to emerge in India that can help fulfil unmet vaccine requirements.

Give people choice to opt for a mix-and-match boost, with an mRNA jab to enhance what they took.

The Centre should allow vaccine makers to get clearances for local distribution independent of the restrictions imposed by the govt guidelines.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPINGS

FATF AND RELATED ISSUES

65. Why next FATF review is critical for India?

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Why next FATF review is critical for India?**” published in **Live Mint on 17th March 2022**.

News: The evaluation of India by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) could start by the September-October year, followed by an on-site visit in February 2023.

What is FATF and what is its objective?

FATF is an inter-governmental body that

- Sets standards, and develops and promotes policies to combat **money laundering and terrorist financing**.
- Generates the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- Works to stop funding for **weapons of mass destruction**.

FATF currently comprises 37 member jurisdictions (countries) and two regional organizations (European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council).

What are the FATF recommendations?

These are framework of measures that countries should implement in order to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

FATF also **monitors and conducts peer reviews** of each member to ensure they implement its standards fully and effectively.

What is FATF's grey list?

This means that a jurisdiction is under **increased monitoring**. The country has to swiftly resolve the identified strategic deficiencies within agreed timeframes. Presently, 23 countries — including Pakistan, Myanmar, Cambodia, Philippines, Morocco — are in the grey list.

FATF also has '**high risk jurisdictions**' above the grey list. These are countries with serious deficiencies in their anti-money laundering (AML) rules and regulations.

Why should India be concerned this time?

The last review of India was in 2010. In that review, FATF observed that India has made significant progress in addressing the deficiencies.

This round will be crucial due to following reasons:

Money laundering instances: From Yes Bank to IL&FS to Dewan Housing Finance. In all these cases, allegations of money laundering were levelled against the top management and promoters.

Questions over demonetization and crackdown on shell companies will be raised during the assessment.

Recent case of the Paytm Payments Bank – The banking regulator has ordered an external audit of the IT systems of the payments bank. The reason for clampdown is not clear but it could be due to violation of the **KYC-AML norms**.

Issue of PEP — Politically Exposed Persons: There has been no mention of PEPs in the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002**. This could be viewed as a regulatory gap during the FATF assessment.

How are the regulators preparing?

The Indian financial sector regulators have also **increased their vigil and scrutiny** on regulated entities. The focus on AML has gone up significantly in the last two-three years.

The Reserve Bank of India has, for instance, introduced a dedicated **KYC-AML inspection team** to exclusively look into compliance of banks and other financial sector entities.

Financial sector is only a part of the FATF assessment. The watchdog will also look at other sectors such as narcotics, smuggling, wildlife trafficking, which are known for fund diversion and money laundering.

UNITED NATIONS AND RELATED ISSUES

66. United Nations votes are not black and white

Source: The post is based on an article "**United Nations votes are not black and white**" published in **the Hindu** on **17th Mar 22**

News: Article highlights the finer details of the voting system followed at the UN and various other organs like UN Security Council.

Nature of Voting in UN System

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

The UN General Assembly: The member country has various options for voting like 'Yes', 'No', 'Abstention', 'present and not participating' or 'absent at the time of the vote'. This makes it possible for member states to nuance their positions to suit their needs

The UN Security Council: Here it is required that there is a "concurring votes of the permanent members. A permanent member who does not wish to cast a veto, may choose to abstain, thus allowing the resolution to be adopted (Earlier, abstention by a permanent member would amount to a veto), if it obtains the required number of nine favourable votes.

In UNSC, the members have an additional provision. It is allowed to add explanation of the vote before and after the vote. **For example**, China in present Ukrainian Crisis 2022, abstained from voting in UNSC. If it had voted against the resolution, it would have amounted to a veto. It would not be right for China which creates its image of a country which opposes foreign intervention in sovereign states.

The UN regulations and practices on voting are designed to enable the delegations to express their national opinions, considering their vital national interests.

The delegations do not vote for or against other countries. They vote for themselves.

What are the instances of Indian Abstention in Past and Present?

In 1979, India abstained in the UN General Assembly after the Soviet Union had vetoed a Security Council resolution against its intervention in Afghanistan.

In 2022, India abstained on the resolution criticized Russian invasion of the Ukraine in the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

Justification for India's abstention

- India expressed its **fundamental position** that **war is not a solution**. The diplomacy should be the only option to prevent war.
- India's votes in the UNSC, the UNGA and the Human Rights Council reflect its current national concerns in the light of the situation in Ladakh, Afghanistan, the increasing ties between Russia and China, and its membership of the Quad.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – DATA GOVERNANCE

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – COVID AND ITS IMPACT

DATA GOVERNANCE AND RELATED ISSUES

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

67. Aarogya Setu proved to be of limited utility, and it only aroused the suspicion of a wary citizenry.

It led to **loss of time** and **energy**. It means due to lack of data, much of the 'covid management' protocol was diverted for imposing stringent conditions for recording covid deaths. For example, State governments set up audit committees to certify covid deaths.

Poor data result in **poor program formulation** and **implementation**. For example, India's poor covid data resulted in the **poor progress** in ramping up health infrastructure. It also slowed down the pace of the vaccination programme till the second wave hit us in the spring of 2021?

What are the suggestions to improve India's data governance?

First pandemic data lesson: “An **Open data ecosystem** can be literally life-saving”. For example, A **geo-tagged database** can help epidemiologists to better predict the evolution of the epidemic.

Second pandemic data lesson: When data quality is poor, uncritical use of data in policymaking is fraught with dangers. Therefore, a better quality of data should be generated which is beneficial for policy making

A **well-regulated data ecosystem** can be built. It can help reap the benefits during a crisis. For instance, the UK’s statistics watchdog, **the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR)**, worked to keep the data honest. An independent and credible watchdog can check the distortion of honest data.

An **empowered statistical regulator** is the need of an hour in a healthy democracy. He should be answerable to its citizens and Parliament rather than the ruling regime.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

DRAFT INDIA DATA ACCESSIBILITY AND USE POLICY 2022

68. 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**.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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

69. 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 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

70. 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?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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.

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.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)

71. 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?

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.

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

72. 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.

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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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

73. 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 25th 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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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

74. 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?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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**.
- 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

75. Crisis in Sri Lanka

Source: The post is based on an article "Crisis in Sri Lanka) published in The Hindu on 25th 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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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.

76. 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

77. 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**

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 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.

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 rouble 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.

78. 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”.

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.

79. 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

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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 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

80. Needed, an Indian Legislative Service

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Needed, an Indian Legislative Service**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd 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.
2. **Breaches Separation of Power:** Officials mandated with exercising one area of power may not expect to exercise the others.
3. **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:

1. **Presence of variety of law making bodies:** Ranging from Panchayat, Block Panchayat, Zila Parishad, Municipal Corporations.
2. **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

81. Teachable moments

Source: This post is created based on the article “Teachable moments” published in Business Standard on **24th 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:

1. **Handling of Supernumerary admissions** such as through the quota for sports and extracurricular activities.
2. **Role of Class XII board exams** in the admission process. Whether the CUET supersedes them or some colleges will prescribe a minimum cut-off.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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

82. 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

83. 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?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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.

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

84. 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 **22nd 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:

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

- 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:

- **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

85. 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?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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

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

86. 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 24th 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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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?

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.

87. 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.

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.

88. When West Weaponizes Sanctions

Source: The post is based on an article "**When West Weaponizes Sanctions**" published in the **Business Standard** on **22nd 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**.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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

89. 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.

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.

90. 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: They focus remain 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

91. Sealed justice: On sealed cover jurisprudence

Source: This post is created based on "Sealed justice: On sealed cover jurisprudence" published in The Hindu on 25th 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

92. 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.

GS2 – POLITY – UNION AND STATES: ISSUES

INTER-STATE DISPUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

93. 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

- 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 Mokedatu project**, according to Tamil Nadu.

Mokedatu 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

94. 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.

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.

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (IDENTIFICATION) BILL

95. This is a criminal attack on privacy

Source: The post is based on an article “**This is a criminal attack on privacy**” published in **The Hindu** on **1st April 22**.

News: Recently, the **Criminal procedure (Identification) Bill 2022** was introduced in the parliament by the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs.

The Bill aims to replace the Identification of Prisoners Act 1920 that has been in need of amendment for several decades.

What has been proposed in the bill?

The **definition of measurements** has been proposed to be broadened.

– It would include new techniques like iris and retina scan, physical, biological samples etc.” in addition to behavioural measurement like signatures”

– The definition has also allowed the police machinery to do **analysis** of the **measurement**.

Data capture and ‘choice’: The proposed bill allows the police and prison officials to take measurements of all persons who are placed under arrest. It will include those who are arrested for petty crimes like a traffic violation, etc.

However, at present, data is collected only of convicts or persons arrested for an offence which is punishable with a minimum of one year’s imprisonment.

Storage of Data: It allows the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) to collect data and maintain it as a digital record for a period of 75 years. It will be used for prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of any offense”.

What are the issues in the proposed bill?

The Bill was neither put up for **pre-legislative consultation**. It was also not indicated in the legislative agenda in the Parliament session.

The proposed Bill states that a person, “**may not be obliged to allow taking of his biological samples**”. It means it **offers a choice** to a person to refuse to give biological samples.

– Firstly, this “**choice**” is limited to “**biological samples**”. It is not applicable to “**iris and retina scan**”.

– Second, the person can exercise his choice only if a police officer confers such a choice to a person. It means, a **police officer has discretion**. It can lead to misuse of discretion.

The proposed bill does not talk about the **manner** in which the records will be used for preventing crime. In fact, it means it may lead to surveillance.

It may lead to the development of **parallel databases** of the “measurements” by the law enforcement agencies. For example, **Rajasthan** and **Punjab State Police departments** already have such databases. The proposed law has also not been linked to a centralised database called as the **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)** which is operated by NCRB.

Absence of a data protection law means the database will suffer from weak enforcement.

Once an **innocent person** or the **masses who lack social and economic power** in Indian society enter their “measurements” within the system, they will be subjected to it almost for their entire life. For example, **Pardhi Adivasi community** which was once designated as a criminal tribe has continued to face preventive surveillance and predictive policing based on caste-system for centuries.

Way Forward

The Supreme Court of India pronounced “**Right to privacy is a fundamental right**” in the **Puttaswamy judgment**.

Therefore, the **legislature** and the **executive** have the responsibility to protect the fundamental right to privacy.

This protection is important to prove that India is a **constitutional democracy**, rather than a mere **electoral democracy**.

96. Any data extraction law must pass a privacy test

Source: This post is created based on the article “Any data extraction law must pass a privacy test” Published on 1st April 2022 in Live Mint.

News: The **Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022** has the objective of letting the authorities bio-tag law-breakers in their records for a watchful eye to be kept on them. The concern of citizens is the lack of a privacy framework that can restrict unauthorized use and the safety of data collected.

What are the provisions of the bill and related issues?

The bill proposed to enlarge the scope of what could be accessed under the **Identification of Prisoners Act of 1920**. It will be enlarged to include iris and retina scans, analysis of physical and biological samples, and ‘behavioural attributes’ such as a person’s signature. These will be retained by the National Crime Records Bureau for 75 years.

There, however, is lack of clarity on whom the bill will include. As far as bio samples are concerned the consent of arrested individual is mandatory, except when offence is a sexual offence or provides for a minimum punishment of 7 years. However, in practical application this right could get lost as awareness levels remain low and few can count on a pre-trial ‘right to remain silent’.

Way forward: DNA and biometric grabs are valuable crime-solving aids today. Still, this needs to be filtered by our basic right to privacy.

97. Identity and privacy: On Prisoners’ identification Bill/ Why the Criminal Identification Bill overreaches

News: **The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022**, has been tabled in Parliament.

The bill proposes to enable the collection of biometric and biological data from prisoners, besides the usual physical measurements, photographs and finger-prints.

It authorizes the **National Crime Records Bureau** to create a central repository of this evidence and share it with law enforcement agencies. There have been questions regarding legal validity of the bill.

What makes a law constitutionally valid?

To be constitutionally valid, the law must be validly enacted, serve a legitimate purpose, and any curtailment of fundamental rights for this purpose must not be excessive.

The earlier law, the **Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920**, was limited to serious offenders only. Various states have also broadened the scope of this act. For example – **Tamil Nadu** has enabled collection of blood samples.

What has been the global trend?

Countries such as the USA and UK have empowered their enforcement agencies to collect, store and analyze physical evidence from arrestees and detainees for specific classes of offences. The US maintains DNA indexing systems at the local, state and federal levels. The National DNA Database of the UK is the largest of its kind globally.

What are the shortcomings of the new Bill?

1. **Blanket provisions** – The Bill allows police to collect samples not only from convicts but also those arrested or detained under any preventive detention law.
2. **Lack of adequate restriction** on storage, sharing, or usage of the collected data. For example, the US system have strong protocols in place.
3. **Violation of fundamental right to privacy** as declared by **S. Puttaswamy case**.
4. **Violative of Article 20(3)** – right against self-incrimination.

Way forward: Such practices that involve the collection, storage and destruction of vital details of a personal nature ought to be introduced only after a **strong data protection law**, with stringent punishment for breaches, is in place.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

POLICE REFORMS AND RELATED ISSUES

98. Building faith in India's investigative agencies

Source: The post is based on the article “**Building faith in India's investigative agencies**” published in the **Indian Express** on **02nd Apr 22**.

News: According to the CJI remarks, the **institutions** including the **police** and the **investigative agencies** are losing the public trust and social legitimacy. Their reputation has eroded due to allegations of corruption, police excesses, lack of impartiality and close nexus with the political class.

What are the issues affecting the investigative agencies?

The lack of infrastructure, lack of modern equipment, lack of accountability of erring officers, lack of sufficient manpower, and inhuman conditions, especially at the lowest rung are some of the pertinent problems.

There is a change in priorities with the change in the political executive, and repeated transfers of officers are some of the issues that lead to **delays in trials**. These issues often lead to the acquittal of the guilty and incarceration of the innocent. This severely affects the public trust in the system.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

The investigative agencies still **do not have the benefit of being guided by a comprehensive law.**

There is an issue of **multiplicity of agencies.** Multiple agencies are investigating the same incident or criminal offence. It leads to dilution of evidence, prolonged incarceration of innocents etc.

In general, the female class do not report certain offences to the police machinery due to a **lack of representation of women** in the institutions.

The police officers are harassed after the **change in the regime.** But upright officers find it difficult to stand by their oath.

What steps can be taken to usher in police reform in India?

First, the police officers should **break the nexus with the political executive.** They should build robust and independent institutions. As a response, the political executive will change with time.

The best of talents who enter this system should learn that they should stand by their ethics and stand united with integrity, no matter how deficient and non-cooperative the other institutions are.

Second, The police and investigative agencies **should win the trust of the public** in order to gain social legitimacy.

Third, police should work to **ensure law and order and crime prevention.** It should work impartially and with the cooperation of the public.

Fourth, The need of the hour is the **creation of an independent and autonomous investigative agency.** For example, a statutory and an independent umbrella institution for various agencies like the CBI, SFIO, and ED can be created.

The law should clearly define its powers, functions and jurisdictions. It should be headed by an independent and impartial authority appointed by a non-partisan committee akin to the one which appoints the Director of the CBI.

The umbrella organisation will end the **multiplicity of proceedings.** Once an incident is reported, the organisation should decide as to which specialised wing should take up the investigation.

A separate and autonomous wing for prosecution and investigation can be set up under the umbrella organisation.

A reasonable check and balance can be introduced by instituting an annual audit of the **performance of the institution.**

This umbrella investigative body can be suitably adapted by the states because the police and public order is a state subjects.

Fifth, there is a need for **regular up-gradation of knowledge,** deployment of state-of-the-art technology, and international exchange programmes to learn the best practices.

Sixth, encouraging the presence of women personnel in the policing system will encourage hesitant women victims to approach the criminal justice system and report crimes.

Seventh, the relations between the community and police can be fixed. This can be done by including **sensitisation workshops, and interactions** with the public to inspire public confidence during the police training modules.

REFORMING ICAI AND RELATED ISSUES

99. A parliamentary Bill the ICAI needs to take note of

Source: This post is created based on the article “A parliamentary Bill the ICAI needs to take note of” published in The Hindu on 31st March 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

News: The Lok Sabha approved a Bill to amend the **Chartered Accountants Act, 1949**.

The law governs the **Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)**. The amendment bill aims to improve discipline, governance, administration, and accountability of ICAI. Following are its main provisions:

1. The ICAI's disciplinary committee and board of discipline will be chaired by non-chartered accountants (CA)
2. Elected council members will no longer be in a majority in disciplinary committee.
3. The term of the ICAI's Council will be raised from three to four years.
4. The maximum number of consecutive terms for its elected members will be reduced to two from the current three.
5. ICAI will appoint its auditor from the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India's panel of CA firms

What is the need of the amendment bill?

Training, disciplinary record:

Despite the difficult examination and articleship (Practical training) for CAs, some skills seem to be lacking to succeed in the corporate world. Skills include, analytical ability, critical thinking, grasp of technology and communication and presentation skills. CA student enrolment is also decreasing.

The ICAI has also been lax in acting against errant members. In 2018, the Government had set up the **National Financial Reporting Authority** as India's first independent regulator of accounting and audit. This along with a new amendment will effectively reduce ICAI to an examination board.

Historical Baggage:

CA has not kept pace with the changes in India's economy and society. ICAI was set up in 1949, largely as the Indian version of the U.K. institute. The focus of Indian business back then was how to make money by beating the system rather than improving efficiency and competitiveness. The CAs focused on getting low-value work from government entities, such as, tax audit, public sector bank branch audit etc. This is presently not sustainable.

Technological advancement:

Artificial Intelligence/ Machine learning can reduce the need for human intervention in accounting. Recent reforms such as faceless tax assessment, prompt refunds, abolition of GST audit have reduced government mandated business for CAs. It might be the reason behind popularity of overseas qualifications such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) in India, as they are more relevant to future needs.

Indian Institutes of Accounting (IIAs)

The Parliamentary Committee has suggested starting **Indian Institutes of Accounting (IIAs)** on the lines of IIT/IIM. They will offer a course based on accounting, auditing etc., ending ICAI's monopoly over certification. IIAs can greatly enhance the quality of education with a wholesome curriculum.

Way forward: Accounting instituted in other countries including the UK have changed. The ICAI also needs to respond maturely.

100. An unhelpful response to accountancy scandals

Source: The post is based on an article “**An unhelpful response to accountancy scandals**” published in the **Live Mint** on **31st March 22**.

News: Recently, the government introduced bills to amend the three Acts of Parliament – the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), Institute of Cost Accountants of India and Institute of Company Secretaries of India.

These institutions govern a trio of business governance-related institutions

Why have these legislations been proposed?

There have been a series of **audit scandals** in India Inc over the past two decades. For example, the Satyam accounting fraud, the IL&FS Scandal in 2018

The Parliamentary panel on finance advocated for **changes in disciplinary action**. The disciplinary action often falls short. There has been involvement of the auditors in some alleged financial scams. Thus created a need to revisit the existing disciplinary processes in the three institutes.”

What are the issues in new legislation?

The issues have been raised in the **manner in which the legislation has been brought** up by the government.

The three entities already have internal disciplinary panels. The proposal mandates that the committees should include external members. But it would provide another **source of potential conflict**.

Another proposal is to set up a new coordination body for the three bodies. It would be headed by a secretary-level officer. This **increases the probability of government interference** in the functioning and erosion of autonomy of these institutions.

What are the issues in the functioning of the ICAI?

It has been **reluctant to improve the self-governance**, the institutional systems and processes in line with global trends

The institute has been mostly led by family members etc. They don't improve or crack down on unethical staffing practices.

What is the way forward?

In order to improve audit standards and promote professionalism in our chartered institutes, the centre should **appoint chartered accountants to bank boards** as nominee directors, giving them extra-jurisdictional responsibilities.

Opening up the membership of these institutes to overseas audit firms, can go a long way in improving the performance of these institutes.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

101. The folly of an ‘atmanirbhar’ internet

Source: The post is based on an article “The folly of an atmanirbhar internet” published in the Indian Express on 30th March 2022.

News: The Big Tech companies have been alleged of the “weaponization” of digital platforms. They have been alleged to silence the Russian State media.

Why is the move of the big tech companies right?

The Kremlin-controlled media have created a narrative about genocide against the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine. They were doing false reports of Russian soldiers being welcomed as liberators by grateful Ukrainians.

The controlled media did not show the fate of millions of refugees that were left homeless due to Russian invasion.

In Russia, the independent media including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter were taken off-air.

What are the factors in India-Russia relations?

Both had grown their relationship based on arms supplies, hydrocarbons and the love for Bollywood films, especially Raj Kapoor.

How have Russia and India dealt with digital media?

Both India and Russia have **imposed stringent regulations** on the social media platforms like Facebook, Google etc.

– **For example**, Russia warned Google and other major platforms under the so-called “**landing law**”. It also warned the employees to be fined and arrested for non-compliance.

Similarly, **India issued such orders in February 2021**, like platform to have office with an Indian address. They need to employ a chief compliance officer, a nodal contact person and a resident grievance officer. They were given three months to comply and the chief compliance officer would be criminally liable for content on the platform.

Russia and India both have been **trying to slow down the access to Twitter accounts** about a year before. Both had made similar excuses like Twitter have failed to remove content relating to illegal drug use, child pornography and encouraging teen suicide. For example, Indian government had demanded the blocking of 500 accounts, etc. In this context, Indian authorities raided twitter offices.

What is the way forward?

It is time for India’s path to diverge from what Russia is doing. It must **check creation of a parallel internet** along the lines of China, North Korea and Russia

In democracies, the **media that spreads disinformation must be curbed**. It should not be allowed to justify a wrong war.

“Atmanirbhar Internet” is not a desired thing in India. It is a globally connected digital common. It imparts knowledge relies on the freedom of expression and the freedom to draw upon others.

If India must push for **self-reliance**, like reducing its disproportionate reliance on Russian weapons and hydrocarbons.

MINORITIES AND RELATED PROVISIONS

102. Hindu as minority: Government's affidavit is consistent with the Constitution

Source: This post is created based on the article **“Globalization is dying: Long may the phenomenon live” published on 30th March in Indian Express.**

News: This week, the Government of India submitted a detailed affidavit in the Supreme Court on the issue of who is a minority, and how minorities are defined in the Constitution.

About Government's affidavit:

It states about granting minority status to Hindus in **Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, a few Northeastern states, and Lakshadweep**. The affidavit says Hindus can be declared a minority in a few states, and avail minority welfare schemes under **Articles 38 and 46**.

The affidavit says minorities are defined both nationally and at the level of states.

The definition of minority

“Minorities” (or “minority”) appears at **four places in the Constitution** — in the headnotes of **Articles 29 and 30, and clauses (1) and (2) of Article 30**. The Constitution does not define “minority”.

First, a minority is a group that is **numerically smaller** than the majority in a society. Lack of numbers alone is not a guide to any authoritative definition. In **apartheid South Africa**, minorities exercised power and domination over the rest of the society.

Second definition of minority is that the group must be **non-dominant in society and the polity**. Minorities, such as, Muslims satisfy both the tests, viz. numerical inferiority and non-domination. Their representation in Parliament and state Assemblies is at an all-time low.

The Constitution talks of only religious and linguistic minorities. It does not recognise sexual minorities such as LGBTQ+. Also, the Supreme Court has **accepted only the numerical inferiority test, i.e., less than 50%** in a state's population, for a group to be recognised as a minority under Article 30(1).

