

**9pm**  
**Compilation**

**April, 2022**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

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# General

# Studies

# Paper – 1

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#### **INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD KNOWLEDGE**

##### **1. Celebrating India's contribution to the world of knowledge**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Celebrating India's contribution to the world of knowledge” published in **The Indian Express** on **09th April 2022**.

**Context:** Recently there have been debates and discussion over India's contribution and achievements in various domains of knowledge.

The debates arose because despite immense contributions, India's achievements remain unattributed and uncelebrated despite 5,000 years old civilization. The topic became more important as India is going to celebrate its 75 years of Independence.

##### **What have been the Indian contributions to world knowledge?**

India has contributed a lot since ancient times, which has been crucial in the development of modern concepts.

*Albert Einstein once said, “We owe a lot to the Indians. They gave zero, and taught how to count”.*

The scientific discovery could not have been possible without such contribution in the field of knowledge.

The **modern mathematical concepts** were born in India several centuries ago – **(1)** In the 7th century CE, **Brahmagupta** proved that the product of a negative and a positive number is a negative number. **(2)** The **Virahanka work** is similar to the Fibonacci Series, **(3)** Pingala's **Meru Prastara** can be related to **Pascal's Triangle**, and **(4)** **Madhava** (c 1,400 CE) found the approximate value of pi (p), and **(5)** In fact, the Indian numeral system (e.g., **Bakhshali Manuscript**) is the source of the **Arabic numeral system**. Later, it was transmitted to Europe.

In the field of **space sciences**, **Hinduism** related **ancient cosmological ideas** that were central to Hinduism form the basis of modern cosmology. The Hindu religion faith related to an **infinite number of deaths and rebirths** has some similarities with the **theory of the multiverse**.

India was a centre of **manufacturing** and **trade**. The **Damascus swords** were made from **Wootz steel in India**. Till the 19th century, Lahore, Amritsar, Agra, Jaipur, Gwalior, Tanjore, Mysore and Golconda were some of the few manufacturing centres for the Wootz steel. The art was lost after the advent of the British

In fact, **Kautilya** advocated **interest rates** that varied with **risk** (His **treatise** known as **Sukraniti**). This concept is related to **constant optimisation** of **risk** and **return**. These thoughts are the basis of theory of **differential interest rate** which is one of the founding pillars of modern economics.

India's rich heritage comprises both **tangibles** like **architecture** and **intangibles** like the wealth of knowledge.

##### **Way Forward**

“**Dhara: An Ode to Indian Knowledge Systems**” has been launched by the Ministry of Culture in this direction. It will enable academic scholars to add rigorous reasoning and scientific credibility to India's contribution and achievements across domains.

Further, **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** commemorating the **75th year** of **Indian Independence** provides an occasion for doing something in this regard.



## MERGING OF FILM AND MEDIA UNITS WITH NFDC

### 2. Protect the film archive. This can't be done by handing it to a corporation

**Source:** The post is based on the article, “Protect the film archive. This can't be done by handing it to a corporation” published in the **Indian Express** on 5th Apr 22.

**News:** Recently, the government has **merged** the Films Division, Children's Film Society, International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Directorate of Film Festivals, and National Film Archive of India (NFAI) with the NFDC (National Film Development Corporation of India).

#### What are the achievements of the NFAI?

**Contributed to the growth of our film culture.** It has gathered a certain amount of expertise and special experience. These worked with experts in the respective fields.

The NFAI's functioned to **preserve our film heritage**. It was one of the largest reserves of cinema films in the world. It used to archive the original prints of films in various languages from all over India.

The NFAI was a member of the international federation of film archives. It shared, exchanged, and standardised modern methods of archiving and restoration.

#### What are the issues with the merger?

The government has the duty and commitment to preserve and nurture our cultural heritage. This merger with a corporate body will **violate the government's commitment**.

These institutions have different characters and functions. They are being brought under a single institution known as NFDC. The **NFDC does not have special knowledge or experience** in any of these areas.

Any corporation works on the basis of business. Thus, how NFDC, a company would maintain a film archive when it is a known fact that it is an expensive affair.

The government has **proposed digitisation of films** in the archive. It will act as an alternative model to optical film preservation. There are questions like for how long digital format will last and how secure it is for preservation.

The culture of preservation of cinema in optical film format is a strong movement. It ensures long-time preservation. It ensures longevity in preservation.

GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN ISSUES

## HIJAB ROW IN KARNATAKA

### 3. Strengthen secularism, save the republic

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “Strengthen secularism, save the republic” published on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Indian Constitution: Evolution and Features

**Context:** The judgment of Karnataka High Court regarding the hijab issue has further provoked the hijab-wearing college students in Udupi. They have approached the Supreme Court to contest the order.

#### What is the political dimension of the hijab issue?

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The issue of hijab is political as well as constitutional. The Supreme court can settle the constitutional aspect but the political dimension will continue.

As a matter of fact, Hindu and Sikh women in northern India cover their heads on occasions such as a marriage, funeral, etc. However, removal of hijab from educational institutions creates an environment of intolerance.

### **What is the moral framework that India has followed?**

India has a past where people from other parts of the world were welcomed with open arms. A tolerance of other faiths and compassion towards fellow beings became an integral part of Indian traditions because of Buddha.

The Constitution adopted that moral framework for the governance of India. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and conscience on the one hand and secularism for the governance of the country on the other.

### **What is the essence of Indian secularism?**

The essence of Indian secularism is that the state