Supreme Court Judgements:

In **‘Re: The Kerala Education Bill’** (1958) the court explicitly rejected districts as a unit to determine the minority status of a group within the state. The apex court took the **“state” as a unit** to determine the minority status of groups claiming themselves as minorities.’

‘TMA Pai Foundation’ (2003) laid down that in the absence of any special definition of “minorities”, any community, **religious or linguistic**, which is numerically less than 50 per cent of the population of a state is entitled to the protection of minority rights.

Thus, Hindus are entitled to recognition as a linguistic minority in the whole of India, not just seven states/UTs.

Religious, linguistic minority

Article 30 gives the same rights to religious and linguistic minorities, but does not say that these minorities must necessarily be determined at the level of the state.

Two views are possible as to the recognition of minorities.

1. **One approach** can be to define religious minorities nationally and linguistic minorities on the basis of the state.
2. The **second approach** can be to accept the dissenting opinion of **Justice Ruma Pal in TMA Pai Foundation**. It states that if a law of Parliament is being challenged, minorities must be defined nationally; if it is a state law, then minorities must be determined at the state level keeping in view numerical inferiority within the state concerned.

In 1930, the erstwhile **Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ)** had defined community not in terms of numbers, but in terms of shared religious, racial, and linguistic traditions.. The existence of a community is not dependent upon recognition by law. In **N Ammad** (1998), the Supreme Court rightly held that minority status is a matter of fact, and does not require state recognition or declaration.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – RESERVATION IN INDIA

RESERVATION IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

103. Quota and data: On Vanniyar quota verdict

Source: The post is based on the article “**Quota and data: On Vanniyar quota verdict**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd April 2022**.

News: Recently, the Supreme Court of India **quashed the Tamil Nadu Special Reservation Act of 2021**, or the Vanniyar quota law, on the ground that it was not based on updated quantifiable data.

What was proposed in the legislation?

Read here: [Supreme Court strikes down Tamil Nadu’s 10.5% Vanniyar quota](#)

What were the issues in the proposed reservation?

The Court said, caste can be the starting point for the identification of backward classes or providing internal reservation, but it cannot be the sole basis for giving reservation.

The Court pointed out that the **relative backwardness** and **representation of other communities** in the MBCs and DNCs were not analysed using **relevant, updated and contemporaneous data**.

What is the importance of judgment with respect to the state’s power on the reservation?

First, the court held that the State is competent to design **subclassification** among backward classes. It can prescribe the **quantum of reservation** based on such **subclassification**, and formulate an **ancillary law**, even with the assent of the Governor, to one included in the Ninth Schedule. But, Internal or exclusive reservations cannot be granted to any community without using **quantifiable data**.

Second, a **caste-based census** is required to determine the representation of various communities in public employment and in education. If there is an inadequate representation, it may be a ground for special treatment in the reservation.

Third, the concept of a creamy layer is very important to uphold the **principle of equity** in the reservation. Therefore, a person who is in the creamy layer must be excluded from providing reservations to backward classes.

ISSUES RELATED TO PUBLIC HEALTH – AUTISM

104. We need to talk about autism

Source: This post is based on the article “We need to talk about autism” published in the **Indian Express** on **2nd April 2022**.

News: United Nations has mandated April as autism awareness month and April 2 as Autism Awareness Day. In India, Autism is emerging as a major paediatric concern. So, Our systems have to be ready for it.

What is Autism?

Autism is not a “disease” that can be cured. It is a condition that arises from certain neurobiological factors.

Characteristics: A person with Autism will have a lifelong set of developmental impairments in the domains of communication and social responsiveness. The person is accompanied by a set of restrictive and repetitive behaviours.

Research also suggests that sleep disturbances — fragmented and erratic sleeping, frequent and prolonged night waking — impact over 80% of children with autism.

What are the steps taken by India to tackle autism?

1) Autism was **recognised as a disability** in 2016 under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. **2)** The bulk of learning for autistic children in most schools, private and NGO-run, is implemented through **Individualised Education Plans (IEP)**. It contains joining dots, tracing letters, and putting objects from one container to the others, etc.

3) In 2019, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), launched an app — PedNeuroAiimsDiagnostics. The app aims to help in the early detection of Autism. Despite being very robust, the app has not seen much traction.

What are the challenges associated with combating Autism in India?

1) Awareness is low, and the stigma is high. For instance, wearing amulets, making children to drink the water touched by a crow, etc.

2) Low availability of data: A Government of India statistical profile from 2021 about Persons with Disabilities (PwD) does not account for autism since it bases itself on the Census data of 2011. For instance, A 2019 all-India statistic reveals a total of 10,338 persons with autism in India. Delhi reported zero cases as did many other states. But that is not the ground reality.

3) There is no one autism. There are many autisms: autism research shows that it a “spectrum of conditions.”

How can India face the challenges associated with Autism?

Health, education and awareness campaigns are the three domains the government should focus on.

Ramping up autism screening: This is because there are no biomarkers to detect the risk of autism.

Curriculum frameworks should be dynamic and responsive to the spectrum of autism are the need of the hour. RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India), NCERT (National Council of Educational

Research and Training) and NIOS must collaborate on the creation of learning material and teacher training programmes for IEP.

Autism awareness campaigns need to popularise legal rights and government benefit schemes, which include free education and financial support for benchmarked disabilities.

The National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMED) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment disseminates such information. But awareness needs to be raised

COVID PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT – LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

105. 7 Lessons From The Pandemic

Source: The post is based on an article “7 Lessons from The Pandemic” published in **The Times of India** on 02nd Apr 22.

News: It seems that the Covid-19 pandemic may become endemic soon. In the last 2 years, Covid-19 has tested Indian governance among a number of other things. Therefore, it provides scope for learning a number of lessons from the recent covid experiences

What lessons can be learnt from India’s experience with the Covid Pandemic?

Firstly, The Indian government could have adopted a **selective and targeted lockdown**. The harsh and too severe lockdown resulted in the loss of millions of jobs and a lot of misery for poor migrants. For example, **Bangladesh** issues **four days’ notice** to the people to go back to their homes before imposing a lockdown.

Secondly, India **failed to reform the healthcare sector**. It is still rigid, inept, inefficient, ineffective and plagued with bureaucratic problems. In contrast, **Thailand** has linked its **public and private systems** to ensure healthcare reforms. It also improved its primary healthcare networks. In contrast, 33% of the nurses and 40% of doctors are absent and medicines are often stolen in India’s rural primary healthcare network.

Thirdly, the accurate data like testing, infections, deaths data at a neighbourhood level and an **authentic geotagged database** are important for predicting the epidemic’s evolution. It helps in taking right **policy response**. For example, the Kerala model has been a success story in taking the right decision.

Fourthly, India’s vaccination drive could have been better had the government pre-ordered vaccines early. Although it was impressive that vaccine drive was well coordinated, cost-effective and digitally managed. For example, India’s got vaccine certificates instantly.

Fifthly, on the **government’s fiscal response**. The Indian government provided free rations and a rural job guarantee through credit easing. This effectively prevented tragedy.

Sixthly, related to the **educational system**. The power of technology was used in education delivery, for example, the virtual classrooms were started. But it was limited to privileged children who had internet access. Poor kids without smartphones or connectivity failed to maintain their education level.

Lastly, on ideological beliefs. India needs a **blend of central planning and market-based reforms**. Although **market-based reforms** brought widespread prosperity, the poor were left at the mercy of the rich. Therefore, **central planning is also needed** to protect the weak.

HEALTHCARE INFRA IN INDIA

106. Towards affordable healthcare in India: 'Jan Aushadhi' to 'Jan Upyogi'

Source: This post is based on the article “**Towards affordable healthcare in India: 'Jan Aushadhi' to 'Jan Upyogi'**” published in Down to Earth on **28th Mar 22**.

News: India marked the Jan Aushadhi Diwas 2022 in mid-February.

About Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)

Prime Minister launched Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) in 2015, with a vision to provide affordable and quality medicine to the citizens of India.

The scheme was established under the **department of pharmaceuticals of the Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers**.

Since its establishment in 2015, more than 8,000 janaushadhi kendras (centres) have been operationalised across India. These centres offer generic drugs and surgical items at an affordable price.

In the long run, PMBJP aims to make healthcare **affordable, accessible** and **acceptable** by all the citizens.

Benefits of PMBJP:

- It serves **employment opportunities** to the human resources in the pharma sector. It provides financial assistance and support to the qualified personnel to open Janaushadhi Kendra and generate income.
- In addition to the direct employment opportunity, Janaushadhi Kendra generates **peripheral employment** in associated supply chain, transportation and maintenance sectors.

What is the need for affordable healthcare?

Considering the following vital factors, it is important to make healthcare affordable to the population:

- **Health is one of the central pillars** of a nation's Human Development Index (HDI) that indicates its prosperity. Hence, every nation aims to provide good healthcare to its citizens at an affordable cost through various initiatives and schemes.
- The **budget allocation to healthcare is less** than 3 per cent. India's population is dominated by rural domiciles and mid-income groups.
- About **one-third population of our country is devoid of health insurance**. The prevailing diseases and pandemic outbreaks add to the perils of the situation.
- Medicines (*aushadhi*) and surgical equipment have a larger share in healthcare. **Making them reach the common mass** of our society solves a major issue in healthcare. This makes 'Jan Aushadhi' a *jan-upyogi* (useful for the mass).
- **India's out-of-pocket expenditure (OOP) on healthcare is more than 60%**, according to Niti Aayog's latest report. This is significantly above the average for lower-middle income countries. Costly patented drugs further contribute towards a higher OOP.

What are some issues with PMBJP that need to be addressed?

- increasing the outreach of the Janaushadhi Kendra.
- promotion for increasing awareness of PMBJP.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

– maintaining the affordable price of the generic medicines despite increasing inflation and supply cost.

What is the way forward?

First, to increase the outreach of Janaushadhi Kendra, an **increase in the healthcare budget** for infrastructure and financial support is required.

– In addition, PPP models for generic drugs should be looked into to increase competitive participation of more private players and expand the outreach. Training and development of pharmaceutical staff will also be required in expansion of Janaushadhi Kendra.

Second, to **spread awareness about PMBJP** and Janaushadhi Kendra, collaboration with local hospitals, clinics and doctors is required.

Third, to maintain the affordable prices of the generic drugs, **supply-side intervention** is required. This primarily includes:

– R&D of drugs to bring the efficacy of generic drugs at par with that of patented drugs, at less cost.

– Efficiency in production, storage and supply chain would also help in slashing the input cost and thereby, maintain the affordable prices.

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

CUET and related issues

107. On CUET: Centralising tests

Source: The post is based on an article “Centralising tests” published in The Hindu on 30th Mar 22.

Syllabus: GS2 – Social Sector, Education

Relevance: Higher education reforms

News: The UGC has decided to conduct a Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for admission from 2022-23 in undergraduate programmes in all the Central Universities (CUs) funded by it.

Background

Madhuri R. Shah Committee (1984) recommended a national merit examination for the Central Universities.

The govt advocates for ‘**one nation, one standard**’ maxim in different sectors.

The National Education Policy (NEP) also advocates for a common entrance examination for undergraduate and graduate admissions and fellowships. It should be conducted by the National Testing Agency

What are some challenges?

The test would be based on the NCERT syllabus, which is followed largely in CBSE schools. But a **vast majority** of students do not study in CBSE board but in **State Boards**.

The policy **does not include Class XII marks** as one of the parameters for determining the merit.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

The students, whose learning process was disrupted by COVID-19, may **find it challenging** to clear the test. The test is being introduced just ahead of an admission season.

The **test might affect the interest of State domiciles of students** to secure admission in a university in the North-Eastern State.

What way is forward?

In the instant case, the UGC has clarified the existing scheme of reservations in individual universities would not be disturbed

108. Common University Entrance Test won't solve the real problems

Source: This post is based on the article “**Common University Entrance Test won't solve the real problems**” published in **The Indian Express** on **29th Mar 22**.

News: University Grants Commission (UGC) recently announced the introduction of the Central University Entrance Test (CUET), which is now mandatory for undergraduate admission at any of the 45 central universities in the country.

What is the need for a centralised entrance test like CUET?

In India there is an uneven quality of different school boards due to which there is a huge trust deficit and suspicion about the academic quality of even the toppers. A centralised mode of ranking and evaluation through the CUET promises an “**objective**” and “**value-neutral**” measurable index for selecting and eliminating young aspirants for different courses.

Furthermore, this centralised test would **free the tension-ridden youngsters from the pressure of writing multiple entrance tests** in different colleges/universities.

What are the limitations of such standardised testing?

The dominant structure of education prevalent in the country is essentially **book-centric and exam-oriented**. Rote learning or strategic learning (a gift of coaching centres) is its essence. It is far from learning and unlearning with joy, wonder and creativity, young students become strategists or exam-warriors. Under these circumstances, **true learning suffers**.

MCQ-centric “objective” tests are not suitable for the domain of humanities and social sciences as they involve subjective and diverse interpretation. Young students are **deprived of the hermeneutic art of interpretation** and skill of argumentation, and compelled to reduce everything into an “objective” fact. In such a scenario, children will lose the power of creative articulation, and culture of debate and contestation.

What is the way forward?

Meaningful learning is not just about exams. In fact, truly meaningful learning takes place outside the parameters of the official texts and curriculum, wherein teachers inspire students to see beyond the syllabus.

Hence, for real transformation, we must **a)** see beyond the CUET, **b)** work on the quality of schools and creatively nuanced life-affirming pedagogy; and **c)** think of honest and fair recruitment of spirited teachers, and relative autonomy of academic institutions, **d)** learn to value the uniqueness of each child

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE IAS

109. Fixing the service: Recruiting more IAS officers is necessary, as is a real merit system and trimming of government

Source: This post is based on the article “**Fixing the service: Recruiting more IAS officers is necessary, as is a real merit system and trimming of government**” published in **The Times of India** on **29th Mar 22**.

News: Data presented by a parliamentary committee has revealed that over 1,500 sanctioned IAS officer posts (22%) at the state level lie vacant, with some states reporting greater gaps than others.

It should be noted that GoI had earlier mooted an **amendment to service rules to ensure more officers are available for central deputation by making states’ consent immaterial. This had triggered stiff resistance from opposition-governed states.**

What is the annual intake of IAS officers?

The last review of IAS cadre strengths in 2012 had fixed the annual intake at **180 officers**.

The parliamentary committee has remarked that a panel constituted to revise this number for 2022 onwards can “significantly” increase the intake to fill sanctioned posts.

What are some issues with bureaucracy in India?

Crisis of quantity & quality: Alongside quantity, bureaucracy is also battling a crisis of quality.

– Currently, talented officers, sandwiched between mediocrity and officer scarcity, are heavily overworked. This is not a sustainable path.

Top-heavy structure of the bureaucracy: Unlike pyramidal hierarchies in typical organisations, central cadres like IAS and IPS have “cylindrical” structures because of assured promotions.

– **For instance**, Punjab police has around 30 DGP/ADGP-level officers. This top-heaviness isn’t contributing to governance, as Punjab is reeling with the problem of drug and liquor mafia.

Outsider tag for lateral entrants: GoI’s efforts at lateral entry have struggled because many IAS officers rising to the mid- and senior-levels have deep-rooted knowledge of the terrain and strong support networks. Lateral entrants, on the other hand, face the outsider tag despite industry or research or grassroots experience they may possess.

What is the way forward?

Recent GoI initiatives like Mission Karmayogi and Capacity Building Commission must lead to a performance management system that can reward the best and brightest and deter young officers from sliding into mediocrity.

Underperformers must be retired prematurely so that they don’t drag down governance.

The number of officers embedded in non-essential departments, commissions, corporations and schemes must be reduced.

BIMSTEC AND RELATED ISSUES

110. BIMSTEC after the Colombo summit

Source: This post is based on the article “**BIMSTEC after the Colombo summit**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd April 22**.

News: The 5th summit of the regional grouping, the BIMSTEC (*Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation*), composed of five South Asian countries and two Southeast Asian countries, was held virtually in Colombo on March 30.

The summit has undoubtedly advanced the cause of regional cooperation and integration.

But, the question to address is – whether BIMSTEC is now capable of tackling the challenges facing the region and can this multilateral grouping trigger accelerated economic development?

How the BIMSTEC was gradually strengthened?

India took a lead in strengthening and rejuvenating BIMSTEC by convening the Leaders’ Retreat in 2016.

A forward-looking summit held in Kathmandu in 2018, meant the efforts to enshrine primacy to BIMSTEC further gained momentum.

The eventual result is now seen in the package of decisions and agreements announced at the latest summit.

What is the outcome of the Colombo summit?

Colombo package consists of the following elements:

1) BIMSTEC Charter: Adopted formally, it presents BIMSTEC as “an inter-governmental organization” with “legal personality.” Among BIMSTEC’s purposes is acceleration of “the economic growth and social progress in the Bay of Bengal region”, and promotion of “multidimensional connectivity”.

The grouping now views itself not as a sub-regional organisation, but as a **regional organisation** whose destiny is linked with the area around the Bay of Bengal.

2) Reduction in the number of sectors of cooperation from the 14 to a more manageable seven. Each member-state will serve as a lead for a sector:

- trade, investment and development (Bangladesh);
- environment and climate change (Bhutan);
- **security, including energy (India);**
- agriculture and food security (Myanmar);
- people-to-people contacts (Nepal);
- science, technology and innovation (Sri Lanka),
- connectivity (Thailand).

3) Adoption of the Master Plan for Transport Connectivity (2018-2028). This approval was delayed, but its importance lies in the highest-level political support accorded to this ambitious plan. It was devised and backed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

4) Finally, the package also includes **three new agreements signed by member states**, relating to

- mutual legal assistance in criminal matters
- Cooperation between diplomatic academies
- The establishment of a technology transfer facility in Colombo

What are the challenges that the grouping faces?

The pillar of trade, economic and investment cooperation needs greater strengthening and at a faster pace.

- Despite signing a framework agreement for a **comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** in 2004, BIMSTEC has made slow progress on this front. Of the seven constituent agreements needed for the FTA, only two are in place as of now. Work on the legal instruments for coastal shipping, road transport and intra-regional energy grid connection, remains unfinished.

What is the way forward?

Speedy success has been achieved in deepening cooperation in security matters and management of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). Likewise, by working on FTAs, the **economic development needs to be hastened too**.

BIMSTEC should **focus more** in the future on new areas such as the **blue economy, the digital economy, and promotion of exchanges and links among start-ups and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**.

The **personal engagement of the political leadership should be increased**. The decision taken in Colombo to host a summit every two years is welcome if implemented. But in the medium term, an annual summit should be the goal, with an informal retreat built into its programme.

BIMSTEC needs greater visibility. India's turn to host the G20 leaders' summit in 2023 presents a golden opportunity, which can be leveraged optimally. All BIMSTEC members can be invited to the G20 summit as the chair's special guests.

Simplifying the name: The present name running into 12 words should be changed to four words only — the Bay of Bengal Community (BOBC). Brevity reflects gravitas.

111. Cohesion and co-operation: On power imbalances in BIMSTEC

Source: The post is based on an article "**Cohesion and co-operation: On power imbalances in BIMSTEC**" published in The Hindu on 1st April 2022.

News: Recently, the fifth Summit of the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** was held.

In the summit, **BIMSTEC Charter**, and **Master Plan for Transport Connectivity** were adopted among other things.

What are the challenges facing the BIMSTEC?

The **Rohingya crisis** has weakened the bilateral relations between **Bangladesh** and **Myanmar**. For example, Dhaka wants all the refugees to be repatriated to Myanmar and Myanmar is not responding positively.

How is BIMSTEC important for India?

India will be leading the **'security pillar'** out of the seven designated pillars of the revived BIMSTEC. It will give a boost to regional aspirations of India, which were not fulfilled by the **SAARC**. The SAARC has been facing various roadblocks and has not met since November 2014.

India does not have any sharp disagreements or hostilities with members of BIMSTEC unlike **SAARC**. The latter one is burdened by **India-Pakistan hostilities**. Thus, it would provide a co-operative environment for India.

India has opted not to be part of **China-led RCEP**. Therefore, BIMSTEC, a regional grouping of countries which are in close proximity to India, may provide it with a lot of opportunities.

Way Forward

The **sustained bilateral** and **group-level discussions** are required to prevent problems like the **Rohingya crisis** to act as a roadblock in the functioning of the grouping and implementation of the decisions.

India should ensure continued **political engagement** with **Nepal, Sri Lanka** and **Bangladesh**. This would ensure **smooth bilateral** and **group-level working relationships**.

India should take a **leadership role** in the region. It can start with promoting **cross-border connectivity**; lowering barriers to the movement of people and goods; and promoting flow of investments.

In order to boost intraregional trade and economic ties, a **'coastal shipping ecosystem'** and an **interconnected electricity grid** is required. In this context, India's PM has also called for a **BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement**.

The BIMSTEC members should learn from the security- and trade-related issues which troubled **SAARC** and **SAFTA**.

112. Bridging the bay in quest of a stronger BIMSTEC

Source: The post is based on an article **"Bridging the bay in quest of a stronger BIMSTEC"** published in **The Hindu** on **30th Mar 22**.

News: Sri Lanka is going to host the Fifth Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Summit. It is going to be the silver jubilee (25 years of BIMSTEC).

BIMSTEC members should build the momentum of collaborations in the Bay of Bengal region for the security and development of all.

What have been the area of cooperation b/w BIMSTEC countries?

BIMSTEC countries have been cooperating in several areas. This includes areas include security, counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, cybersecurity and coastal security, and transport connectivity and tourism, among others.

There is growing involvement of educational institutions, industries and business chambers through various forums and conclaves. This is helping to enhance cooperation in different sector.

Why BIMSTEC has special significance for India and the region?

India has made the Bay of Bengal integral to India's 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies

The Bay of Bengal has become important in economic and strategic space. It has a unique position as a **pivot** in the **'Indo-Pacific' region**, a place where the strategic interests of the major

powers of East and South Asia intersect. There is growing economic, geopolitical and security connections between the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions.

The BIMSTEC further has potential due to **geographical contiguity, abundant natural and human resources**.

All the member countries have **rich historical and cultural linkages**. It promotes deeper cooperation in the region.

The BIMSTEC serves as a bridge between the South and Southeast Asia which are two major high-growth centres of Asia. It can **accelerate the process of regional integration**.

Way Forward

Connectivity is essential to develop a **peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal region**. Therefore, national connectivity infrastructure should be upgraded and integrated into a regional road map. In addition, the hard and soft infrastructures should also be developed.

– For example, The **BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity** can boost the connectivity.

The **BIMSTEC Secretariat should be strengthened**. It coordinates, monitors and facilitates the implementation of BIMSTEC activities and programmes. Therefore, approval of the BIMSTEC charter during the summit can be a way forward.

India can play key role in regional cooperation. For example, Recently, India has implemented its promise to set up a Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies (CBS) at Nalanda University, Bihar for research on art, culture and other subjects related to the Bay of Bengal.

The **political support and strong commitment** from all member countries are crucial in making BIMSTEC a dynamic and effective regional organisation.

113. A subregional grouping that must get back on course

Source: The post is based on an article “**A subregional grouping that must get back on course**” published in **The Hindu** on **29th March 22**.

News: A summit level meeting of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is going to be organized in Sri Lanka.

It is an opportunity to take concrete steps to address critical challenges confronting the region.

About Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue (BOBMD)

It was organised recently by the **Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue** and the **Pathfinder Foundation**.

It brought together government officials, maritime experts, and representatives of prominent think tanks from **Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia** to step up efforts in areas such as environmental protection; curtailing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, etc.

What is the potential for the blue economy of the Bay of Bengal?

The Bay of Bengal is an important **source of natural resources**. It includes **rich marine ecosystems** like fragile estuaries, mangrove forests, coral reefs, seagrass meadows and mass nesting sites of sea turtles.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

It also serves a coastal population of approximately 185 million people. For example, the fishermen population thrives on fish catch etc

There are many opportunities to develop maritime trade, shipping, aquaculture and tourism

What are the pressing challenges in BOB?

The BOB is facing plastic pollution; destruction of natural protection against floods such as mangroves; sea erosion; industrialization and population pressure in the coastal areas, huge quantities of untreated waste flow, annual loss of mangrove areas; and emergence of a dead zone; etc.

Frequent **cyclonic storms** and an **increase in the sea level**.

There are anthropogenic security threats like, **terrorism**, and **piracy**.

Another conflict between countries is due to fishermen crossing into the territorial waters of neighbouring countries is an important one. For example, India and Sri Lanka **fishermen dispute**.

At present, there is **limited cooperation** between countries of the region in marine research. Like interactions of the premier institutions and excellent scientists within the region.

Way Forward

There is a need for **regional coordinated** and **concerted action** for tapping the potentials of BOB and resolving the maritime issues of a transboundary nature in the BOB region.

Marine environmental protection should be a priority. Protected areas can be established. The frameworks can be developed to prevent and manage water pollution.

The modern technology and improved fishing practices can be used to **strengthen fisheries management**, and promote sustainable fishing methods,

There is also a **need for greater scientific research** on climate change and its impact in general and on fisheries in particular.

A **Participatory approach must be evolved** for data collection, and real-time stock assessment for fish stock. In this context, a regional open fisheries data alliance may be created.

The BIMSTEC summit should support both BOBP and FAO's BOBLME.

– The Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) is an inter-governmental organisation (based in Chennai), doing work to promote sustainable fishing.

– The Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) project is funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and others.

There should be increased monitoring, control and surveillance of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. For this, an **international vessel tracking system** can be established. A **regional fishing vessel registry system**, automatic identification system (AIS) trackers for vessels; improved joint regional patrols, etc. be established.

114. Taking The BIMSTEC Route To Prosperity

Source: This post is based on the article “Taking The BIMSTEC Route To Prosperity” published in **The Times of India** on **28th Mar 22**.

Context: BIMSTEC is holding its summit on Mar 30 in Sri Lanka. As SAARC has failed to make any progress in the past few years, the burden to advance the regional cooperation now lies on BIMSTEC. Further, meticulous preparations behind the scenes have created an atmosphere of hope for its success.

What is BIMSTEC and how has it grown over time?

-- Read [here](#)

It completes 25 years of the journey that began in Bangkok in June 1997.

Until 2014, it was a low-profile, unassuming sub-regional grouping. But as hopes of SAARC cooperation faded, India took a bold initiative, helping the smaller grouping to develop ambition.

– In Oct 2016, the leaders of BIMSTEC were invited to a historic retreat for deep reflection, where they also interacted with the BRICS leaders.

– In 2018, BIMSTEC felt adequately confident to project itself as a dynamic regional grouping, ready to work for “a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region”.

Why is BIMSTEC significant?

It represents 1.7 billion people and a combined GDP of \$3.8 trillion, which can accelerate economic development through greater integration.

Since the SAARC continues to be in limbo, BIMSTEC is the only available platform for South Asian cooperation with the region.

For India

For India specifically, BIMSTEC is of increasing relevance to its

- Neighbourhood First policy
- national priority to ensure stability and development in the Northeast,
- Indo-Pacific strategy.

What are the likely outcomes of the summit?

BIMSTEC leaders will adopt the **charter (or constitution)** that defines its goals, institutions and long-term vision.

Leaders may also approve a **major rationalisation of sectors of cooperation**, pruning them down from 14 to seven areas, each assigned to a member state as ‘the lead’.

They will support the **strengthening of the secretariat**, with at least one country – India – offering additional funding to shoulder its added responsibilities.

A **10-year master plan for transport connectivity** supported by the Asian Development Bank will be adopted.

Three new agreements will be signed, focussed on

- mutual legal assistance in criminal matters
- cooperation between diplomatic academies and

– the establishment of a technology transfer facility in Colombo.

What are the challenges that need to be addressed?

One, connectivity issue, is based on the triple-axis of coastal shipping linkages, a seamless road transport network governed by a motor vehicles agreement, and a smooth energy grid interconnection based on demand and supply. Some agreements are not in place yet, while others await implementation.

Two, the creation of a **BIMSTEC development fund**, which has shown little progress so far.

Three, cooperation for disaster management and security cooperation for countering international terrorism, crime and cyber security have developed well. But, they need to be **balanced with progress on the economic front**, as some members' worry about the group's 'over-securitisation'.

Four, the plan to conclude a **comprehensive free trade agreement**, which began with a framework agreement signed in 2004, poses the biggest challenge. Existing impediments to the trade agreement need to be removed by gathering the necessary political will.

Five, the leaders may develop a **consensus on the broad parameters that should shape BIMSTEC's ties with its external partners**. This is of increasing importance, given China's marked intrusion into the geo-economic space of BIMSTEC.

What is the way forward?

BIMSTEC should draw suitable lessons from the successful ASEAN model.

BIMSTEC aspires to be inclusive, an association of business and industry leaders as well as other stakeholders from the 'Third Space' comprising youth, women groups and media. A rejuvenated BIMSTEC will contribute to turning the Indo-Pacific into a free, open and inclusive region.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

INDIA – NEPAL RELATIONS

115. An opportunity to repolish India-Nepal ties

Source: The post is based on an article “**An opportunity to repolish India-Nepal ties**” published in **The Hindu** on **1st April 22**.

News: The Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is on trip to India from April 1.

This visit holds significance since it is the first visit of Nepal's PM to India since 2018, and is also the first bilateral visit of the new PM of Nepal.

What are the issues with India-Nepal relations?

India-Nepal **bilateral relations** reached a **historic low** when the **Indian blockade** was done in September 2015.

After **demonetisation**, India refused to accept the demonetised rupee bills from the **Nepal Rastra Bank**.

Poor perception of **India's trust in Nepal**. For example, the passengers boarding flights from Nepal to India are subjected to a **pre-boarding security check**. This happens despite 20 years of the **hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft**.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

India has not welcomed the million-grant assistance proposed by **Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)**, a **US government foreign aid agency** and approved by the Nepali parliament. It may prevent improvement in the India-Nepal relationship and give a dent to the **Indo-US relationship**.

Nepal is often blamed for playing **geopolitical** games between **China** and **India** due to its unique geographical location.

China is actively engaged in Nepal. It has made inroads into the politics of Nepal. For example, it sponsored an **anti-MCC campaign**.

Since July 2020, The **Nepal Parliament** has been **dysfunctional** due to development of the cracks within the former Communist alliance.

What is the way forward?

First, India can build trust in Nepal through a **power trade agreement**. The hydropower will remain the only source that can manage peak demand in India despite India's focus on solar energy projects in India.

Second, both countries should **promote trade and transit arrangements** through electronic platforms. It can provide many new opportunities for businesses on both sides of the border.

Third, Nepal needs to work upon the **Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA)** signed between India and Nepal. Its implementation would attract more foreign investments from Indian investors.

Fourth, New Nepali leadership can provide confidence to India that Nepal is interested to work with India.

INDO-PAK RELATIONS

116. India can act today to shape tomorrow's terms of connectivity with Pakistan

Source: The post is based on an article "**India can act today to shape tomorrow's terms of connectivity with Pakistan**" published in the **Indian Express** on **31st Mar 22**.

News: Recently, there have been various developments between India and Pakistan relations which were encouraging.

What are some of the positive developments?

- Both countries handled India's accidental firing of a missile into Pakistan's territory with exceptional restraint.
- An Indian trader sent a consignment of sugar from India to Uzbekistan via Pakistan territory.
- Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan had praised India's independent foreign policy.

What are the issues/challenges from both sides?

India

India's **geo-economic focus is now on the east and south**. Hence, it has crafted the Act East and Neighbourhood First policies. It is now focusing and investing in global and Indo-Pacific partnerships.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

There is **stagnation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**. It has prevented any progress on the plans for motor vehicles connectivity, a joint satellite, an integrated power grid, energy interdependence and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline.

India has **not made any investment in border infrastructure** since India opened its first Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Attari.

After the **Pulwama attack**, Delhi withdrew the Most Favoured Nation status and raised the basic customs duty to 200 per cent.

There is **only one formal crossing** with Pakistan. There are over 60 border crossings with northern and eastern neighbour countries.

Pakistan

The civilian government of Pakistan has let the **army handle India**. In fact, the **geo-economic priority of Pakistan now lies towards the north and west**, especially through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Pakistan is being used as **China's proxy**. It poses a regional challenge for India.

What will happen if India continues to isolate Pakistan?

Pakistan may continue to disconnect from South Asia. It may use asymmetric warfare to keep its border as hard and securitised.

What can be done by India even if Islamabad does not reciprocate?

In order to limit domestic opposition, the initiative taken by India should not involve Kashmir.

India can **promote sectors and industries in the border regions** of India. It will benefit both India and Pakistan. It will allow India to be an export market.

India should **explore unilateral measures**. Any non-reciprocated initiative should be promoted diplomatically in order to place the ball in Pakistan's court. This will put **international pressure on Pakistan**. Former-PM of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee advocated economic interdependence strategy to soften the India-Pakistan border relations

India can **lower import duties on Pakistani goods**. It would put the onus on Islamabad to revise its own decision to suspend trade. For example, Pakistan's largest global export is in textile, and it is heavily dependent on cotton imports from India.

India to unilaterally **improve cross-border infrastructure**, it should massively finance the development of its last-mile road, rail and air network in the peripheral border areas of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab. It will spur domestic development. It will also attract attention from the Pakistani borderland economies.

India can set up New ICPs along the border at Hussainiwala, Munabao, Suchetgarh or Nadabet.

Way Forward

There is a potential to increase India-Pakistan trade from actual \$2.4 billion in 2017-18 (now reduced to \$400 million) to \$37 billion (as per the World bank).

Even if Pakistan fail to immediately reciprocate, it will still help India reap the benefits of trade and mobility.

INDIA-AUS RELATIONS

117. India and Australia are finally acting like the natural partners they are

Source: The post is based on an article “**India and Australia are finally acting like the natural partners they are**” published in **The Hindu** on **31st March 2022**.

News: Indian-Australian PM had a virtual summit. Further, a historic free trade agreement is going to be signed between both the countries.

The free trade negotiations were being carried out for a decade. The negotiation started since May 2011. The discussions were restarted in June 2020 when India-and Australia established a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Important aspects in Indo-Australia relation

Both India (Part of South Asian Subcontinent) and Australia split from the same supercontinent in the geological history.

Today, India and Australia represent a partnership with similarities in interests and values. For example,

- Both are multicultural societies and federal democracies
- Both are apprehensive about Chinese hegemonic rise.
- Both are concerned about stability in the Indo-Pacific

What are the issues with Indo-Australia Relations?

The challenge of economic integration still remains.

There are predictions about the demise of the Quad. It is because the central theatre of conflict has moved to Europe.

India’s perceived “neutrality” over the war in Ukraine has been taken seriously by west.

Is ETCA compliant to WTO rules?

The ECTA deal is apparently fully in compliance with WTO rules and Article 24 of GATT. This allows countries to grant special treatment to one another by establishing a free-trade association, provided that “**(1)** duties and other trade restrictions would be eliminated on substantially all the trade among the participants, **(2)** the elimination of internal barriers occurred within a reasonable length of time....”

What is the significance of the agreement to India?

It will give a boost to India’s **labour-intensive manufacturing sector**, pharma, textile, gemstone and jewellery sectors.

Indian students in Australia will find an **easier pathway to employment**. There will be greater ease of visa for a range of skilled human capital from India in demand in Australia, including chefs and yoga instructors.

In addition, **Australian coal will get relatively unrestrained access** to India.

What is the way forward?

The ECTA can act as a significant turning point for India’s foreign policy in terms of geo-strategy as well as geo-economics.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Both countries have stated to cooperate in areas like science and technology, climate change, defence, people-to-people ties, joint surveillance and real-time intelligence sharing among others.

INDIA – CHINA RELATIONS

118. A missed chance for Indo-China relations

Source: The post is based on an article “A missed chance for Indo-China relations” published in the Indian Express on 30th March 2022.

News: Recently, Chinese leader visited India. He visited after participating in the OIC Council of Foreign Minister (CFM) hosted in Islamabad and carrying a tour to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal.

It was the first Chinese leader visit to India after the military standoff in eastern Ladakh in 2020.

What were the objectives behind the Chinese visit?

First, China wants to give a message that it is a big power. It is assuming a leadership role in the region. It wishes to develop consensus on important issues such as Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Second, it was aimed to ensure that BRICS summit going to be organised later this year becomes successful.

Third, China wants to give the impression that both China and India have a shared interest in ensuring that Russia is not isolated. It also wants to give the message that there is a rift between the US and India over Ukraine. **For example,** China appreciated India’s “strategic autonomy policy” in context of Russia-Ukraine Conflict.

Fourth, it aims to convey to the international community that it is a “responsible” power. Unlike, the US, which withdrew from Afghanistan, it became the first P-5 country to visit Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover,

Fifth, The Chinese participation in OIC CFM implies that China desire to be seen as a strong and sympathetic backer of the Islamic world, against stereotyping by the West.

Sixth, China do not want the West to enter into its backyard (Indo-Pacific). For example, Nepal approved a \$500 million US government aid programme under the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which provides an alternative to infrastructure and developmental finance under the BRI. It is being perceived by China same as NATO expansion for Russia.

What are the challenges in resolving in bilateral relations between India and China?

Chinese side **only talks to solve “the border issue in bilateral ties”**. It does not talk about other fields, including trade, which continues to lean disproportionately in China’s favour.

China has been **interfering in India’s internal affairs**. For example, it has raised the Kashmir issue at the UN Security Council. In fact, Chinese side also made reference to Kashmir at the OIC CFM meeting in Pakistan. China’s reference to Kashmir is insensitive because:

- China is itself in occupation of part of Kashmir territory i.e., Aksai Chin and the Shaksgam valley.
- In Xinjiang, China has been accused of human rights violation and showing no respect to “Islamic civilisation” and “Islamic wisdom” that Wang Yi alluded to while in Pakistan.

There exists a number of bilateral issues and on strategic issues between both the countries, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Indo-Pacific and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

China is **expanding strategic and military ties with Pakistan**. Its shadow is growing in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

There is lack of agreement on disengagement at the remaining friction points in the border areas of India-China.

Way Forward

India's participation, either in the BRICS summit or the 19th Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the RIC (Russia-India-China) grouping may provide opportunities for resolving bilateral issues between India-China.

India has made it clear that the peace is a prerequisite for normal ties.

INDIA – SRI LANKA RELATIONS

119. Aid Sri Lanka's economy and not Rajapaksa's grip

Source: This post is based on the article "**Aid Sri Lanka's economy and not Rajapaksa's grip**" published in **The Livemint**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: Indo-Lanka relations

News: As per reports, Sri Lanka has sought an additional \$1 billion by way of a credit line, which would be on top of the \$2.4 billion aid package it has already received from New Delhi this year.

India should help Colombo get past its economic crisis for the sake of friendly ties and regional interests. But this should be done in a way that doesn't strengthen its leader's power.

How bad is the situation in Sri Lanka?

- Queues at fuel stations have lengthened as supplies run dry
- Long power cuts have become the norm
- Essential commodities are scarce
- A food shortage has grown acute.
- Lack of foreign exchange
- Currency has lost value and retail inflation has soared
- Popular discontent against the Rajapaksa government has spilled onto the streets in the form of protests

How can India help?

To prevent instability, New Delhi can extend low-cost help to alleviate the hardships of Sri Lankans. But this must be done with due care.

What are the factors behind Sri Lanka's crisis?

Easter Sunday terror attacks of 2019 followed by covid closures hampered Sri Lanka's tourism. Even pre-pandemic, it had such **loose fiscal and monetary policies** that economists warned prices would rise, slow commerce down and compress tax collections.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Barring of imports: In 2020, it had blocked inward vehicle shipments. Last year, it barred chemical fertilizers in a misguided push for organic farming that hurt its farm output (and had to be reversed).

Reduced credit ratings: With some \$6 billion in foreign payments due this year, its credit ratings have also been slashed.

What is the way forward?

It is in India's interest to contain Chinese presence and influence in Sri Lankan archipelago region.

Sri Lanka's poor record on minority rights under the Rajapaksa clan has been under watch. So the relief provisions India makes must not end up backing a regime whose disposition towards Tamils, among other groups, has been a cause of concern.

120. Economic crisis in the island nation has provided an opportunity for Sri Lanka and India to deepen their relationship

Source: This post is created based on the article "**Economic crisis in the island nation has provided an opportunity for Sri Lanka and India**" published in **The Indian Express** on **29th March 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – India and its neighborhood – International relations.

News: In the backdrop of the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar is visiting Sri Lanka that began on Monday. Both countries are expected to sign agreements, including in defence and maritime security. This is a follow up to the \$2.4 billion financial aid India has extended over the past few months.

Causes of Sri Lanka's economic crisis:

1. **Mounting debt of Sri Lanka** – So high that it can't even pay for fuel and food grain imports.
2. **A hit to tourism** – due to Easter bombings in 2019 and the Covid pandemic.
3. **Ukraine war** – which disrupted supply routes, leading to shortage of essential goods.
4. **Ill-timed policies** – For instance, promotion of organic farming has fueled fertilizer shortages and a fall in output.
5. **Heavy foreign borrowing** – Particularly from China, to build infrastructure, including a mega port city in Hambantota. These capital-intensive projects did not deliver the expected returns.

What is Delhi doing?

Besides extending a credit line, Delhi has started work on a series of joint projects including the Trincomalee Oil Tank Farms, renewable power projects, and a cultural centre in Jaffna.

However, considering the complex history between the two countries, India should tread cautiously in this moment in Sri Lanka.

INDIA – MALDIVES RELATIONS

121. Explained: What's behind the new anti-India campaign in the Maldives?

Source: This post is based on the article “**Explained: What's behind the new anti-India campaign in the Maldives?**” published in **Indian Express** on **28th Mar 22**.

News: On March 23, the Maldivian Parliament disallowed a planned opposition rally in the capital Male. It had been called by former president Abdulla Yameen and his Progressive Party, and its ally, the People's National Congress.

The theme of the rally was “**India Out**”, a slogan coined two years ago by protesters who claimed that the MDP government led by President Ibrahim Solih had “sold out” the Maldives to India.

The protest, a day before External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar arrived in the country, was not allowed to take place.

What is the prevalent political situation in the Maldives?

– Maldives gained democracy in 2005. **India and China** have both eagerly **competed for influence** in the Maldives over the last 10 years.

– As the closest big neighbour, **India has been Maldives first responder for decades** in all sectors. This relationship was cemented by the strongman former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who was the unchallenged ruler of the country until the closing years of the 20th century.

– In the Maldives, **the MDP**, and its top leaders, especially Nasheed, are seen as **pro-India**, while rival **Yameen** is seen as a **China proxy**.

– In the last presidential and parliamentary elections in 2018, the MDP was voted back to office.

– With a friendly government in Male, India has been able to rebuild bilateral ties and regain some of its previous influence after a six-year gap during the Yameen presidency that saw relations dip to their lowest point.

– Yameen's release in December 2021 from a long house arrest has led to an immediate increase in the pitch and frequency of the anti-India rallies.

– The next presidential and parliamentary elections are in 2024, and Yameen is using the campaign to increase his support base, by painting the MDP as a party that has enslaved the country to India.

What are the allegations made by 'India Out' protestors?

They have alleged that New Delhi has sent a **large military contingent** to the Maldives. Allegations are focused particularly on the co-operation between the two sides to develop a **harbour on the Uthuru Thilafalhu (UTF) atoll** for the Maldivian coast Guard.

Protestors claim the UTF to be a **foreign military base** of India in the Maldives.

The Maldives Defence ministry has issued a statement saying that there were no foreign military personnel on UTF, which is being developed as a dockyard for the Maldivian coast guard.

Security cooperation with India

In February 2021, India and Maldives signed an agreement for the development of the UTF harbour. India had also extended a \$50 million line of credit for defence purchases.

Maldives is also part of the India-driven **Indian Ocean mini-lateral Colombo Security Conclave**, in which the other members are Sri Lanka, and the newly admitted Mauritius. Bangladesh and Seychelles are expected to join soon.

In Nov 2021, the Indian Navy, Maldives National Defence Force, and the Sri Lankan Navy conducted a two-day exercise in the Exclusive Economic Zones of the three countries in the southern Arabian Sea. It was code-named “**Focused Operation**”.

Maldives signed a **defence pact with the United States** in 2020. Last month, the Maldives signed an agreement to allow the US to open an embassy in the country, the first western nation to do so.

How is the Maldivian government countering anti-India narrative?

The MDP has begun its own “India First” campaign. It even drafted a legislation to criminalise anti-India protests as anti-national. The legislation was dropped, but the sentiment behind it led to the banning of the “India Out” protest in Male last week.

GS2 – POLITY – ELECTORAL ISSUES

ELECTORAL ISSUES

122. The move to ease voting for overseas citizens

Source: This post is created based on the article “**The move to ease voting for overseas citizens**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th March 2022**.

News: The ECI has proposed to extend the **Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETBPS)** for NRIs.

How overseas voters currently vote in Indian elections?

Prior to 2010, an NRI who had stayed out of India for more than 6 months at a stretch was not able to vote in elections. As their names were deleted from electoral rolls.

After **Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2010**, NRIs who had stayed abroad beyond six months have the right to vote, but only **in person** at the polling station where they have been enrolled as an overseas elector.

How has the existing facility worked so far?

A very low proportion of eligible overseas residents actually registered or turned up to vote. The proviso of having to visit the polling booth in person has discouraged eligible voters from exercising their mandate.

To remove this restriction the ECI has approached the government to permit NRIs to vote via Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETBPS).

What is ETPBS and how does it function?

The Conduct of election Rules, 1961, was amended in 2016 to allow service voters to use the **Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETBPS)**. Under this, postal ballots are electronically sent to service voters. The service voters can then download the ETPB, register their mandate on the ballot and then send it to the returning officer of the constituency via ordinary mail. The postal ballot must reach the returning officer by 8 a.m. on the day of the counting of results.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Will this facility be available to all overseas voters across countries?

ECI officials have asked the Law Ministry to explore the possibility of extending postal ballots to overseas electors and not restrict it to any particular country.

In March 2021, the Ministry of External Affairs informed ECI that implementation may have “huge logistical challenges” and needs “a realistic assessment of requirements.”

The ETPBS method allowed for greater turnout among service voters in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Way Forward

For increasing NRI voting there can be a postal ballot mechanism that allows for **proper authentication** of the ballot at designated consular/embassy offices. **An effective postal system** should ease this process for NRIs. The **rules must be clearly framed for eligibility** on the basis of time spent away from the country.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

General

Studies

Paper - 3

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor based courses.



General Studies - 3

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

WASTE MANAGEMENT

1. Waste Pickers need policy report

Source: This post is based on the article “**Waste Pickers need policy report**” published in **Indian express** on **5th March 2022**.

News: India is home to more than 4 million waste pickers, who are the backbone of traditional waste management in most Indian cities.

Yet, they are one of the most marginalised groups of Indian society and are at the very bottom of the socio-economic chain. The fact that they have feeble access to the government social safety net makes them highly vulnerable to emergencies and disasters.

What are the challenges that waste pickers face?

Their multiple vulnerabilities include **low and uncertain incomes, limited access to government schemes, high health risks, and severe social exclusion**. These get compounded in the presence of emergencies like the **COVID-19 Pandemic**.

Apart from this, nearly 70% come from **socially backward groups** and over 60% have **no formal education**.

Majority of them have **no health insurance**, indicating very high degrees of health-shock vulnerabilities.

Why are they mostly left out of government’s social safety net?

They usually lack any income, caste, or occupation certificate. This thwarts any attempts at formalising their work and limits their access to government social security schemes.

What is the way forward?

Short term measures

- Urban local bodies should **register these workers** and provide them with ID cards that recognise them as municipal workers with a clear role. They should be paid a **minimum wage** and should be given an authorised access to waste.
- If **Waste pickers’ cooperatives are given more strength**, they can collectively bargain for higher prices for what they collect.

Long term measures: There is a need for a **comprehensive welfare framework** to design social protection schemes explicitly for Waste pickers.

- There is a need to **proactively reach out to the workers** for enrolment in government schemes and for a **greater awareness** among them about their entitlements.
- There is a need to **create better, safer, decent jobs in the economy** that informal workers like can eventually move to, supported by efforts to enhance their skills.
- Finally, alternatives like **technology-led circular economy** models that eliminate the need for any person to do this hazardous work manually need to be explored.

PLASTIC POLLUTION AND RELATED ISSUES

2. Tackling the plastic problem

Source: This post is developed based on the article “**Tackling the plastic problem**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **28th Feb 2022**.

News: A United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report stated last year that emissions of plastic waste into the aquatic ecosystems may triple by 2040 in the absence of actions.

What are the causes behind increasing plastic waste?

Increasing global consumption and low participation in recycling programmes.

Consumption externality: It is more challenging to address compared to production externality. Because imposing cost of the harm by plastics on all consumers may not yield efficient solutions due to their large number.

Banning plastic bags can result in a sustainable environment, intergenerational equity, saving marine and wildlife ecosystems, and restoring soil quality. However, it also causes inconvenience for consumers, increases substitution costs, and creates unemployment shocks as it affects the production of plastics.

Taxation: It is difficult to bring global consensus on a uniform tax to be imposed. Because, it may depend on country-specific circumstances.

What policy measures can be adopted against plastics?

Removal of existing taxes and subsidies that have a negative environmental impact.

Taking into account the different types or grades of plastics for taxation.

Restructuring existing taxes in an environmentally friendly manner. It can be done in the following ways:

- various stages of production, consumption or disposal of plastics should be taxed. Because pollution starts happening from the production stage.
- Meters can be installed for recording the emission or the effluent discharged for taxation purposes.
- Eco-tax should be equal to Marginal social cost arising from the negative externality at various stages.

Promoting multiple use of plastics through better waste management

Educating the public on the harmful use of plastics

Providing subsidies for research and development activity for substitute development,

Appropriate disposal mechanisms and waste management and use of waste for constructive usage like roads

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND GROWTH

GS3 – AGRICULTURE – MAJOR CROPS: CROPPING PATTERNS

FERTILIZER SECTOR IN INDIA

3. Liberalise, do not bureaucratise

Source: This post is developed based on the article “**Liberalise, do not bureaucratise**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **28th Feb 2022**.

News: The draft Integrated Plant Nutrition Management Bill, 2022 has been put for the public comments.

[About the Draft Integrated Plant Nutrition Management Bill, 2022](#)

The bill has been criticised from various angles by various stakeholders in the fertilizer sector.

What are the criticisms against the bill?

Use of fertilisers: The bill aims to balance the use of different types of fertilizers in the light of over-use of urea. This imbalance can be corrected by rationalizing subsidies and not by enacting a new law.

Governance structure: At present, fertiliser sector is governed by two mechanism: **1)** Fertiliser Movement Order (FMO), promulgated and enforced by the fertiliser ministry. It controls the production of fertilisers. **2)** Fertiliser Control Order (FCO), issued and administered by the agriculture ministry. It controls the allocation of fertilisers to different states.

The inclusion of these provisions in the planned single statute may confuse the different stakeholders.

Inspector Raj: Bill may bring back the Inspector Raj of prior to economic liberalisation in 1991. It provides for fertiliser inspector with sweeping powers like entering, searching and confiscation of stocks in any premise in fertiliser sector for violation of bill’s provisions.

Complicated pricing system: Bill empowers central government to fix the maximum price at which fertilisers would be sold to the farmers. However, prices would differ for different consumers or classes of consumers in accordance with the local situation and period of storage of fertilisers. It will complicate the process of fertiliser pricing.

Over-regulation: It will also bring desi soil fertility-enhancers and crop yield-boosters, such as “Pachgavya Krishi” and “Amritpani” under price control and controls of other kinds. It means these products will be subject to bureaucratic controls and inspectorial scrutiny.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECH – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

DEFENCE TECH IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

4. An atmanirbhar flight plan for fighter jets

Source: This post is based on the article “**An atmanirbhar flight plan for fighter jets**” published in the **Business Standard** on **4th March 2022**.

News: India designed, developed, and manufactured many combat aircraft like 147 HF-24 Marut fighters in the 1960s and 40 Tejas light combat aircraft (LCA). Many of our institutes like DRDO, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, and IT engineering companies, have built expertise in aeronautical design, flight dynamics, and other skills needed for building modern combat aircraft.

Yet, it struggles to design engines for one of these otherwise indigenous aircraft. Almost every aeronautical engine flying in India has been purchased from abroad.

What are the reasons behind that?

Reverse engineering: All world's engine vendors America's Pratt, Europe's Rolls-Royce, and Russia's Klimov sell aero engines to India, without any hesitation. That is because Reverse-engineering an aero engine is exceedingly difficult. The critical technologies in this field relate to materials (high-temperature composites and alloys) and precision engineering, which are nearly impossible to copy. Even China has not succeeded in reverse engineering a high-performance aero engine.

Why India is not successful in making its own engine?

Limited Resources: DRDO's aero engine laboratory Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE) has made little progress in developing the Kaveri engine for the Tejas LCA. The Tejas needs an engine with 82-90 kiloNewtons (kN) of peak thrust, but the Kaveri has managed 72 kN during flight testing in Russia. The reason for such a thrust deficit is **limited resources along with technological incompetence**. Kaveri engine programme had been allocated just Rs 2,839 crore for R&D, including setting up engineering and test facilities, which is not sufficient.

Not enough attention: Ministry of defence is estimated to buy foreign military aero engines worth Rs 3.5 trillion over the next two decades. Yet, **governments have not paid attention to developing aero engines, which account for one-third the cost of a new military aircraft**. With government focus on "atmanirbhar Bharat" and 68% of the defence capital budget being earmarked for domestic purchases, meeting that indigenisation target would require many more engines to be domestically designed, developed, and manufactured.

What should India do?

First, India requires **sophisticated testing facilities**. During the testing of Kaveri, India took the help of Russia and undergone through various performance checks. Creating such flight-testing facilities in India would save hundreds of crores and valuable time.

Second, MoD should shift without delay to **indigenous aero-engine programmes** for combat aircraft. For this DRDO can partner with French engine-maker Safran in developing an engine for the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). Although Safran is currently reluctant to transfer engine technology to India, but if it did, this would be a huge gesture of Indo-French solidarity.

Third, the government should also **urge the USA to ease restrictions** on the release of advanced engine technologies so that India faces fewer restrictions in getting the General Electric (GE) F-414 engine to power the Tejas Mark 2. India is already importing the less powerful GE F-404 engine for the Tejas Mark 1, but the Mark 2 is a heavier and bulkier aircraft and would require the F-414 to power it.

5. Is DRDO To Blame for India's Acute Import Dependence?

Source: This post is created based on the article "Is DRDO To Blame for India's Acute Import Dependence?" published in **Times of India** on **3rd March**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3- Science and tech – Defence technologies

News: After the Ukraine conflict, DRDO has been blamed for India's heavy dependence on other countries like Russia for their defence needs. However, there are many issues that are constraining the capabilities of DRDO.

What are the issues facing Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)?

First, DRDO is a demand-driven organization. It means the efficiency and success of DRDO's projects depend upon the user's requirements. For example, Arjun Main Battle Tank (MBT) was built as per the requirements of the Indian Army based on a Western tank. It achieved performance in terms of protection, mobility, and firepower comparable with any leading MBT in the world in its class. However, later it was found that tank has become heavier for transportation over the bridges near the border.

Second, Some experts also try to **compare DRDO with US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).** However, DARPA is a user independent organisation, means it is independent of US armed force's requirements. It is like venture capital with an element of risk of failures.

Whereas, DRDO's projects are user defined and it is only one link in the entire chain of defence development and production.

Third, some technologies are difficult to develop and reverse engineered. They require continuous investment over years without expectation of immediate return. This is not the case with DRDO. For example, Kaveri aero engine project was abandoned, even though it achieved some successes.

Fourth, DRDO has decentralised and it is embracing the private sector as a partner. Thus, it should not be held responsible for technical failures. It is working on the same lines as DARPA, like funding the private sector projects, under Technology Development Fund Scheme. Another, VDEX program is a defense ministry program, with a corpus of Rs 500 crore administered for developing techs for armed forces.

CYBERSECURITY AND RELATED ISSUES

6. Reporting Cyberattacks

Source- This post is based on the article "**Reporting Cyberattacks**" published in **The Hindu** on **26th Feb 2022.**

News: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is likely to come up with new cyber security regulations. These regulations are likely to put the onus organisations to report any cybercrime that may have happened against them, including data leaks.

Such provision is part of the Data Protection Bill 2021 and European Union General Data Protection Regulation (EU GDPR) also.

What are the advantages of Incident reporting?

If incidences are reported, organisations can be alerted about the associated security vulnerabilities.

Firms not yet affected can also take **precautionary measures** such as deploying **security patches** and improving their **cyber security infrastructure.**

However, it has been seen that firms are reluctant to notify the breach incidents to the regulators.

Why are firms reluctant to report such incidents?

Reputation of firms-This is because any security or privacy breach has a negative impact on the reputation of the associated firms.

Market performance-In the long term, it is seen that breached companies underperformed in the market. After one year, share price of breached firms fell 8.6% on average, resulting in a poor performance in the stock market.

How can the government overcome this issue of non-compliance?

Ensuring the implementation of the regulation– It can be done through periodic cyber security audits which can identify incidents that might not have been reported by the firm.

However, the regulators in most countries including India do not have such capacity to conduct security audits frequently and completely. So, to overcome this issue government can empanel **third party cyber security auditors** for the conduct of periodical cyber security impact assessments for government departments. Private firms can also be mandated to publish periodic security audit reports.

Government has set up **Common Criteria Testing Laboratories and certification bodies** to certify IT security products and protection profiles. The same scheme can be **extended towards cyber security audits and assessments**.

IBM has set up a large cyber security command centre in Bengaluru, other large firms can also be encouraged to set up such centres for protection of their firms' assets.

What is the cyber security situation world-wide?

Worldwide private firms, government services, especially critical utilities, are prone to cyber-attacks and breach incidents. The **ransomware attack** against the **nationwide gas pipeline in 2021 in the U.S.** virtually brought down the transportation of about 45% of all petrol and diesel consumed on the east coast.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECH – DEVELOPMENTS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS AND EFFECT

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND NUCLEAR POLICY OF INDIA

7. GoI Will Have To Keep Buddha Smiling

Source: This post is created based on the article “GoI Will Have To Keep Buddha Smiling” published in Times of India on 5th March 2022.

Syllabus: GS- 2 – International Relations – India’s Nuclear policy

News: Russian invasion of Ukraine has reignited the debate of the significance of robust nuclear deterrence.

Since the Russian invasion the question is being raised – would Russia have invaded Ukraine, if the latter had not given up its nuclear stockpile. It is notable, that Ukraine had given up its nuclear stockpile along with Belarus and Kazakhstan, after the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in 1994.

Why India requires nuclear deterrence capabilities?

First, India is facing a 2-front challenge from China and Pakistan. Both these countries have more nuclear warheads than India. China has more than double the number India has.

Second, As per a Pentagon report, **China’s nuclear warheads can go up to 700** in the next six years and top 1,000 by 2030.

Third, US focus on Europe may embolden **China to step up the pressure on India’s northern borders**. India might not receive help from other countries.

Fourth, Pakistan does not have a “no first-use’ (NFU) policy. It often indulges in the display of nuclear threats.

How India should strengthen credibility of the nuclear deterrence?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

India has taken many steps in strengthening its nuclear deterrence capabilities, like creation of the tri-service Strategic Forces Command (SFC) and the PM-led Nuclear Command Authority in 2003. However, much more is required to be done:

Nuclear-powered submarines that are armed with nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles are called SSBN. At present, **India has just one SSBN, INS Arihant, which can be armed only with the 750-km range K-15 nuclear missiles.**

Whereas, US, Russia and China have much larger SSBNs, which are armed with 5,000-km plus range missiles.

What are the steps taken by India?

Work is continuously ongoing to strengthen nuclear triad (Water, Air, Land) in India:

Water based capabilities

- INS Arighat is expected to be commissioned this year.
- Construction of two 7,000-tonne SSBNs is also ongoing.

Air based capabilities

- Some Sukhoi-30MKI, Mirage-2000 and Jaguar fighter jets have been modified to enable them to deliver nuclear gravity bombs.
- Induction of the nuclear-capable Rafale fighters.

Land based capabilities

- country's first intercontinental ballistic missile Agni-V, with a strike range of over 5,000-km, has been inducted.
- Prithvi-II (350-km), Agni-I (700-km), Agni-II (2,000-km) and Agni-III (3,000-km) missiles, have already been introduced.

XENOTRANSPLANTATION

8. Find space for new science, its ethical dilemmas

Source: This post is created based on the article **“Find space for new science, its ethical dilemmas”** published in **The Hindu** on **4th March 2022**.

News: Several advances have been made in the field of ‘Xenotransplantation’.

Xenotransplantation involves the transplantation of nonhuman tissues or organs into human recipients.

What are the developments made in the field of Xenotransplantation?

In September 2021, at the NYU Langone hospital in New York, the medical team attached a kidney from a gene-edited animal to a person declared brain dead. It was to check if the animal kidney was able to do the job of processing waste and producing urine. The experiment was successful.

On January 14, 2022, in University of Maryland, doctors used a genetically modified heart, as a replacement heart for a patient who had run out of available options.

In a latest example, a doctor in Germany has been working in the area of xenotransplants. He is planning to develop a farm to cultivate genetically-modified organs for such transplants.

All the above developments have one source i.e., tissue or organs of Pigs. It is regarded by medical science as an animal whose organs are currently best suited for humans.

Need of Xenotransplantation

In the United States there are around 90,000 persons waiting for a kidney transplant. Success in Xenotransplantation will fulfill this requirement.

In Germany alone there are 8,500 patients waiting for organ transplants.

Wide adoption of xenotransplant procedures will diminish the **illegal and immoral trade** in human organs.

What are the ethical issues associated with Xenotransplantation?

The animal rights movement is against xenotransplantation, because it ignores the **rights of animals**. According to them, animals also have rights and it is our moral responsibility to support these rights. Thus, they are against animal farms with genetically modified animals.

Second, the **philosophy of anthropocentrism** places human beings at the center of nature. It regards all other living creatures as having value only if they can be of use to humans. Mahatama Gandhi was also opposed to such thinking.

Third, Xenotransplantation places us in a **classic utilitarian dilemma**. The dilemma is whether it is better to kill an animal and save a human being or to save an animal and let the human die.

Lastly, pig is considered a **dirty animal in many societies**, including many Indian societies. Even the people who deal with pigs are given low social status. Thus, it would be difficult to make such a development, adopted globally.

GS3 – AGRICULTURE – STORAGE, TRANSPORT AND MARKETING OF AGRI PRODUCE

APMCs in India and related issues

9. Gaining heft – On e-NAM's trade effectiveness

Source: This post is based on the article “**Gaining heft**” published in the **Business Standard** on **2nd March 2022**.

News: There is an increase in the e-NAM's trade volumes after the repealing of the three agricultural laws.

What is electronic National Agricultural Market (e-NAM)?

It is a pan-Indian digital market, launched in 2016. About 1,000 markets in over 20 states and Union Territories have been linked to the e-NAM portal and the network is further expanding.

What is the present status of e- NAM?

Although trade in e-NAM is increasing, online trading is taking place only in 570-odd markets of the 1,000 linked to the e-NAM. Many big agricultural markets, like Delhi's Azadpur mandi, one of the largest in Asia, are yet to be connected to it. Besides, just three states Rajasthan, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh account for over 70% of the transactions.

Also, the bulk of the trading consists of the deals within the same mandis (intra-mandi trade) or between the mandis of the same district. Inter-mandi and, inter-state trade are minimal, though that is what the e-NAM is chiefly meant for.

How the e-NAM can be further promoted?

There is a need for a **single trading license** that will be valid throughout the state and across the states as well. Also, **state APMC Acts should be amended** to make specific provisions for

inter-state trading in farm commodities. Issues concerning the quality, grading, packaging, storage, and transportation of the commodities should be resolved.

To overcome the legal hurdles in inter-state marketing of farm produce, the **Ashok Dalwai committee** proposed to **shift agricultural marketing from the State List to the Concurrent List**. Along with the expansion, there is a need to **consolidate the existing network** of the e-NAM.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – CRYPTOCURRENCY AND RELATED ISSUES

10. RBI ought to take a balanced view on cryptocurrency

Source: This post is based on the article “**RBI ought to take a balanced view on cryptocurrency**” published in the **Live mint** on **2nd March 2022**.

News: While it is right to be concerned about cryptocurrency, RBI’s move to ban crypto and refer it to the Ponzi scheme lacks balance.

How crypto is beneficial?

Crypto could save in remittances transfer as India received 87 bn dollars and remittance charge alone cost 30,000 crores. Crypto with near-zero fees could be useful here. Cryptocurrencies are also powering new innovations like Maharashtra State Board of Skill Certification verification based on Ethereum and NFT (Non-Fungible Token) by media houses.

How the RBI’s move on banning cryptocurrency is not justified?

RBI does not clarify how cryptocurrency is going to actually “wreck” the economy. There was also no reasoning on how a crypto ban in India would solve any of the problems cited that regulation cannot solve.

Also, Citizens should have the right to participate in a new technology wave and be part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS, SURVEYS

6th IPCC report

11. Our Politicians in denial of climate change

Source: This post is based on the article “**Our Politicians in denial of climate change**” published in Indian **express** on 5th March 2022.

Syllabus: GS3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

Relevance: Climate Change, IPCC sixth assessment report.

News: IPCC (Intergovernmental panel on climate change) has released its 6th assessment report, titled ‘Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability’.

In its report, IPCC discusses the increasing extreme heat, rising oceans, melting glaciers, falling agricultural productivity, resultant food shortages and increase in diseases like dengue and Zika.

What the IPCC’s 6th assessment report says about climate change?

IPCC warns that if the planet gets warmer than 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial times (*we are at 1.1 degrees at present*), then there will be irreversible impact on “ecosystems with low resilience” such as polar, mountain and coastal ecosystems.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

This will cause devastation to “infrastructure in low-lying coastal settlements, associated livelihoods and even erosion of cultural and spiritual values.”

The increased heat will lead to an increase in diseases like diabetes, circulatory and respiratory conditions, as well as mental health challenges.

What are its India specific findings?

Impact on India

– IPCC also highlights that climate “maladaptation” will especially affect “marginalised and vulnerable groups adversely, indigenous people, ethnic minorities, low-income households and informal settlements. As a majority of Indian population falls into this group, it will be **hugely impacted**.

– IPCC highlights India as a **vulnerable hotspot**, with several regions and cities facing climate change phenomena like flooding, sea-level rise and heatwaves. **For instance**, Mumbai is at high risk of sea-level rise and flooding, and Ahmedabad faces the danger of heat waves.

– With increasing climate change, grains will have **diminished nutritional quality**. Already the by 4-10% globally due to climate change. India being a predominantly agrarian economy is likely to be especially hurt.

– Population in urban India is going to double 2050 from current figure of 480 million in 2020. **High concentration of population** in these cities will make them **extremely vulnerable** to climate change.

12. IPCC report makes a case for building people’s resilience to climate crisis. It will require multi-pronged efforts at all levels

This post is developed based on the article “**IPCC report makes a case for building people’s resilience to climate crisis**” Published in **The Hindu** on 2nd March 2022.

News: IPCC’s began taking stock of the climate crisis about 30 years ago. However, its latest report is the gravest of all the warnings issued by the global body of experts.

The report predicts that the world will face multiple hazards even if the global temperature rise is contained to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The IPCC does not prescribe policy decisions. Thus, the experts underline building people’s resilience, especially that of the most vulnerable.

How would Climate Change impact India?

Global warming will affect India’s coasts, plains, forests, rivers, groundwater and mountain systems.

More than 40 per cent of the India’s population will face water scarcity by 2050. Whereas the country’s coastal areas, including cities such as Mumbai, will be affected by sea-level rises.

What should India do?

Climate-sensitive policymaking at the national and local levels is required. India should rectify past mistakes such as ignoring hydrology while planning towns and cities, neglecting flood alert systems, and encouraging water-guzzling crops.

Policymakers will have to find ways to save the country’s food security from adverse effects.

13. Planning for resilience in a warming world

Source: This post is developed based on the article “**Planning for resilience in a warming world**” Published in **Indian Express** on 2nd March 2022.

This post is developed based on the article “**A cautionary tale**” Published in **The Hindu** on 2nd March 2022.

This post is developed based on the article “**A vivid climate warning shot across India’s bow**” Published in **Live Mint** on 2nd March 2022.

News: 2nd part of 6th IPCC report highlights the vulnerability of Indian cities to Climate Change.

With Global temp. already 1.1-1.3° Celsius above pre-industrial levels, some impacts of climate Change are bound to happen.

India has almost all type of climate change hotspots. The three major climate change hotspots are the semi-arid and arid regions, the Himalayan ecosystem and coastal zones.

- About half of India’s landmass is arid and semi-arid.
- India has 7,500 km of coastline, with population of 33 crore people living within 150 km from the coast
- The Himalayan region is home to five crore people covering 13 states and union territories.

The report further highlights that most of the national targets determined at the Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow are not sufficient to have an impact in the short term. For example – India will achieve net zero emissions latest by 2070 and would also ensure 50% of its energy will be from renewable energy sources by 2030. None of these targets can stop the breach of the 1.5°C level.

What are the implications of Urbanization as per IPCC report?

In the next 15 years, almost 40% of Indians will be living in urban areas. Urbanization processes have generated vulnerability and exposure combined with climate change hazards.

1. Extreme heat and humidity in urban areas will create life-threatening climatic conditions.
2. The primary drivers of increasing heat exposure in already-warm cities in India will be global warming and population growth.
3. The urban heat island effect will be amplified by heatwaves. Older adults, people with comorbidities, will be most vulnerable.
4. Increasing temperature will result in **heat-induced labour productivity loss**, leading to economic losses.
5. Climate Change will result in **Sea level rise** and increase in tropical cyclone storm surge and rainfall variability like increasing high-intensity short duration (sub-daily) rainfall. It will lead to larger probabilities of cities getting flooded.
6. **In the Himalayan region**, due to unplanned urbanisation, changes in land use, and land cover, small towns with populations under a lakh are turning into major urban centres.
7. One of the contributing factors of glacial decline is the **deposition of black carbon**. Black carbon can be sourced back to stubble burning, brick kilns, polluting industries.
8. **Water scarcity** in the hilly region has become a new phenomenon of change in hydrological regimes of the region.
9. The **‘wet bulb’ temperature** trend is an index of the impact of heat and humidity combined — and its effect on health. Several cities of India in the Himalayan belt are predicted to reach wet-bulb temperatures of 35°C. It will have consequences such as a rise in heat-wave linked deaths or reduced productivity.

How Local bodies in India are increasing adaptability?

Firstly, In Bengaluru, Indian communities have traditionally managed a **network of water tanks** of immense ecological importance. It made the urban areas water-secure. However, the practice is not continued due to increasing urban areas. However, the restoration of the blue network offers a more sustainable and socially just alternative for managing water resources.

Secondly, Passive cooling technology, is a part of ancient Indian building designs. It is a widely-used strategy to create naturally ventilated buildings. This tech can be used as a counter to urban heat island for residential and commercial buildings.

Third, Local governments in **Surat, Indore, and Bhubaneswar** linked transformation to local development needs. The report proves that the economic benefits of adaptation are a strategy for local institutions to support adaptation action

Fourth, to manage flooding in Indian cities adaptation measures should include **overhauling stormwater management, green infrastructure, and sustainable urban drainage systems.**

However, global response needs quantum leaps. Radical ideas like 'solar geo-engineering' might gain appeal soon.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND ASPECTS

CLEAN COOKING FUEL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

14. Looking for an effective alternative to LPG

Source: This post is based on the article “**Looking for an effective alternative to LPG**” published in the **Indian Express** on **4th March 2022.**

News: The government spent more than Rs 12,000 crore on near-universal access to LPG connections, Still, about six lakh people die every year due to air pollution in Indian kitchens.

What are the problems faced by the people?

Over half of **rural India** continues to primarily **rely on burning solid fuels for cooking.** It increases the likelihood of illnesses, including ischemic heart disease, cataracts, and lung cancer. Recent evidence also shows that it increases the risk of Covid-19 infection.

Rising domestic LPG prices, removal of subsidies, growing retail inflation, and unending distress owing to the pandemic have squeezed the pockets of low and middle-income households. Thus, it is difficult to shift to LPG.

What are the other alternatives?

Electricity: It may not be an immediately viable alternative because of two major concerns.

First, households that got electricity connections under rural electrification schemes have a maximum connected load of 500W. However, induction stoves are rated more than 1500W. If homes move to electric cooking, there will be issues of supply due to distribution transformer failures. As households would cook at roughly the same time, it could lead to further stress on the electricity distribution system.

Second, the Requirements of a rural household are usually met within 100 units/month, which gets covered by concessional tariffs. However, beyond 100 units, consumers have to pay about Rs 7-8 per unit used. Induction-based cooking alone would drive up the monthly electric bill by at least Rs 500-600, which would be unaffordable for many poor households.

Piped Natural Gas: It could be an alternative to LPG in densely populated urban areas in the coming years. But it is not designed to supplement the cooking needs of rural India because of

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

network expansion costs. Even if this is addressed, India has limited reserves of natural gas. Therefore, large-scale usage of PNG would require imports, which would make PNG unaffordable.

What is the government doing?

Since the launch of [Ujjwala Yojana](#) in 2016, there have been significant efforts in increasing the domestic LPG distribution network. The government has added 12 new bottling plants (with an added capacity of 6,200 thousand metric tons per annum) and about 9,000 new distributors.

However, budgetary allocations to LPG have been rapidly shrinking in the recent past. It has come down from about Rs 31,400 crore in 2018-19 to only Rs 4,000 crore in the budget for 2022-23.

What should be the way forward?

A targeted approach backed by financial and institutional support is required in order to address the shortage of LPG problems. Government should also resume LPG subsidies and rationalize them. For example, subsidies could be provided only to consumers with low consumption.

Also, revising LPG prices could be limited to twice a year to provide price certainty in the context of volatile oil markets

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

INDIA AND ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

15. Rich nations must step in

Source: This post is based on the article “**Rich nations must step in**” published in the **Business Standard** on **3rd March 2022**.

News: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released the second part of the [Sixth Assessment Report](#).

What is government doing to cope up with climate change impact?

Government has introduced the National Action Plan on Climate Change in 2008. It also launched a [National Initiative for Climate Resilient Agriculture \(NICRA\)](#) in 2011. Government is also working on developing crop varieties and agronomic practices which can handle climate-related stresses.

India should stay at its stand of the last climate summit at Glasgow, especially its call for equity, climate justice, and curbing unsustainable consumption. The developed nations must lead in mitigation and extend financial assistance to the developing countries for adaptation.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

GS3 - INDIAN ECONOMY – COVID PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT

POST-PANDEMIC ECONOMIC RECOVERY

IMPACT ON ECONOMY

16. Here's Why its V not K

Source: This post is based on the article “**Here's Why its V not K**” published in **Times of India** on **4th March 2022**.

News: There has been a lot of debate on the issue that whether post pandemic recovery is V-shaped or K-shaped.

Proponents of K- shaped recovery point claim that while corporations have returned to normal levels of activity, unemployment, poverty and distress among MSMEs continues to rise.

Why the post pandemic recovery is more likely to be V-shaped recovery and not K-Shaped?

The **first** argument is that as the workers and MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian economy, GDP could not have returned to its pre-Covid level without workers returning to work and MSMEs recovering too.

Secondly, acc to the PLFS Survey quarterly GDP at constant prices had dipped by 24% in April-June 2020 quarter but it returned to its pre-Covid level by January-March 2021 quarter. This sharp fall and full recovery within three quarters is what constitutes the V-shaped recovery of GDP.

Urban unemployment rate spiked from 9.1% in January-March 2020 quarter, to 20. 8% in April-June 2020 quarter but fell back to 9. 3% by January-March 2021 quarter showing a V-shaped recovery.

One counterargument for this can be that the **fall in the unemployment rate merely reflects a withdrawal of workers** from the workforce. However, According to PLFS labour force participation rate (*which is percent of above-15 population looking for work*) has also followed a V-shaped recovery path.

Net additions to Employee Provident Fund (EPF) subscribers list which closely track movements in GDP and the urban employment rate also shows a **V-shaped recovery**.

In the rural economy also, GDP data shows that **agricultural activity has remained robust** in both 2020-21 and 2021-22 and MGNREGA funds have also been generously expanded.

These are strong arguments against the narrative of massive unemployment and poverty in rural areas.

GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY - Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges

REGULATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

17. Conflicts and a settings change for social media

Source: This post is based on the article “**Conflicts and a settings change for social media**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th March 2022**.

News: Armed conflicts within and between states like the current Ukraine-Russian conflict have also had some influence on cyberspace over the years.

Social media platforms have gone by the mantra of “tech neutrality” to avoid taking decisions that may be considered political for too long. However, there is need for some norms for social media as they have a huge amount of influence on our daily lives.

What is the need for a framework of conduct for social media platforms wrt global conflicts?

There is need for content moderation on these platforms. Information here can be operationalised and **used to exacerbate conflicts**. However, most social media giants are yet to create institutional capacity to deal with such situations.

They act as **conduit for further amplification of content** on other platforms. Major social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter also provide space for extremist views from smaller platforms, which makes the identification of original user of content difficult.

There is a huge **issue of Misinformation and disinformation** on these platforms. Although, algorithmic solutions are widely put to use to address them, these algorithmic solutions sometimes have harming the already resource-scarce party.

What role can India play?

The lack of coherent norms on state behaviour in cyberspace as well as the intersection of business, cyberspace, and state activity is an opportunity for India.

- India can initiate a new track of conversations here which can benefit the international community at large.
- Ultimately, this will contribute to maintaining a rule-based world order that can greatly benefit India.

What is the way forward?

There is a need

- for a protocol that outlines the norms of behaviour on social media during such situations that can help in addressing the multitude of evolving factors.
- **to create a balance** between the business interests of social media platforms and their intersection with global public life in critical situations.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

EMISSION REDUCTION AND TRANSITION TOWARDS CLEAN ENERGY

18. Pumped storage hydro projects can help meet our energy goals

Source: This post is based on the article “Pumped storage hydro projects can help meet our energy goals” published in **Livemint** on 07th March 2022.

News: As per a study done by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), our storage requirement by 2030 is forecast at 41GW. So, there is a need for adopting grid-scale energy storage technologies to complement India's energy sources and achieve India's nationally-determined contributions (NDC).

About the status of India's electricity production and consumption

India is the third-largest producer and consumer of electricity globally, with annual electricity production of around 1,200-1,300TWh and one of the largest synchronous power grids.

As of December 2021, the installed generation capacity of the country stood at 393GW, comprising 235GW of thermal, 151GW of renewable (wind, solar, hydro and biomass) and 6.78GW of nuclear.

What is pumped storage hydro (PSH) plants?

Pumped storage hydro (PSH) plants are storage systems based on hydropower operations between two or more reservoirs (upper and lower) with an elevation difference. At the time of demand, downward water flow generates electricity with a hydraulic turbine, and water is pumped back to the upper reservoir using power from grid or RE sources, with an overall efficiency of 75-80%.

PSH Plants in India

The country has 5,745 large dams, which provide an excellent opportunity for developing PSH plants by placing them in between two large dams or by using one dam and a second reservoir on a hill-top in a manner.

In India, the PSH potential of about 120GW has been identified at about 120 sites. Only nine plants with an installed capacity of 4,785MW have been commissioned so far, and three with a capacity of 2.7GW are under construction.

Significance of Pumped storage hydro (PSH) plants

-PSH plants are highly useful options for the integration of Renewable Energy power with the power system.

-The PSH plants will have a very **low impact on biodiversity and involve very few resettlements and rehabilitation (R&R)** challenges.

-**Promote Atmanirbhar Bharat:** PSH plants use domestically produced material and even the electrical mechanical parts are made in India.

What are the challenges associated with the PSH plants?

1) PSH plants have to obtain land, forest and environmental clearances, **2)** Users like discoms find them too costly and less attractive as a storage option. **3)** With High investment costs and long gestation for a PSH project, private participation has been low, **4)** Hydro and PSH projects are a state government legislative subject, and require the support of many policymakers and electricity regulators, apart from state governments.

How to promote PSH Plants in India?

Power storage is a major part of India's clean-energy mission, and India must enable the setting up of PSH plants through steps like,

1) There is a need to **adopt the sustainability guidelines** of the International Hydropower Association and to **carry out an ex-post analysis of a few operational storage projects**, which might help to dispel some apprehensions related to energy storage projects, **2)** States should **decide and announce a basis for PSH-project allotments** through a process that is transparent but different from that for conventional hydro projects, **3)** PSH projects should be **delinked from a per-unit energy cost basis** for speedy development.

4) The benefits of PSH projects can be shared across state and national boundaries. **5)** India must **develop market mechanisms and innovative economic models** that let energy-storage technologies be evaluated on the basis of merit, **6)** **Prioritizing projects** based on location, duration of storage, availability of a pre-feasibility report, detailed surveys, investigations and project reports, etc.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RELATED ISSUES

19. Strengthen environmental clearances

Source: This post is based on the article “**Strengthen environmental clearances**” published in **Business Standard** on **7th March 2022**.

News: A robust system of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required to find the balance between the environment and development, and to mitigate harm.

Many projects are being given environmental clearance, without paying attention to how many should be allowed and in what conditions.

What are the changes present EIA process required?

First, credible baseline data about the proposed project should be made available and easily accessible to the public.

Second, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system has been unnecessarily made difficult. All clearances – i.e. – environment, forests, wildlife, and coastal, should be streamlined and consolidated. In the Budget 2022-23, a single-window clearance system has been announced, however, it is solely aimed at the ease of doing business.

Third, Public assessment process is not useful as of now. Public hearings are held, not heard. Risks from projects can be mitigated if the community concerns are heeded.

Thus, mandatory videography of any public hearing should be live-streamed. The committee assessing the project must be made accountable for taking those concerns into account.

Fourth, the role of the environmental assessment committees must be revised properly. At present these committees are not responsible for the compliance or monitoring of the project. Furthermore, they make the government less accountable for the decisions that are taken during

the scrutiny of the project. Thus, these committees should be should either be made accountable or disbanded.

Fifth, at present, there are many monitoring agencies after clearance and yet enforcement is weak. there is a need to integrate the functioning of all agencies — from state pollution control boards to coastal- and forest-related institutions.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRA – ENERGY SECURITY

ENERGY SECURITY

20. Risks of imported energy gets real

Source: This post is based on the article “**Risks of imported energy gets real**” published in **Business Standard** on 8th March 2022.

News: India imports 36 per cent of its total energy needs and biomass still accounts for a fourth of India’s energy supply.

The current spike in energy prices due to sanctions on Russia have the potential to derail India’s post-Covid recovery.

This crisis should strengthen policymakers’ resolve to focus on self-sufficiency in energy over the medium-term.

What has been the rise in energy prices been in the last two years?

Current Oil Prices at \$120 per barrel is \$40 higher than the price in the December 2021 quarter Which will have an additional burden of \$60 billion.

Prices of other forms of dense energy like gas, coal, edible oil and fertilisers have risen too primarily because Russia and Ukraine are net suppliers of these commodities.

Together with oil, the increase in energy imports for India could be \$100 billion, close to 3 per cent of GDP.

What are the impacts of the rise in energy prices?

Value of India’s energy imports as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) is now close to the highest among major economies.

– Higher energy costs may make **consumers to shift to foreign alternatives** from costly locally produced goods and services. This will negatively impact the GDP growth because the benefit will go outside the country. Although government may cushion this impact by cutting taxes on fuel, import duties on edible oil, etc but it also has little fiscal room to absorb the total impact.

– Across the world and in history, economic productivity strongly correlates with the use of dense forms of energy. However, higher prices (of petrol, diesel and LPG or of plastic products) means lower usage and a drop in energy use means lower GDP, as improvements in energy efficiency occur over a longer period.

– Higher energy prices as well as geopolitical uncertainty are likely to **hurt global demand**, and this may negatively impact India’s manufacturing exports.

What if the current scenario doesn't end in the short term?

This may lead to India's balance of payments transitioning from a reasonable surplus to a very **large deficit**.

This may also lead to a **huge negative impact on the current account**, which may push Reserve Bank of India to let the rupee depreciate.

If the current crisis lasts longer, then the government may have to let the **petrol and diesel prices rise**, accelerate electrification and shift to a less-import-dependent energy mix.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

INDIA'S TRADE POLICY

21. An alternative export strategy

Source: This post is based on the article “**An alternative export strategy**” published in **Business Standard** on 10th March 2022.

News: In a recent interview Raghuram Rajan, the former governor of the Reserve Bank of India, has suggested that India should focus primarily on exports of information technology-enabled services (ITeS) along with professional services such as consultancy, legal, medicine, accounting, etc.

What are the problems associated with making service export as the mainstay of India's export strategy?

Unemployment- Professional services involve skill-intensive jobs, and thus they may not provide a solution to the difficulty of rising levels of unemployment and underemployment among low-skilled workers.

Unequal Growth- An expansion of high-skill professional activities will only lead to a relatively greater demand for the more qualified consultants and professionals, further aggravating the unequal, K-shaped recovery pattern that has been evident during the pandemic.

Data Privacy- The necessary regulatory policies for liberalisation of the services include various issues. **For instance:** issues of data privacy, storage and localisation

Movement of Professionals- India's predominant comparative advantage in the services sector has been its human capital. Thus this has been the single most important factor for India's prolonged and often stalled services sector negotiations in preferential trade agreements as well as at the WTO Doha Development Agenda.

What is a better alternative?

India may actually consider focusing on services that are an integral part of manufacturing sector exports, and hence adopt an integrated approach to its services sector exports. This will include putting emphasis on employment-intensive services supporting manufacturing activity.

This approach has been in use globally and is widely referred as “**servicification**” and/ or “**servitisation**” of manufacturing where services are increasingly exported as “embodied” and

“embedded” in manufactured goods and processes. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development or UNCTAD observes that for a select set of economies when services within manufacturing are considered, the services sector value addition to overall exports is close to two-thirds.

Recent literature on the subject provides evidence of such services contributing to higher manufacturing sector productivity, export capabilities and employment.

What will be the factors that can hinder such a policy’s smooth implementation?

Rail freight and distribution services are among the most employment intensive sectors, but remain relatively more restricted in India. Undue restrictions in services supply and discriminatory regulations on foreign entry have been found to limit the positive economic gains from these services.

Reforms and further liberalisation towards creating a facilitative regulatory framework for private/ foreign ownership and participation in these sectors will lead to not just enhanced services, but also to manufacturing productivity.

What is the way forward?

So, it is essential that India’s export strategy views services as an integral part of manufacturing. This will provide multiple benefits like enhanced productivity, manufacturing competitiveness, export and employment.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

WATER CRISIS AND RELATED ISSUES

22. Water Management needs a Hydro Social Approach

Source: This post is based on the article “**Water Management needs a Hydro Social Approach**” published in **The Hindu** on 10th March 2022.

News: The fact that freshwater resources are under stress is very widely acknowledged, and also that the principal driving force behind this situation are human activities in their various forms.

According to the IPCC estimates the gap between demand for and supply of fresh water may reach up to 40% by 2030 if present practices continue.

What have been international efforts for conservation of water?

2030 Water Resource Group was formed in 2008 at the instance of the World Economic Forum, it has been promoted by World Bank since 2018.

This Group will help in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on water availability and sanitation for all by 2030 (SDG 6).

How are some current water management techniques a cause of concern?

Water resources are not distributed uniformly. Thus, world over intra- and inter-basin transfer (IBT) of water is used as a major hydrological intervention to rectify the imbalance in water availability due to naturally prevailing unequal distribution.

However, World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature has suggested a cautious approach and the necessity to adhere to sustainability principles set out by the World Commission on Dams, while taking up IBT projects.

What has been India's approach towards IBT projects?

Recently, inter-basin transfer of water drew attention in India due to a provision made in Budget 2022 for the Ken Betwa river link project which is a part of the National River Linking project (mooted in 1970 and revived in 1999).

This decision raises larger questions about hydrological assumptions and the use and the management of freshwater resources.

What are the factors that are making the situation of water scarcity worse?

The basic idea behind IBT is to export water from the surplus basin to a deficit basin. However, the status of basin as surplus may change if factors of present and future land use, especially cropping patterns, population growth, urbanisation, etc are considered.

Besides this, rainfall in many surplus basins has been reported as **declining**.

There is also concern about the **present capacity utilisation of water resources** created in the country. The average water use efficiency of irrigation projects in India is only 38% against 50%-60% in the case of developed countries.

Even at the crop level, we consume more water than the global average. The agriculture sector uses a little over 90% of total water use in India. And in industrial plants, consumption is 2 times to 3.5 times higher per unit of production of similar plants in other countries.

There is also **lack of proper disposal and reuse of grey water** in our country. It is estimated that 55% to 75% of domestic water use turns into grey water depending on its nature of use, people's habits, climatic conditions, etc. This untreated grey water and industrial effluents get into freshwater bodies and becoming a source of pollution.

Apart from the **inefficient use of water in all sectors**, there is also a reduction in natural storage capacity and deterioration in catchment efficiency.

What is the way forward?

There is a need to involve non-state actors in decision-making processes.

Hydro-social cycle approach is one such approach that studies water resource in sync with the human-nature interactive structure.

A hybrid water management system is necessary, where (along with professionals and policy makers) the individual, a community and society have definite roles in the value chain.

INSOLVENCY LAW AND RELATED ISSUES

23. Insolvency proceeding deadline problem

Source: This **post** is based on the article “**Insolvency proceeding deadline problem**” published in **Business Standard** on 11th March 2022.

News: Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016 aims for time bound corporate insolvency resolution process or CIRP.

Although initially these timelines were adhered, but with time, considerations of factors like livelihood of those related to the company have led to delays.

Due to this, the focus has shifted to revival rather than on timely resolution.

How does the IBC 2016 goes about the resolution process?

IBC 2016, prescribes **time limits for the corporate insolvency** resolution process, or CIRP, and for each task in the process, starting from initiation till closure. The time prescribed for CIRP is mandatory.

An early resolution increases the likelihood of a company being revived and, in turn, of productive assets being turned around quickly.

CIRP envisages two options for resolution — namely, (a) **revival of the company** through a resolution plan, or (b) **liquidation of the company**. It lets the market choose the options sequentially. The market first makes an attempt to revive the company, failing which the liquidation process is initiated.

Is the timeline proposed been adhered to in practice, what has been the experience?

The code provides for consequences for not adhering to the time schedule.

– These timelines were **adhered strictly in the initial days. For example:** 23 CIRPs, which concluded with resolution plans in 2017-18, took on an average **243** days.

However, over the years a perception emerged that the livelihood of many is linked to the survival of a company and thus **revival took precedence, even at the cost of time and value.**

Subsequently, the **code was amended** in 2019 to extend the period given for resolution and also to allow for extensions and exclusions, which became a major reason for delay.

As a result, 98 CIRPs that concluded with resolution plans during April-December 2021 on an average took **709** days, which is far more than the prescribed timeline.

Apart from preference for revival, there is another reason for delay. CIRP requires several constituents to play their respective roles, and it is possible that any of them may fail to perform its role in time, causing delay.

What is the way forward?

Market and adjudicating authority should be given a specific timeline to finish their respective tasks. This will prompt the market to complete the process in time.

Timely resolution will help to **reclaim the economic value of an enterprise** under stress.

STARTUPS AND RELATED ISSUES

24. Why society gains when start-ups fail

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why society gains when start-ups fail?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **10th Mar 22**.

Context: Start-up culture should be promoted in India. It is economically beneficial without any harm.

Status of start-ups investment in India in 2021

India attracted **\$77 billion** worth of private equity investment in 2021. Out of this around \$42 billion was gone to early-stage ventures.

Why do we need to have start-ups?

Most start-ups are expected to fail: Indeed, most start-ups fail. But this high failure rate is not a problem per se. It is because society only needs a few successful start-ups. These few are enough to compensate for the losses of others as they alone can harness the gains of innovation, productivity, and job creation. Therefore, start-ups failures should not be treated as a disease as discouraging them will never create innovation, immunity, and jobs.

Startups don't socialise their losses: Corporate bank loans to crony capitalists create a huge amount of bad loans, leading to the need to bail out banks with public money. Whereas the cost of start-up failure is borne by consenting adults (entrepreneurs) with the support of foreign institutions, angel investors, and entrepreneurs with successful previous exits. The coming venture capital losses leave behind assets, generate learning and breed valuable alumni, unlike NPAs.

Startups will solve real problems for Indians: India's poverty is not because of a shortage of land, labor, or capital. But it is due to issues in total factor productivity (combination of three factors). Therefore, we need higher productivity regions, cities, sectors, firms, and individuals. Startups can play a major role and can pledge to solve the problems of India.

What are the issues associated with startups?

First, the **global capital supply** for funding start-ups is facing challenges due to fiscal and monetary policy normalization. For example, Investors are now not investing recklessly, they are looking for financial sustainability and capital efficiency along with addressable markets. For example, the risk-free return in the US bond market.

Second, the **explosive start-up funding has created excess of funding for many start-ups by using manipulative methods**. For example, criminal fraud done by Elizabeth Holmes, founder Blood-testing company (Blood-testing company) Theranos by raising \$700 million by acceptable hyping of her product and lying about performance.

Conclusion

We only need a few startups. Their survival will raise India's soft power and prosperity by using improbable ideas to solve impossible problems.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

VALUE OF CURRENCY AND RELATED ISSUES

25. Managing the rupee

Source: This post is based on the article “**Managing the Rupee**” published in **Business Standard** on **09th Mar 22**

News: Due to Russian Invasion of Ukraine, US imposed a ban on energy imports from Russia and its other allies could do the same. Their corporations in the energy sector are moving out of Russia. It could permanently reshape the dynamics of energy sector.

Energy prices might stay elevated in the foreseeable future even if a diplomatic solution is reached in the coming days and weeks.

All this will result into a weaker rupee, which will add to inflationary pressures. Inflation reduces the purchasing power and will be reflected in the external value of the currency as well.

Challenges to India Rupee (External Value of Rupee)

Due to a number of global backdrops, the Indian Rupee is under pressure. A pressure is borne by Indian Rupee from both the current and capital accounts.

Impact of Higher Commodity Prices: India is a large importer of crude oil and several other commodities. Since beginning of this year, Oil prices have gone up by over 70 per cent. Thus, Indian Rupee slipped to an all-time low recently. On the other hand, due to the current scenario, the demand for US dollars may increase, pushing up its price.

Foreign portfolio investors: They are moving out of Indian markets. For instance, foreign investors, have sold Indian stocks worth over Rs 26,000 crore. Funds are flowing to the US, which has led to a decline in government bond yields, and is pushing up the dollar. Thus, dollar demand is increasing.

Increasing Interest Rate in USA: The Federal Reserve is expected to start increasing interest rates. It will tighten financial conditions in the coming months. In fact, risk aversion started much before the Ukraine crisis. It is because markets began to adjust to the possibility of higher-than-expected rate hikes by the Fed.

Suggestions for monetary policy adjustments

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** should not use large forex reserves to contain Rupee volatility. Obstructing this currency adjustment could create bigger imbalances.

An **orderly adjustment in currency** should be undertaken. It would actually help stabilize the current account. A stable and manageable deficit on the current account would, in turn, make the currency more stable.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

The RBI should reassess its **inflation outlook** and act accordingly. RBI's earlier projections for the next fiscal year are outdated. They need to be updated as ignoring inflation could increase risks, including external.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – GST AND RELATED ISSUES

26. Addressing uncertainty – Necessary changes in GST must be made in time

Source: The post is based on an article “Addressing uncertainty” published in the Business Standard” on 11th Mar 22

News: The Goods and Service Tax (GST) is going to complete its five years in a few months. Therefore, it has triggered a debate for big structural change in the system.

GST was expected to reduce complications in the indirect tax system, contain tax evasion, and boost revenue and economic growth over time. However, it has fall short of expectations.

What are the issues linked with GST?

Compensation Issue: Provision of the compensation cess against the shortfall in revenue for the first five years may be removed with completion of five years. It is expected that the compensation cess will continue, but the proceeds will be used to repay the loans taken to compensate states for the revenue shortfall during the pandemic period.

Uncertainty for the states: The fact that cess will not be used to compensate the states for revenue shortfall will create significant uncertainty for the states. It is particularly important when economic activity is weak and states are expected to reduce their budget deficits.

What are the suggestions?

Compensation Issue: To compensate the states for their revenue shortfall, additional cess might need to be imposed. It is because the cess will remain beyond June 2022, and will be used to repay the loan.

Changes in tax structure: The group of state finance ministers is reportedly expected to recommend increasing the **5 per cent slab to 8 per cent**, which is projected to increase revenue collection by Rs 1.5 trillion annually.

Inclusion of some items: The Group of Minister (GOM) in its report is also expected to recommend the removal of items from the exemption list.

Operational Issues: The GST Council should review operational issues in the GST system. It can lead to improvement in the ease of filing, which will help boost compliance and revenues.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

CREATOR ECONOMY IN INDIA

27. Unshackling the creative sector

Source: The post is based on the article “Unshackling the creative sector” published in the Business Standard on 12th March 2022

Syllabus: GS-III Indian Economy

Topic: Creator Economy

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

News: A report commissioned by YouTube (YT), provide a glimpse of the “creator economy” in India.

Scope of YouTube Channels in India

YouTube platform hosts around **40,000 Indian channels** with over 1 lakh subscribers and the number of channels earning revenues in excess of Rs 1 lakh jumped by 60 per cent year-on-year in June 2021.

The cost of setting up a YT channel is negligible. The big influencers end up hiring teams, setting up studios with fancy equipment and exploring alternative marketing and revenue generation options as well.

YouTube created the equivalent of *6.8 lakh full time jobs*. It generated a “contribution” of Rs 6,800 crore (roughly \$890 million) to India’s gross domestic product in the “creator economy” in India in 2020.

Other Creative Ecosystem

YT is the biggest player in this digital entertainment ecosystem, but it is also paralleled by other creative ecosystems

Indian Movie Industry: In 2019-20 (the pre-Covid year), the Indian movie industry (all languages) generated over Rs 14,000 crore in revenues from ticket sales, channel subscriptions, etc.

TikTok: Despite being banned in India; it still has a huge fanbase in India. Example, dozens of people circumvent the ban to access TikTok, and we can see desi TikTok content popping up on WhatsApp all the time.

Instagram: It is another platform for big influencers. It has a user-base of 180 million-plus. Plus, there’s Spotify, podcasters, and gamers, as well as smaller communities on Twitch.

What are the few challenges faced by the creator economy?

Indian Smartphone Mobile Users: Only about half of India’s mobile users have smartphones

Internet Connectivity: Most of India lives with pathetic 4G speeds, which is a big barrier. In contrast, some 90 countries already have commercial 5G, while India hasn’t even auctioned spectrum.

It can be described as a “hyper-pareto” market: – In these markets 95-99% of the revenue is being cornered by 1-5% of players. It is in contrast to a normal Pareto system, in which 80% of the revenue is accrued by 20% of the players in the system.

The practical barriers for a digital creator are mostly policy-related: TikTok is banned; creators pay 18% GST and fill in lots of intimidating paperwork on revenues.

What can be done?

More attention is required at removing policy barriers and red tape would help creators to maximise their potential.

If 5G rolls out, and smartphone penetration improves, growth rates in this digital creator economy could be turbocharged, despite the already large base of users.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – COVID AND ITS IMPACT

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

28. Shock-proofing the economy: Quality jobs the best possible safety net

Source: The post is based on an article “**Shock-proofing the economy: quality jobs the best possible safety net**” published in the business standard on 11th March 2022.

Syllabus: GSIII- Inclusive Growth

Topic: Shock-Proofing Economy, Social Security Net etc.

Context: India’s policy must be aligned with the present realities to make its economy shock proof to any external development.

India has gone through a number of crises in the Indian economy since 1962. For Example like India fought three wars, suffered droughts, first oil shock, double-digit inflation, which peaked at 26 per cent, imposition of Emergency 1975, the 1991 foreign exchange crisis, the Asian and then global financial crisis, and so on. In recent years, including, the “twin balance-sheet crisis”, the demonetization of 2016, the covid-induced crisis.

Now, there is a need to take an account of the resilience of economy to the past shocks and make it prepared for the present and future shocks. Only it will make it shock-proof.

What has been done by India to shock proof the economy, so far?

At commodity level: The food shortages are over; and the oil reserves have been built to mitigate the risk of an oil price shock.

At macroeconomic level: The foreign exchange reserves are more than comfortable, inflation has been trending lower, and therefore the currency is more stable.

At the firm level, the corporate balance sheets are better than before. For example, the debt-equity ratios have improved, profit margins have improved, and overseas debt is being discouraged. Therefore, there are now fewer zombie firms that lock up capital in half-dead enterprises and the Banks are better-capitalised.

At the individual level, the food security programme for two-thirds of the population, the rural employment guarantee scheme, the rolling out of a free health insurance programme for the bottom half of the population, and modest cash payments to different categories of individuals have been provided as safety net at many front

At governance level: There is also greater transparency and better regulation (However, with scope for improvement in both.)

What are the ways to make economy shock-proof?

At individual Level: The rural employment guarantee act needs to be better funded, and the old-age pensions needs to be stepped up.

At commodity level: India has energy dependence on imports, for which there is no solution for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the capacity of the oil reserves can be doubled once oil prices fall.

At firm level: The firms should build buffers against supply shocks. There is a need for concerted indigenisation push in strategic sectors like defence.

At governance level: A scrutiny is required at governance level. It is because the crisis like IL&FS have been due to problems at the level of boards of directors, the auditing firms, and credit-rating agencies.

Others: It can help minimise the premature deaths that push vulnerable families into crisis. The focus should be made on better road engineering. It is important to reduce the high toll of traffic accidents.

However, better quality jobs for better-qualified people would be a better safety net. An unemployment allowance should be the next big social-security initiative. It is because abovesaid shock-proofing requires a larger macro-economic transformation, which will take time and can't be achieved in the foreseeable future

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – INDIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

INDIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

29. Shutdown this misguided energy policy

Source: The post is based on the article “Shutdown this misguided energy policy” published in the Hindu newspaper on 12th March 2022

Syllabus: GS III – Infrastructure (Energy Sector)

Topic: Nuclear Energy

News: On March 3, a fire broke out near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in Ukraine during the course of a military battle that could have triggered a major nuclear disaster.

Trends of Nuclear Accident in the Past

On March 11, 2011, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant suffered severe accidents after an earthquake and a tsunami hit it. The cooling system was broken and as a result radioactive cores continued producing heat and eventually melted down. It attracted the world's attention towards the dangers of nuclear energy.

However, the Indian government in dec. 2021 said that it is planning to build “10 indigenous reactors” and had granted “in principle approval” for 28 additional reactors, including 24 to be imported from France, the U.S. and Russia.

Why is the Indian governments' nuclear policy misguided?

Given the post-Fukushima global and national trends in the nuclear industry, such a policy seems misguided;

Nuclear power is not an economical source of electricity: nuclear power plants are capital intensive and recent nuclear builds have suffered major cost overruns. For example, V.C. Summer nuclear project in South Carolina (U.S.) was abandoned due to cost overrun, after an expenditure of over \$9billion.

Renewable-energy technologies have become cheaper: As per one estimate, the cost of electricity from solar photovoltaics and wind turbines in the U.S. declined by 90% and 72%, respectively, between 2009-21. The cost of for solar power, and solar-wind hybrid project was ₹2.14 per unit and ₹2.34 per unit respectively whereas power from the EPRs at Jaitapur was at least ₹ 15 per unit excluding transmission costs.

Global Nuclear Energy Share is declining: In contrast to India's policy projection, the world's nuclear power share in total electricity has declined from 17.5% in 1996 to just 10% in 2020.

Unviable Imports: India has to import many light-water reactors but imports are not happening on ground. For example, even after 13 years of the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal, not a single new nuclear plant has been established.

Design Issues in foreign reactors: Of the 24 foreign reactors with "in principle" approval, (a) 6 reactors are of the VVER (water-water energetic reactor) design which are already facing operational problems at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu, (b) some reactors proposed to be imported from the U.S., has the same design that was abandoned in South Carolina, and (c) Some are of the EPR design that France has been unable to successfully complete in its home country.

Safety Concern: For example, the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster raised concerns about safety of nuclear plants. In fact, many multinational nuclear suppliers demanded that they be indemnified of liability for the consequence of any accident in India. Therefore, India's liability law was enacted to largely protects them. It means, manufacturers do not really believe in their own claims about how safe their reactors are.

Protest Against Nuclear Plants: for example, "locals turned against" the Mithivirdi nuclear project after the Fukushima disaster in Gujarat.

Climate Change Induced Disasters: Climate change will increase the risk of nuclear reactor accidents. For example, A wildfire approached the Hanul nuclear power plant in South Korea. Also, in 2020, a windstorm caused the Duane Arnold Nuclear Plant in the US to cease its operations. The frequency of such extreme weather events is likely to increase in the future.

Way Ahead

Therefore, nuclear power is not the right choice to "adapt" to climate change, and to mitigate India's carbon emissions since it cannot be deployed at the necessary scale.

The resources spent on nuclear plants will yield quicker results if they are redirected to renewables.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

SPECIAL SITUATION FUNDS (SSF)

30. Why special situation funds are necessary

Source: The post is based on an article "**Why special situation funds are necessary**" published in the Indian Express on 16th March 2022.

News: Recently, Indian financial markets witnessed two crucial reforms. One was release of a

dedicated regulatory framework for **special situation funds (SSFs)** by SEBI and, the other was approval of a new dual-structure for bad-bank (called **NARCL-IDRCL**) by RBI.

Why have such new reforms been undertaken?

India suffers from a bad loan problem which requires higher provisioning, and locking up more capital in the banking system. This reduces credit supply and hurts economic growth.

Special Situation Funds (SSFs) can buy bad loans (in addition to Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) which can also do the same). This can release capital locked-up in the banking system and help improve credit supply.

Concept of Special Situation Fund (SSF)

SSFs is a sub-category of Category I Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs). AIFs manage privately pooled funds. The funds are raised from sophisticated investors with deep pockets.

Traditionally, AIFs could participate in the equity markets. But, could not participate in the **distressed debt markets**. It is because regulations did not allow AIFs to participate in the secondary market for corporate loans extended by banks and NBFCs.

Now, a special sub-category of AIFs, namely SSFs can participate in the secondary market for buying loans extended to companies that have defaulted on their debt obligations.

What more steps can be undertaken regarding SSFs?

SSFs must be allowed to have seamless access across the entire secondary market. It should be allowed to have access for investment as well as non-investment grade corporate debt (loans and bonds). It is an international practice. It was also suggested by the RBI task force (chaired by T N Manoharan) on secondary markets for corporate loans.

SSFs could also be allowed to participate in the secondary market for corporate debt even before the company defaults on its debt obligations. It has multiple advantages as given below:

- It will help lenders and bond investors to **offload potentially stressed assets** to SSFs before any default.
- SSFs would also get **adequate time for debt aggregation** before default. It reduces the collective action problems that may arise after default during insolvency or restructuring.

Indian lenders or bond investors should have **full freedom to sell their loans or bonds in the secondary market** at the best price possible, irrespective of whether default has happened or not.

Conclusion

Introduction of SSFs promises to usher in a modern era of **distressed debt investing** in India.

PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PFMS)

31. GoI tracks the money trail: How PFMS will pull plug on spending slippages

Source: The post is based on an article “GOI tracks the money trail: How PFMS will plug on spending slippages” published in the Business Standard on 15th March 2022.

Context: By midnight of March 31, the Controller General of Accounts will assess the spending in FY22 with help of the public money-tracking system known as the **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)**.

Background of PFMS

The PFMS was conceptualized in 2009. But it became fully functional in a decade. PFMS was conceptualized because the Expenditure Management Commission in its 2016 report, showed that a lot of government money spent was not tracked. i.e., Over a trillion rupees goes undetected through government finances every year.

Also, Bose's study suggested "**quality monitoring**" for all **programmes of panchayats**. For example, the direct benefit transfer and the payment of wages for the MNREGA has been a huge success. He also pointed out that when the money spent is not tracked, the weakest links, such as rural de-v-elopment, are hurt the most.

The World Bank has supported the switch and recommended African and other countries to emulate the model.

Thus, PFMS addresses the issue of slippages in government spending.

What does the Public Finance Management System (PFMS) do?

First, it is a key decision support system for the government. It tracks the flow of funds to the last beneficiary or implementation level. It also ensures the timely release of funds through the effective management of fund floats.

Second, it covers the Central Sector Scheme, Central Sponsored Schemes as well as other expenditures including Finance Commission Grants.

Third, it has been extended to all central government functions including payments, receipts, accounting, expenditure control, management of provident fund and pensions etc. It is integrated with the core banking system/solution and also with RBI and NPCI.

Fourth, the PFMS makes every agency using public money to route it through bank accounts. Since banks report to the RBI in real time, any fiscal stress now becomes apparent immediately.

What is the significance of Public Finance Management System?

It helps to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and the implementation of policies.

It is important when the government needs to respond rapidly to black swan events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lastly, it has cut the difference between audited and un-audited public accounts data of the central government to less than one per cent.

How does it work?

As per instructions, a **single nodal account** for each centrally sponsored scheme is opened with a bank. Implementing agencies use the same account with clearly defined drawing limit.

As per PFMS instruction, it should be a "**zero balance accounts**". i.e., government money along with interest earned on the sum should be transferred to the Consolidated Fund. This prevents funds from being misappropriated.

Some Deviations at different level

The Indian Railways is yet to board the PFMS.

States have the freedom to make decisions regarding expenditure from their own resources and the shared tax corpus (in which the Centre cannot interfere). Therefore, they have developed a different machinery to handle state funds separately. Therefore, it leads to some difficulty in the financial management system.

States are using both PFMS and their own **integrated financial management information systems**. There, it has resulted in some conceptual challenges that have to be overcome.

PRIVATIZATION AND RELATED ISSUES

32. LESSONS IN OUR HICCUPS OVER SELLING AN LIC STAKE

Source: This post is based on the article “**Lessons in our hiccups over selling an LIC stake**” published in **Live Mint** on **15th March 2022**.

News: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has caused market uncertainty. This has prompted the government to rethink the launch of the Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Life Insurance Corp (LIC).

Why is this IPO important for the government?

The regulator’s approval of the IPO is valid only till mid-May. Any delay will upset the Centre’s fiscal math. It can also:

6. Provide significant revenue for the Centre.
7. Lead to reduction of fiscal deficit.
8. Will take LIC to the market.
9. Further push disinvestment agenda.

What lessons do uncertainty over IPO hold out?

Need to take faster approach: First lesson stems from the fact that since the Ministry has 2 years to finalize the strategy, the IPO need not have been timed just before the end of 2021-22. Reasons for such a slow approach are not clear. They could be due to:

- **Attempt to time the market:** As financial advisors often advise retail investors to ride the bull run i.e. when market is growing.
- **Politics:** In the past, politics has played a role in deciding the timing of public-sector disinvestment. Example – **Offshore listing of VSNL** was pulled back due to apprehension of the coalition government that low prices will lead to Parliamentary opposition.

However such frequent flip-flops send mixed signals about share offer intended price range and also confuses investors.

Need to reduce over-reliance on disinvestment: Second lesson is related to the government’s over-reliance on disinvestment to get its fiscal right.

- Earlier, disinvestment was used as an emergency measure to make up for revenue shortfalls.
- Now it has been institutionalized. However, it has neither led to improvement in fiscal gaps over the year, nor has led to improvement in public sector efficiency.
- There is continuous failure to meet the disinvestment targets year after year.

Hence, disinvestment can be effective as an utilitarian exercise, but it is vulnerable to failure if used as a means of grand transformation.

NATIONAL LAND MONETISATION CORPORATION (NLMC)

33. Monetising surplus land held by state is a good idea, it needs to be done with transparency, sensitivity to public interest

Source: The post is based on an article “Monetising surplus land held by state is a good idea, it needs to **be** done with transparency, sensitivity to public interest” published in the Indian Express on March 14th, 2022.

Topic: National Land Monetization Corporation

News: Last week, the Union cabinet approved the creation of a **National Land Monetisation Corporation Mandate**

Read more – [About National Land Monetisation Corporation](#)

It will work to monetise the surplus land holdings of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and other government agencies. It will have a detailed and comprehensive inventory of the state’s land holding.

Why has the government come up with NLMC?

First, it will help identify **the surplus land**. It will give a push for monetising surplus land and also create a database for **potential investors**.

Second, public sector entities hold vast tracts of land that are either **unused** and **underused** land. For example, the Indian Railways is estimated to have around 1.25 lakh acres of total vacant land.

Third, proceeds from the monetisation of these assets will help **generate additional resources**, boosting government coffers.

Fourth, it will **resolve** the issue of the “**artificial**” **scarcity of land**, with an increase in **the supply of land** by auctioning off surplus land. It will depress land prices and thus have a moderating effect on costs of projects.

What are the challenges in front of NLMC?

First, the Ministries, departments, and public sector entities may be **reluctant to demarcate land parcels as “surplus”**.

Second, there will be issues like **absence of clear titles**, ongoing litigation, and muted investor interest.

Third, there is the issue of the **encroachment of government lands**.

Fourth, it raises questions over the management of commons, i.e., whether a public purpose can be better looked after by more effective management of public land by the state.

What are the suggestions to tackle the challenges?

Therefore, the separate agency should be housed with professionals with specialised skills that are better suited for this task.

A “specialised skills and expertise” in areas such as “market research, legal due diligence, valuation, master planning, investment banking and land management” is the need of the hour for land monetization.

INDIA'S TRADE POLICY

34. Will a services exports-driven economic growth strategy work for India?

Source: The post is based on an article “**Will a services exports-driven economic growth strategy work for India**” published in the **business standard** on 14th Mar 22

Topic: External Sector

Context: India's service exports have lagged the outbound shipment of manufactured items, though the **gap** between the two was narrowing immediately before Covid-19 struck.

Why should India adopt a service exports-led growth strategy for India instead of China's model of manufacturing exports-led growth?

According to the data provided by the World Trade Organization (WTO), India's share in global services exports is more than its global merchandise exports. Service exports stood at 4.12% in 2020 compared to share of 1.57% in global merchandise exports in 2020.

Share of manufacturing in India's GVA is low. It is in the range of 15-17% since 2014-15.

It is difficult to adopt the China's strategy in a democratic India: Due to difference in economic environment and the nature of polity in India and China, experts have argued against China's model. It is because China did so by suppressing wages, consumption, keeping borrowing costs low by lowering interest paid to households etc.

Broadened scope of services-export: Pandemic has broadened the scope for India in the export of services. For example, IT-related services can be advanced to other areas such as education, health, legal services (for instance, the Indian law firms can start setting up international offices and advise on the Indian laws sitting in other countries) etc.

Merchandise exports remain susceptible to cyclicalities in commodity prices. Therefore, services exports can reduce the pressure on merchandise exports of India to provide jobs as well as foreign exchange inflows.

What are the challenges in service exports?

Job Creation: It is doubtful whether a service export-led growth model would add millions of jobs needed by the economy. Even in the developed countries, the bulk of jobs are not created in service sector like doctors, etc. These are created in restaurants, etc.

Widening of the services export: Until the Indian regulator allows foreign firms to set up in India, it is difficult to boost the Indian export of legal services.

the regulatory regime for legal services requires a number of fundamental changes. For this, the suggestion of legal fraternity can be taken.

Way Ahead

Both, the services and the geographies which require them need to be identified, and the two should be mapped.

India can focus on various services export like legal services, financial advisory, education and telemedicine that can be exported using technologies and where India also has intellectual capabilities.

The making inroads into financial services can also help in the **internationalisation of the rupee**.

The Indian government need to bring measures to protect privacy of data, reforms its education system etc.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – ELECTRIC VEHICLES

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND RELATED ISSUES

35. Electric vehicles can't go too far in reducing our use of fossil fuel

Source: The post is based on an article “Electric vehicles can't go too far in reducing our use of fossil fuel” published in the Live Mint on 16th March 2022.

News: The Russia's invasion of Ukraine has resulted in fuelling the price of crude oil. It has triggered renewed calls for the use of electric vehicles (EVs) to lower the human dependence on fossil fuels which pollute the environment.

Concept of Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicles don't run on fossil fuels like petrol, diesel or CNG. They run on the electricity.

What are the issues in reduction of fossil fuel dependence by the Electric Vehicles (EVs) Technology?

EVs are also powered by fossil-fuel based electricity: The electricity is generated from various sources like coal, natural gas, water flows, nuclear fission, solar energy and wind etc. At present, majority of electricity is produced using fossil fuels, like coal and natural gas. For e.g., 61.4% of our electricity was drawn from fossil fuel sources (the share of coal in total electricity is 54%) in 202-21.

Restriction of Renewable Energy: The wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine.

Inadequate affordable batteries: A large number of affordable batteries are need to store energy to power a city for few days, for example, more than 14 million batteries would be needed so that Tokyo can have enough power for three days if wind and solar power could not be produced in those 3 days

The electricity accounts for only part of the total global energy consumption: i.e., only 18%: Most energy produced is consumed in the production of four pillars of modern civilization: cement, steel, plastics and ammonia. They are heavily dependent on the combustion of fossil fuels.

Fossil fuels are even required to generate renewable power: for example, if wind power is to supply 25% of global demand for electricity by 2030, it would require around 400 million tonnes of steel. The production of the steel used in wind power requires combustion of fossil fuels. e

Fossil fuels are even required to produce electric car: A typical lithium car battery require lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, graphite, steel, aluminium, and plastics. A massive expansion in EV requires the massive extraction of these metals and, in turn, mean massive use of fossil fuels for their production.

Way Ahead

In India, the proportion of installed capacity that depends on wind and the sun to produce power has gone up, and now amounts to a little over one-fifth of our overall capacity, against 8% in 2014-15.

To conclude, moving the world away from fossil fuels is not just complicated, it's complex. As David Wallace-Wells writes in The Uninhabitable Earth, people are “mesmerized by the threat”

of climate change “without ever perceiving it clearly”.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

DE-DOLLARIZATION BY CENTRAL BANKS

36. Why ‘de-dollarisation’ is imminent?

Source: The post is based on an article “**Why ‘de-dollarization’ is imminent?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **17th Mar 22**

News: The ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis has given an impetus to the question of de-dollarisation of the global forex framework.

Efforts are already underway for the possible introduction of a new Russia-China payment system, bypassing SWIFT and combining the Russian SPFS (System for Transfer of Financial Messages) with the Chinese CIPS (Cross-Border Interbank Payment System).

What is “de-dollarisation”?

It refers to the changes in the **overall global forex market framework** where the leading central banks would diversify their reserves away from US Dollar to other assets or currencies like the Euro, Renminbi or gold.

How this hegemony of dollar was established?

The US sealed a deal with the oil-rich Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the 1970s to conduct global energy trade in dollars.

The collapse of the Bretton Woods system in the 1970s: It enhanced the status of US Dollar by eliminating other developed market currencies from competing with the USD.

Why “de-dollarisation” by central banks is imminent?

To **insulate the economies from geopolitical risks**. US dollar as a reserve currency can be used as an offensive weapon, leading to potential foreign policy coercion or sudden disruptions. **For example**, the war in Ukraine and the subsequent economic sanctions can trigger central banks to proceed in this direction.

The multipolar world requires each country to enjoy economic autonomy in the sphere of monetary policy.

2008 global financial crisis exposed underlying cracks within the US economy and challenged the western hegemony of the financial system.

Rise of Asian economies: As major economic powers like China and India rise, the importance of other currencies like the Yuan and the Indian rupee is going to increase

What are Russian and Chinese efforts towards de-dollarisation?

Russia: It started **three-pronged** efforts towards **de-dollarisation** in 2014 (after annexation of Crimea).

- **First**, Russia reduced its share of dollar-denominated assets.
- **Second**, it prioritises national currencies (instead of US Dollar) in bilateral trade.
- **Third**, Russia developed a national electronic payments system called “Mir” in 2015.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

China: China aims to use trading platforms and its digital currency to promote de-dollarisation. It has established **RMB trading centres** in Hong Kong, Singapore and Europe.

- In 2021, the People's Bank of China submitted a "**Global Sovereign Digital Currency Governance**" proposal at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) to influence global financial rules via its digital currency, the e-Yuan.
- The **IMF** has already added Yuan to its SDR (Special Drawing Rights) basket in 2016.
- In 2017, the European Central Bank exchanged EUR 500 million worth of its forex reserves into Yuan-denominated securities.

What are the challenges that de-dollarisation faces?

US Dollar share in the global trade and foreign exchange: Currently, about 60% of foreign exchange reserves of central banks and about 70% of global trade is conducted using USD.

Psychological Angle: The USD is considered as a "safe-haven" asset i.e., the people continue to view the currency as a relatively risk-free asset. Therefore, the world will continue to prefer the USD as a "store of value" and a "medium of exchange", fulfilling the basic functions of money.

Side effects of de-dollarisation: Sudden dumping of dollar assets by adversarial central banks, may give rise to balance sheet risks as it will erode the value of their overall dollar-denominated holdings.

Most other foreign currencies (Apart from the Euro and gold) have some inherent risks associated with them.

What is the way forward?

Thus, despite triggers to the move away from the dollar, in reality, it will be a protracted process.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – INDIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

37. Clean energy should use the battery of a circular economy

Source: The post is based on an article "**Clean Energy should use the battery of a circular economy**" published in **The Hindu** on 17th Mar 22.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues in mobilization of resources, Infrastructure (Energy), Environment

Relevance: Clean Energy and Circular Economy

News: The Union Finance Minister, in the Budget speech 2022-23, emphasised the role of circular economy, and cleaner technologies such as solar energy and batteries in India's future economic growth.

A robust renewables waste management and recycling ecosystem could help people and India reduce environmental harm, provide energy security, and also create new jobs.

In order to achieve India's net-zero target in the year 2070, India would need over 5,630 GW of solar and 1,792 GW of wind energy.

Why India should transition towards a circular economy?

It can lead to an **efficient waste management ecosystem** necessary to manage the enormous waste that would be generated by renewable energy projects in the coming decades. For example, India's total installed solar capacity could be as high as 325 kilotonnes by 2030.

A circular economy could also **partially insulate the renewable energy industries** from **potential supply chain shocks** triggered by extraneous developments.

It would also offer **quality employment opportunities for the future generations**. For example, new jobs across the entire value chain of waste management and recycling.

What are the steps needed to nurture a circular economy in the Indian renewable energy industry?

First, the existing **electronic waste management rules** should be revised. **For instance**: Bringing various clean energy components under its ambit, and clear definition of responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in the **renewable energy value chain** for example, manufacturers, assemblers, importers and distributors etc.

Second, **dumping** in landfills and **burning** of different components should be banned. It is because dumping leads to leaching of metals (*like heavy metals such as lead and cadmium*) and non-metals into the environment. They then enter the food chain. Also, burning the items of the solar photovoltaic modules releases toxic gases such as sulphur dioxide and some volatile organic compounds.

Third, the renewable energy industry should invest in the **research and development of recycling technologies/new ways of recycling** that result in higher efficiency and a less environmentally damaging footprint.

Fourth, there is a need to create **innovative financing routes for waste management**. It may include **(a)** nudging public and private sector banks to charge lower interest rates on loans in this sector, **(b)** issuing **performance-based green certificates** to recyclers that could be traded to raise money for waste management and **(c)** The mandatory procurement by the renewable energy and other relevant manufacturing industries be done to create market for recycled materials.

Fifth, there is a need to improve the product design like finding substitutes for toxic metals such as cadmium and lead used in their products. There is a need to improve **product designs** to reduce recycling steps.

Sixth, the **end-of-life of components** may be increased by imposition of **stringent quality control standards**. It will consequently reduce waste creation. Such quality enforcement could also position India's renewable energy industry as a global supplier of quality products.

Seventh, India's recycling sector is informal. The workers have to work in unsafe environments without standardised wages. Therefore, the government should develop an **efficient renewable energy waste management** and **circular ecosystem**, i.e., a kind of formal industry.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – ISSUES RELATED TO CHILDREN

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – INFORMATION TECH

38. 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?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

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

39. 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 20th 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

40. 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 20th 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

41. 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.

– 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

42. 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?

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

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

- 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.

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

43. 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 affluents 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.

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

44. 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 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

45. 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?

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.

46. 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:

- **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

47. Whither unemployment benefits

Source: This post is created based on the article "**Whither unemployment benefits**", published in **The Hindu** on **22nd 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?

- 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.
- Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY, 2018)** – in this unemployed insured persons are provided allowances.
- 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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

- 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)

48. One nation one software

Source: This post is created based on the article “One nation one software” published in **Business Standard** on **22nd 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:

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

49. 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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

– 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

50. 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.

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?*

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

– 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

51. 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.

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

52. 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 **23rd 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?

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

53. 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 **24th Mar 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Infrastructure, Energy, Environment

Relevance: electricity sector, coal plant, and energy consumption

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

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.

54. 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 CO₂ 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?

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 **CO₂ 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

55. 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 **23rd 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?

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 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

VALUE OF CURRENCY AND RELATED ISSUES

56. 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 23rd 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

57. 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 25th 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.

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

58. 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

59. 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.

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

60. 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?

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.

GS3 – AGRICULTURE – ISSUES RELATED TO MSP

61. Our Farm reforms deserve another chance

Source: The post is based on an article “**Our Farm reforms deserve another chance**” published in the **Live Mint** on **28th Mar 22**.

News: A recent finding of the Supreme Court-appointed panel has put back in focus the three farm laws that were revoked in late 2021 in the wake of farmer protests.

As per the panel findings, it appears that a majority of farmers may have actually welcomed the agricultural reforms that were aimed through three farm laws 2020.

Agri sector needs an overhaul. If a proper participatory approach is developed, a wide consensus can be built around farm sector reforms.

What is the right approach to bring in the farm reforms?

A consensus-led approach is needed to carry agricultural reforms. A more participatory approach is needed. It may include giving adequate representation to farmers, including protestors, while redrafting laws.

Also, the **draft bill should be put to public feedback**. The draft bills should also be sent to a parliamentary committee so that other political parties can offer their inputs.

The reforms must **grant market forces a greater role in this sector**. The government must convince farmers that an open market would be in their favour. It will enlarge their set of choices.

Particular **attention must be given to those aspects of laws that caused anxiety** and caused their withdrawal, like suspicions of rising crony capitalism.

In addition to **proper market openness** (even to foreign buyers), a **redressal device** must be instituted. It would give assurance to aggrieved farmers. It can be like direct access to courts of justice.

It should be made explicit in India’s competition law, that **no private entity is allowed to dominate farming**, cartelize purchases and carry out unfair deals.

The **farmer collectives** can be formed. It will raise the bargaining power of cultivators. It will also mitigate monopsony risk.

What is the way forward?

Agriculture has been stuck with the legacy of a socialist framework, worsening inequality in India.

The farm sector should not be left to languish. It needs capital, private inputs and greater freedom of choice to modernize.

Hence, a renewed effort must be made.

AGRI R&D and related issues

62. Budgeting for a well-fed, self-reliant India

Source: The post is based on an article “**Budgeting for a well-fed, self-reliant India**” published in the **Indian Express** on **28th Mar 22**.

News: In the backdrop of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the Prime Minister of India has emphasized the need for India to be Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) in defence and agricultural sector in the Amrit Kaal (*next 25 years*).

What is India’s present situation in terms of import dependence?

India has achieved self-reliance in production of a large amount of food in the agricultural sector. It is also a **net exporter of agri-produce**.

India has **high dependence on imports for edible oils**. India imports around 55 to 60% of consumption.

India has a vast potential to emerge as a significant exporter of agri-produce remains untapped.

Why is Agri R&D significant for India?

In the area of agriculture and food, various factors lead to comparative advantage, like

- the research and development (agri-R&D) from lab to land
- investing in irrigation infrastructure
- marketing
- Agro-processing, and
- improving supply from farmers’ fields to consumers or export destinations.

Agri-R&D is important in achieving **total factor productivity**. It makes agriculture more competitive globally. For example, In the Green Revolution, “miracle seeds” were developed for agricultural development.

The Economic Survey (2021-22) pointed out that every rupee spent on agri-R&D yields much better returns, compared to returns on every rupee spent on say fertiliser subsidy, power subsidy etc.

Thus, in order to become fully self-reliant in food, India must invest at least 1% of its Agriculture GDP for R&D in Agriculture.

What are the challenges that need to be addressed?

Low expenditure on agri education & R&D: Total share of expenditure on agricultural education and R&D at both the Union government and the states level hovers around 0.6% of Agri-GDP. It is much below the minimum cut off point of 1%.

Populism: India’s scarce resources are allocated on sub-optimal choices like food subsidy and MGNREGA or on income support and subsidies for farmers, but very little for Agri-R&D. It is largely due to competitive populism.

What is the way forward?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

Private sector should come forward. It should help India attain supremacy in Agri-R&D and innovation systems that make the country not just atmanirbhar but a hub for exports and Agri-technology.

Raising the expenditure on Agri R&D: The govt policy must urgently work towards raising the expenditure on Agri-R&D.

Self-reliance should be done only by specialising in certain commodities where India has a comparative advantage. We can import those commodities where India don't have a significant comparative advantage.

India's **budget allocation in the agri-food space** should focus more on investing in Agri-R&D instead of less-important aspects

Keep a **check on the mismanagement of natural resources** and mitigate climate change issues.

The R&D should focus on building **long-term sustainable solutions** to various issues faced by the agricultural sector.

The government should **incentivise private companies to expand their R&D programmes.**

Some **protection** may be given for **new areas** to develop (infant industry argument).

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECH – ISSUES RELATED TO IPR

IPR AND RELATED ISSUES

63. On TRIPS waiver: Profit over public health

Source: The post is based on an article “**Profit over public health**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th Mar 22**.

News: In 2020, India and South Africa gave a call at the World Trade Organization (WTO) for the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver wrt Covid-19.

Now, a deal has been brokered between the EU, the U.S., India, and South Africa on the issue.

However, the waiver is a classic case of too little, too late. This withered down version of the TRIPS waiver will further dent the WTO's relevance and credibility.

What are the issues with the waiver?

First, the draft waiver **does not cover any COVID-19 medical products other than Covid vaccines. For instance**, baricitinib, which was recommended by WHO for treating critical COVID-19 will not be covered under it.

Second, India proposed to waive all IP rights, not just patents. But the **waiver aims to waive only patents**. The waivers do not cover other IP rights.

Third, the draft waiver will allow the countries to export any proportion of vaccines that is produced domestically to eligible countries. This waiver is **subject to several requirements**. For example,

- eligible members cannot re-export vaccines
- WTO must be notified about every entity that has been authorised to produce the product

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

– The authorization of Compulsory Licence (CL) must be on a product-by-product basis (Trip Plus Obligation) etc.

Fourth, the draft waiver is **not applicable to the least developed countries**. Only those developing countries that exported less than 10% of world exports of COVID-19 vaccine doses in 2021 are allowed for exportation and importation.

Fifth, the draft waives the obligation of a member to protect undisclosed information submitted before a drug regulator to claim marketing approval in the present context. But, it is **silent on overcoming the challenges posed by protection to other trade secrets** covered under Article 39.1 and 39.2 of TRIPS.

Have such waivers proved effective in the past?

No.

In the aftermath of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa, the WTO adopted a decision in 2003 waiving certain TRIPS obligations to increase the accessibility of medicines in countries that lacked manufacturing capability.

However, this waiver was **subject to stringent requirements** because of which hardly any country made effective use of this waiver.

What is going to happen now?

The deal will now be presented to the entire WTO membership to be accepted at the forthcoming ministerial meeting.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

Atmanirbharta and self-reliance

64. A contributor, not consumer

Source: The post is based on an article “A Contributor, bot consumer” published in **The Hindu** on **29th March 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Atma Nirbhar Bharat

News: Recently, A book named Atmanirbhar Bharat: A vibrant and Strong India was published which analysed the Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call for an Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) in May 2020.

What kind of self-reliance should India pursue?

India’s Atmanirbharta should neither be **protectionist** nor be **isolationist**. It should be a self-reliant India. India should be able to engage with a tension-filled world order. This can help build India’s national identity which is pivotal to the fortune of modern states.

It should address the **existential challenges** that are internal to India like, addressing the conflicting aspirations and expectations of different states. **For example**, the aspirations of the Dravidian model of development should be synchronised with regional-specific aspirations and the holistic concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat. In the absence of cooperation, the fundamental issues such as the sharing of Cauvery waters and coal for energy, which are important for self-reliant India, will remain unresolved.

The **Western model of development** cannot work for a country as diverse as India. It is evidenced by the catastrophic financial crisis of 2008. It is not human-centric.

India's atmanirbharta model should be based on civilisational pride, experience and a self-belief that will help India be a **contributor to the world** rather than **only a consumer**. It should be a **human-centric model** i.e., the growth model be based on equity and humanity.

The politicians and leaders in India should realise that this is not a time for narrow political gains. It is a time to come together for the sake of the nation.

Atmanirbhar Bharat envisages a self-reliant India working for *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*

65. **Atmashakti over atmanirbharta: Learn right lessons from Russia sanctions**

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Atmashakti over atmanirbharta: Learn right lessons from Russia sanctions**” published in Times of India on 28th March 2022.

Context: Following the West's stringent export controls restricting Russian state's access to cutting-edge technology, there have been rising clamor on the need for self-sufficiency. However, there are certain points to consider before converting the goal of atmanirbharta into import substitution.

What needs to be considered?

First, there is no need for **decoupling** when there is substantial **convergence of strategic interests between India and the West**: The West prefers powerful India to counter China. For this reason, the post-Pokhran sanctions were replaced by a civil nuclear agreement between the US and India.

Second, the pursuit of self-sufficiency is itself a **near-impossible goal**: For instance, the government is pushing policy to attract semiconductor manufacturing firms to set up shop in India. However this is just one stage. Other stages are also there such as cutting-edge research, highly skilled workforce, testing and packaging. No country can do all these by itself. Hence, **plurilateral collaboration is required**.

Third, there is a **need for Atmashakti**. That is, India's deep connections with the West foster technology transfer in critical and emerging technologies. For instance, initially the West helped China build its strengths.

Fourth, **self reliance – can morph to self-harm via protectionism in technology manufacturing**. For example: The banning of drone imports to become a global drone hub by 2030 is antagonistic. There's no incentive for a company shielded by protectionism to compete with the best in the world.

What is the way forward?

Instead of protectionism, India needs to dominate in areas where the West is relatively disadvantaged. For example, **the IT industry** benefits immensely from the connections in the West.

There is also a need to provide **stable and non-discriminatory tax, business and trade environments**.

GLOBAL THREATS AND CHALLENGES

66. Globalization is dying: Long may the phenomenon live

Source: This post is created based on the article “Globalization is dying: Long may the phenomenon live” published on 30th March in Live Mint.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Important International institutions

Context: Recently, the Western world came together to impose sanctions on Russia, decades old business arrangements with countries were terminated. All this came in the backdrop of COVID-19, exposing the vulnerability of globalization.

Among nation-states it has led to hardening of nationalistic agendas. Countries are focusing on self-reliance to reduce geopolitical risks.

Is it possible to reverse globalization trends?

From an evolutionary perspective, humans became the dominant species due to our ability to cooperate to further common objectives. From being hunter-gatherers, to establishing villages, towns and nation-states. In recent times, this is visible in arrangements such as the European Union.

That said, when events like the Russian invasion of Ukraine give rise to questions, there is a need to address these concerns in ways that will allow us to **reap the benefits of globalization**.

For instance, concerns regarding **SWIFT**. This is operated by a Belgian company which is subject to any sort of pressures that a domestic entity faces. The alacrity with which Russian banks were ejected raises concerns as to management of global financial infrastructure.

This raises demand for alternatives. Rather than have a single entity for financial messages, focus can be on setting up financial messaging infrastructure that is based on open protocols.

There is a need to evaluate all our global public infrastructure through a similar lens. Such important infrastructure should function like **global commons**. In cases where effective control lies with a small group of nations, we need to develop alternatives.

RUSSIA – UKRAINE CONFLICT

67. Between BRICS and Quad

Source: The post is based on an article “Between BRICS and QUAD” published in the Business Standard on 28th March 2022

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

Relevance: BRICS, QUAD, and Russian-Ukraine Conflict

News: Recently, the Chinese and Russian leaders visited New Delhi. Both developments are important in the context of India’s position over the Russia-Ukraine war

What has been India’s position on Ukraine crisis?

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

India has **consistently abstained from voting on all resolutions** by both the West and Russia. For example, India abstained from Russia's resolution in the UN's forum on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

India indicated disappointment to Russia. Russia did not resort to dialogue and diplomacy before carrying out military operations in Ukraine.

New Delhi has consistently called for peace and dialogue amid Russia-Ukraine hostilities.

India's abstentions from voting amount to a balancing act. It was designed to protect India's national interests.

What has been the response of the East and the West?

East

China is outreaching India to secure India's attendance at the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) summit and Russia-India-China (RIC) dialogue

West

It seems that India is a **consequential player** along the Russia-China axis. It is because of two factors i.e., Russia has been isolated by much of the international community, and China has declared a "no limits" partnership with Moscow.

The **US, Japan and Australia**, i.e., three other members of QUAD have all unequivocally condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Therefore, the US is building pressure on India to pick a side in the current crisis.

However, Japan and Australia have not pressured India to pick a side in the crisis.

What is the way forward?

China and Russia outreach may provide a chance for India to resolve the boundary dispute in Ladakh, and Northeast. There may be dialogue for demilitarisation of the borders.

India's balancing act may protect India's immediate economic interests. But New Delhi must weigh its position vis-à-vis the QUAD and BRICS in context of the geopolitical shifts.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

CORAL REEFS, CORAL BLEACHING AND RELATED ISSUES

68. The phenomenon of coral bleaching

Source: This post is based on the article "**The phenomenon of coral bleaching**" published in **The Hindu** on **29th Mar 22**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment, Conservation & Biodiversity

Relevance: Coral bleaching

News: The management authority of the world's largest coral reef system, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, confirmed on 25th Mar that the reef is experiencing a mass coral bleaching event.

This is the **6th time** that the coral reef system is being hit by a widespread and damaging bleaching event, and the 4th time in six years that such an event has occurred.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of March, 2022

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in a recent report said that if temperatures continue to rise, bleaching events may occur more often and a large proportion of the remaining reef cover in Australia could be lost.

What are coral reefs?

Corals are **marine invertebrates** or animals not possessing a spine. Each coral is called a **polyp** and thousands of such polyps live together to form a colony, which grows when polyps multiply to make copies of themselves.

Types of corals: Hard coral and soft coral.

– **Hard corals**, also called **hermatypic** or ‘reef building’ corals extract calcium carbonate (also found in limestone) from the seawater to build hard, white coral exoskeletons.

– **Soft coral polyps**, however, borrow their appearance from plants, attach themselves to such skeletons and older skeletons built by their ancestors. Soft corals also add their own skeletons to the hard structure over the years and these growing multiplying structures gradually form coral reefs. They are the **largest living structures** on the planet.

- Read more about corals [here](#)

What is coral bleaching?

Bleaching happens **when corals experience stress in their environment** due to changes in temperature, pollution or high levels of ocean acidity.

Under stressed conditions, the zooxanthellae start producing **reactive oxygen species**, which are not beneficial to the corals. So, the **corals expel the colour-giving zooxanthellae** from their polyps, which exposes their pale white exoskeleton, giving the corals a bleached appearance. This also ends the symbiotic relationship that helps the corals to survive and grow.

Bleached corals can survive, depending on the levels of bleaching and the recovery of sea temperatures to normal levels.

But, severe bleaching and prolonged stress in the external environment can lead to **coral death**.

What have been the global coral bleaching events?

The **first mass bleaching event** had occurred in 1998 when the El Niño weather pattern caused sea surfaces in the Pacific Ocean to heat up. This event caused 8% of the world’s coral to die.

The **second event** took place in 2002.

The longest and most damaging bleaching event, took place from 2014 to 2017. This started with reefs in Guam in the Western Pacific region getting affected, to then affecting the North, South-Pacific, and the Indian Ocean.

Why are coral reefs significant?

Coral reefs **support over 25% of marine biodiversity**, including fish, turtles and lobsters, while taking up 1% of the seafloor.

The marine life supported by reefs further fuels **global fishing industries**.

Besides, coral reef systems generate \$2.7 trillion in **annual economic value** through goods and service trade and tourism.

Aside from adding economic value and being a support system for aquatic life, coral reefs also provide **protection from storm waves**.

Why the current bleaching event at Great Barrier Reef is significant?

It is the first time that the current **bleaching event has occurred during a La Niña weather pattern**, when warm areas in the Pacific Ocean shift, giving more cloud cover, rain and creating cooler weather conditions over the reef

A 2021 study by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), which is supported by the United Nations, showed that 14% of the world's coral on reefs had been lost between 2009 and 2018, with most of the loss attributed to coral bleaching.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND GROWTH

STARTUPS AND RELATED ISSUES

69. The Start-up India initiative

Source: The post is based on an article “**The Start-up India initiative**” published in **The Hindu** on **29th March 22**.

News: Recently a research paper was released by Dublin City University in Ireland which reviewed India's entrepreneurial policy 'Startup India' which was introduced in 2016.

How has the program been successful so far?

The study affirmed that Startup India **had a positive impact** in reducing regional entrepreneurial disparities.

Startup India entrepreneurship outreach campaigns in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, helped address regional entrepreneurial disparities in India.

The entrepreneurs that are integrated into the portal would be connected to venture capital funds, angel networks, banks, incubators, accelerators, universities, etc.

In fact, many State govts have adopted the policies in favour of start-ups after the launch of this program.

India ranked third among global Start-up ecosystems. More than 65,000 Start-ups registered on the entrepreneurial portal. Out of them, 90 have attained the 'unicorn' status.

What are the issues?

Despite the initiative, the **entrepreneurship** continues to be “**highly concentrated**” in three megacities, namely, **Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi NCR**.

– For example, 93% of all funding raised between 2014 and 2019 were done in these three megacities. It happened because India's venture capital industry is clustered in and around these three cities. Eventually, it can result in **regional disparities** because there will be growth of one area at the expense of another area.

The skewed nature may increase **economic inequality**. It will not promote the **emergence of entrepreneurs** in industries which are not found in the clusters of the megacities.

There is **under-representation of the 'caste', 'tribe', 'marginalised', 'indigenous' or 'social groups'** in the policy. It could be due to caste-based economic exclusion, the urban and rural divide, lack of access to quality education and limited social networks etc.

The policy does not take into consideration **India's digital divide**, especially with respect to urban and rural areas.

The policy ignores **necessity-based** or **subsistence entrepreneurship** which are run informally and through self-employment. For example, it is high among SC and ST communities in rural areas.

There is **under-representation of women** in Start-ups. For example, RBI's pilot survey about the new start-ups stated that 5.9% of participating Start-ups in its survey had a female founder.

What is the way forward?

There is a **need for targeted measures** to promote entrepreneurship among SC and ST communities in India. It can be done using technology-and innovation-driven approach.

The government has started capacity building programmes and the dedicated webpages for women on the entrepreneurship portal.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

70. Lifestyles for climate justice

Source: This post is created based on the article “Lifestyles for climate justice” published on 30th March in Business Standard.

News: A recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has pointed out that climate change has caused substantial damages, and increasingly irreversible losses, in terrestrial, freshwater and coastal, and open ocean marine ecosystems.

Policy approach to tackle climate change:

The policy approach to tackling this has tended to **concentrate on supply-side changes**, involving decarbonizing production. There is a need for equal emphasis on **demand-side changes**, reflected in the Prime Minister's plea for a “Lifestyle for Environment” campaign at Glasgow 2021.

Need for focus on lifestyle:

This is based on **behavioral changes** on the demand side. At the global level, the richest 10% of the world population accounts for 47% of carbon emissions, and the poorest 50% accounts for just 10% of the emissions.

The geographical distribution of the rich and poor is substantially skewed. In many sub-Saharan countries, the vast majority of the population belongs to the bottom 50% of global carbon emitters. The share of people in the global top 10% is especially high in Western European countries and in the US.

In India, the carbon intensity of expenditure rises with income groups. This must be because high carbon-intensity products like cars and air-conditioners are used almost entirely by the top-income deciles.

This **lifestyle of “yesterday's luxuries become today's necessities”**, is a global problem as it has defined living standard goals and consumer behaviour in most countries.

What should be done?

The UNFCCC can promote **sustainable consumption** including reducing waste generation, assisting individuals and households to make environmentally sound purchasing decisions.

In India, the government should **commission a survey on the carbon and environmental footprint of expenditure** categorized by product and income groups.

Focus on specific measures, such as mandatory product standards that reduce the carbon footprint; using government purchase programs to promote environmentally safer products; labeling to show the carbon footprint; nudging consumer behavior through an information outreach; measures to reduce waste generation and mandatorily recycling discarded electronic products and durables by suppliers.

Such change in consumption pattern is essential for climate mitigation and climate justice.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

GIG ECONOMY AND RELATED ISSUES

71. Race to the bottom for gig workers

Source: The post is based on an article “**Race to the bottom for gig workers**” published in **The Hindu** on **31st March 2022**.

News: Recently, Zomato announced its plans to deliver food to customers in 10 minutes. This has raised several questions on the nature of delivery platforms, and the impact on delivery workers.

What are the issues with the platform industry, especially food delivery platforms?

Platform industry is all about grabbing market share. This is done by introducing innovations to increase “efficiency”. In the case of food delivery, platform focus on cost reduction and increasing speed to boost their efficiency. Both factors impact the platform worker, or “delivery partner”. It is because both the factors will improve with reduction in the number of workers and their earnings.

It is the delivery partner who faces the anger of the customer for late delivery. For example, customers even refuse to pay leaving the partner at the mercy of the platform.

All costs including fuel, asset cost including cost of maintenance and depreciation, etc. are borne by the worker. It becomes serious when fuel prices have been skyrocketing

The **average earnings of delivery workers are very less.** Their net earnings are only around 40% of the total gross earnings from delivery pay-outs and incentives. Out of this, 30% is eaten up by fuel costs and another 30% on various capital costs and levies.

Serious working conditions: They work for an average 13 hours per day. They cover over 190 kilometres each day.

Safety concerns: While working for a long hour and distance on a two-wheeler through busy city traffic, it is surely impossible to ensure delivery partner safety.

Whether the platform owners consider “delivery partner” as a partner in their prosperity or not.

What is the importance of the platforms?

These platforms have contributed a lot towards improvement in technology and lifestyle, particularly during the course of the pandemic.

Way Forward

Human involvement is also an important component in the platform industry. It provides the last link to make the platform an efficient delivery machine. This should not be ignored.

POVERTY AND RELATED ISSUES

72. India's food response as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'

Source: The post is based on an article "India's food response as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'" published in **The Hindu** on **31st March 22**.

Context: Global hunger is on the rise, driven by the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic shocks, conflicts, poverty, and inequality.

India via its partnership with World Food Programme, world's largest humanitarian agency, can help address this problem embodying the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kuntumbakam (Earth is one family).

What is the situation wrt hunger across the world?

At present, globally, there are about 150 million **stunted children**, 50 million **wasted children**. In addition, every other child as well as two billion adults are suffering from **micronutrient deficiencies**.

More people are living in hunger than in 2015. In fact, 43 million more people suffered from chronic hunger in 2019 in comparison to 2014. The major cause of this increase has been the Covid-19 pandemic.

Moreover, the **Afghanistan crisis is going to add more**. The Ukraine crisis is also driving food and fuel prices. It will add to the burden to the millions (especially the poor and marginalised) who are struggling.

What efforts have been made to ensure food security in India?

From sufficiency to assistance: Since the Green Revolution, India has achieved huge progress in food production. Now India has achieved self-sufficiency in food production and it is ready to serve other countries. For example, India exported a record 20 million tonnes of rice and wheat in 2021.

Safety nets: India has enacted the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013. In addition, there are the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the Mid-Day meals (MDM), and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). These measures are going to provide safety net to billions of people in India

How has India helped other countries?

Afghanistan

India is providing humanitarian food assistance to the people of Afghanistan under the banner of the United Nations Food Programme. For example, recently, food assistance (in kind) was sent to Jalalabad, Afghanistan, through Pakistan via Amritsar's Attari border.

Africa and Middle East

In addition, in wake of Covid-19, India has given food aid to several countries in Africa and the Middle East/West Asia. For example, such assistance was sent to Yemen and Zimbabwe in the past.

What is the way forward?

Access to food helps in maintaining peace, as highlighted by the Nobel Peace Prize received by World Food Programme (WFP) in 2020. India must continue to address malnourishment and hunger by furthering access and inclusion via its policies and systems.

The developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America can also learn lessons from India's journey from chronic food shortage to surplus food producer like land reforms, new regulatory systems, public support, and intervention in Agri markets and prices and Agri research.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

FUEL PRICING AND RELATED ISSUES

73. Is the fuel pricing policy problematic?

Source: This post is created based on the article “Is the fuel pricing policy problematic?”
Published on 1st April 2022 in The Hindu.

News: India officially has a deregulated pricing regime for fuel prices. However, there has been a practice to put prices on hold during election campaigns. Experts have raised concerns with this fuel pricing policy.

How has India's fuel pricing regime evolved in recent years?

The dismantling of oil prices started gradually in 1997, according to the recommendations made by the **Nirmal Singh Committee**. From 75% in the first year to 100% by April 2002.

From 2004, oil prices started moving up. Hence, the government restored the **cost-plus pricing system** to protect the consumers. The government did not pass the entire price burden to consumers.

It **subsidized prices for transport fuels, LPG, and kerosene** through mechanisms to provide for oil marketing companies. Till 2009-10, the government issued oil bonds, but it provided cash subsidies thereafter till 2014-15.

The oil prices came down again in 2015, hence, the NDA government started implementing **market price mechanism**, without any burden on the consumers.

The current high prices are due to two factors. First is the high level of excise and VAT. Second is external factors such as depreciation of rupee and Russia-Ukraine war.

There is a stop-and-start approach to price changes despite a free pricing regime. As soon as the elections in critical States are announced, fuel prices are frozen despite global price trends.

This policy is definitely a red flag because investors closely study governments' behavioural responses to various kinds of shocks that emanate from the world economy. Investors also look at the prospect of Indian economy and capacity utilization.

How does the deregulation affect the economy?

There are **political and economic reasons** for the government to deviate from the stated policy either temporarily or in a regular way.

The Indian economy is **vulnerable to global crude price pressures**. If these prices are passed fully to customers and industries, they will have major economic effects. High retail inflation now will lead to subdued economic recovery, especially after COVID-19.

Hence, India is not able to manage **a meaningful de-administered price** over a long period of time and makes short-term compromises again and again.

In the short term, the quick solution could be a reduction in excise duties or taxes, which will have a fiscal cost. The government has had healthy tax revenues this year. Hence, the tax

buoyancy can provide legroom to the government to absorb a reduction on excise duty on petroleum products.

Fiscal dilemma faced by the government

The tax-to-GDP ratio particularly of the Central Government has not touched the old peak after GST reforms, personal income tax reforms, corporate tax reforms. Therefore the capacity of government becomes limited.

Oil bonds are an inefficient intervention as they only tend to postpone the problem. From 2002 onwards, India's strategy for dealing with global crude price rise vulnerability has been myopic. The governments tend to develop short-term measures when there is a sharp rise. There is a need to develop long-term measures given the import dependency on crude is 85%.

LITHIUM IMPORT AND RELATED ISSUES

74. India's lithium dependency worries

Source: This post is based on the article "**India's lithium dependency worries**" published in **Livemint** on **31st Mar 22**.

Context: Lithium has been among the most sought-after mineral during the past few years, largely on the back of its usage in battery manufacturing. China is a major import source of Lithium.

Why is Lithium important for India?

It is a **key component of lithium-ion batteries**, the demand for which has surged amid the Centre's push to boost the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in the country.

PLI Scheme: The ₹18,000 crore production-linked incentive scheme for advanced chemistry cell (ACC) battery storage, has kicked off and the supply of lithium, which is largely an imported product, has declined.

Dependency on China: With India being in a diplomatic tussle with China, the supplies from the neighbouring country have declined and India too is looking for other import avenues.

Why the supply of Lithium has declined?

Demand-supply mismatch: The supply of lithium has not kept pace with the rise in demand from electric vehicle makers across the world.

– China is witnessing a mismatch between demand and supply, which has led to a rise in prices.

Who are major Lithium producers and does India produce lithium?

Australia was the largest lithium producer in 2021, according to US Geological Survey, with an estimated output of 55,000 metric tonnes.

Chile and China ranked second and third.

India

– India is **dependent on imports** for lithium, as production in the country is minimal.

– The first traces of the lithium have been found in **Karnataka's Mandya district**, a mere 100 kilometres from Bengaluru. The preliminary find is relatively small, with just about 1,600 tonnes of lithium deposits.

What is India doing to source lithium?

India is searching for domestic reserves and looking for newer countries to source the mineral.

India recently committed to jointly invest \$6 million with the **Australian government** to explore lithium and cobalt mines there over the next six months.

In 2020, KABIL also signed a pact with an **Argentine firm** to jointly explore lithium in the South American country.

GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – SECURITY CHALLENGES IN BORDER AREAS

WITHDRAWAL OF AFSPA AND RELATED ISSUES

75. Centre does well to withdraw AFSPA from many districts in the Northeast. It must carry on working in this direction

Source: This post is based on the article “**Centre does well to withdraw AFSPA from many districts in the Northeast. It must carry on working in this direction**” published in **The Indian Express** on **2nd April 22**.

News: The main task before the Central govt, after the partial withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers (AFSPA) Act from Assam, Manipur and Nagaland, is to slowly restore the primacy of the civilian administration in the areas still under AFSPA.

It’s a process that needs great patience, negotiation and accommodation.

Must Read: [Explained: AFSPA and Northeast](#)

Is AFSPA still in operation in the Northeast?

Yes. The withdrawal is only partial. The law still continues to be in operation in the following areas:

- nearly 75% of Nagaland
- all of the hill districts in Manipur
- 40% of Assam, mainly the districts bordering Manipur and Nagaland

What is the background behind imposition of AFSPA in the Northeast?

The Act in its present form was **first imposed in Nagaland** to battle the Naga nationalist movement that gained ground in the 1950s.

As Naga nationalism acquired the character of an armed insurrection, the Act was **introduced in Manipur’s hill areas**, which are home to Naga tribes.

As Naga nationalism influenced the rise of similar nationalist movements in neighbouring states, including in Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Assam, from the 1960s onwards, the government moved in the army and central para-military forces to the region. The AFSPA **provided operational cover** for these forces, not trained or mandated to operate amid a civilian population or to report to the civil administration.

76. "Explained: AFSPA and the Northeast"

Source: This post is based on the following articles

- “**Explained: AFSPA and the Northeast**” published in **The Indian Express** on **1st Apr 22**.
- “**Helping Northeast**” published in **Times of India** on **31st Mar 22**.

News: The Centre has decided to reduce the area under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the states of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland

The act has been withdrawn entirely from 23 districts in Assam; and partially from seven districts in Nagaland, six districts in Manipur, and one district in Assam.

Once the decision is notified in the gazette, AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

What is the significance of the decision?

AFSPA, has been called draconian as it gives sweeping powers to the armed forces.

- Read more [here](#)

The move is expected to **help demilitarise the region**; it will lift restrictions of movements through check points and frisking of residents.

Why has AFSPA been withdrawn now?

Reduction in insurgency: The move is aided by the fact that around 7,000 militants in the Northeast have surrendered in recent years. Plus, agreements like the 2020 Bodo Accord and the 2021 Karbi-Anglong pact have politically addressed the root causes of regional insurgencies

The killing of 14 people by security forces in a botched anti-militancy operation in Nagaland’s Mon district in 2021, had further intensified the demand for repeal of AFSPA throughout the Northeast

What are the previous attempts at repeal of AFSPA?

In 2004, the then central government set up a **five-member committee under former Supreme Court Justice Jeevan Reddy**. It submitted its report in 2005 recommending the repeal of AFSPA, calling it “highly undesirable”, and saying it had become a symbol of oppression.

Subsequently, the **2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)**, headed by Veerapa Moily, endorsed these recommendations.

Why was AFSPA imposed in the NE?

When the Naga nationalist movement kicked off in the 1950s with the setting up of the Naga National Council (NNC)— the predecessor of the NSCN — Assam police forces allegedly used force to suppress the movement.

As an armed movement formed in **Nagaland**, AFSPA was passed in Parliament, and subsequently imposed on the entire state.

In Manipur, too, it was imposed in 1958 in the three Naga-dominated districts where the NNC was active. It was imposed in the 1960s in the Kuki-Zomi dominated Manipur district, which was under the influence of the Mizo insurgent movement.

As secessionist and nationalist movements started rising in other Northeastern states, AFSPA started being extended and imposed.

What has made AFSPA unpopular among the people?

In Nagaland, 60 years of living under the AFSPA regime has had **psychological consequences**, trauma and alienation of the people. The use of force and AFSPA furthered the feeling of alienation of the Naga people, solidifying Naga nationalism.

Various **incidents of violence and extra-judicial killings** have been recorded in the Northeastern states, as AFSPA gives sweeping powers to security forces.

– In a writ petition filed in the Supreme Court in 2012, the families of victims of **extra-judicial killings** alleged 1,528 fake encounters had taken place in the state from May 1979 to May 2012. The Supreme Court set up a commission to scrutinise six of these cases, and the commission found all six to be fake encounters.

What are the issues with the decision?

Application of AFSPA in Assam was far less heavy-handed compared to Manipur and Nagaland. Hence, removing the act from most of Assam was low-hanging fruit.

Whereas the relatively small areas being exempted in Manipur and Nagaland mean most of these two states remain in the shadow of the draconian law.

What is the way forward?

It is a step in the right direction. The Centre should continue on this track and work to repeal AFSPA across all of the Northeast, as this prone-to-abuse law that has its roots in the colonial era has no place in modern India.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECH – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND RELATED ISSUES

77. Thinking hard on AI

Source: The post is based on an article “**Thinking hard on AI**” published in the **Business Standard** on **31st Mar 22**.

News: Recently, two Indian researchers wrote an unpublished paper “**Artificial Intelligence and the armed forces: Legal and ethical concerns**”.

This has led to the resurgence of a debate on Artificial Intelligence (AI) based arms and weapon system.

In 1950, Alan Turing in a paper titled “**Computing Machinery and Intelligence**”, considered the question: “Can machines think?”. Further, in 1956, it was John McCarthy who coined the term artificial intelligence.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

AI is a field of computer science. It allows computers and machines to perform intelligent tasks by mimicking human behaviour and actions. Further, AI can be of broadly classified into two types:

(1) **Narrow AI**, which performs specific tasks like music, shopping recommendations, and medical diagnosis. For example, music-streaming services, speech recognition, and personal assistants such as Siri or Alexa comes under this, and

(2) **General AI**: It is a system which functions with an intelligent behaviour at least as advanced as a person. It works across the full range of cognitive tasks. General AI is still a few decades away.

What are the advantages of using AI in military operations?

AI based arms and weapon systems can help to obtain **tactical advantages** in the military operation. Big data analytics can be used for this during a war. It will help humans to take decisions.

Development of autonomous weapons systems. Such systems derive conclusions from gathered information and pre-programmed parameters and models. Thus, they independently select, engage and attack (i.e., use force against, neutralize, damage or destroy) targets without human intervention.

Usage in the remote areas

Reduction of casualties among soldiers and non-combatants. For example, For India, AI-based weapons systems can help tackle our hostile neighbours and our peculiar problem of Naxalism.

What are the recent developments in the area?

At present, global powers like **China, Russia, the US, and India** are competing to develop **AI-based weapons systems**. For example, the US is developing intelligent weapons systems.

In the case of India, an **AI task force (AITF)** was set up in 2017.

– It was supposed to “explore possibilities to leverage AI for development across various fields”.

Further, In 2018, Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) set up a **task force** to study the use and feasibility of AI in India’s military.

Israel developed the **Harpy drone**. It is an **autonomous weapon**. It flies to a particular area to hunt for specific targets. It then destroys the target using a high-explosive warhead nicknamed “**Fire and Forget**”.

What are the issues in AI based weapon systems?

There is **no formal definition**, given that the word “intelligence” is, in itself, difficult to define.

Threats due to “Lethal Automated Weapons Systems” (LAWS): Also known as “Killer robots”, they are designed not to require any human involvement once activated. They would effectively take the decision to kill or engage targets. Such systems could pose significant threats, legal and ethical challenges.

The autonomous weapon systems can be used by countries for **warmongering**. They can be used to cause civilian and collateral damage.

Way Forward

“Intelligence” should be clearly defined before attempting its regulation.

Various researchers warned about the dangers of an AI arms race. They called for a “ban on **offensive autonomous weapons** beyond meaningful human control”. It was advocated in the “**International Joint Conferences on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI)**” which was held in 2015.

India advocates, **(1) AI based weapons systems** should meet the standards of international humanitarian law, **(2)** there should be systemic controls on the use of AI based weapon systems, in **international armed conflict**. It will prevent widening of the **technology gap** between countries, and **(3)** AI-weapon use should also be insulated from the influence of public conscience.

A country should avoid deployment of the Lethal Autonomous Weapon System, (LAWS) to curtail a plethora of legal and ethical issues.

IPCC REPORTS

78. How to survive and grow in a warming world

Source: This post is created based on the article “A How to survive and grow in a warming world” Published on 1st April 2022 in Indian Express.

News: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its latest report on climate impacts. It highlights the need for adaptation.

What does the report state regarding adaptation?

It suggests that adaptation to climate impacts in the near to medium term can help communities and ecosystems become resilient against the threats from current and future levels of warming.

Ecosystem-based adaptation, for instance, is recommended for taking care of communities and social well-being, while restoring forests, lands and marine ecosystems.

The adaptation will be different for different places. Also cost-effective adaptation depends on international cooperation, inclusive technology, financial flows, knowledge sharing and capacity building, policy development and on-ground implementation.

What are the gaps in IPCC literature?

The IPCC has been consistently drawing attention to the lack of adequate science from and on developing countries. These countries have in turn been asking for the inclusion of what is broadly termed as “**grey literature**” or non-peer-reviewed literature in the IPCC process.

Such “**grey**” resources are very often supported by respected donor organizations and governments and can be valuable sources of information in contexts where the resources for research and publishing are limited.

What are the steps required for Sustainable Development?

Sustainable development, inclusive of climate resilience, calls for an **ensemble approach**. This should provide appropriate emphasis on tackling climate change impacts and development needs in a world with growing challenges.

For instance, developing countries may have to work harder now to achieve their projected pre-Covid levels of achievement. The pathway should include immediate, near and medium-term outcomes.

Way forward: Pursuing the report’s call for climate-resilient development pathways requires follow-up action. As the pandemic has already highlighted the need for balance in nature-people relationships.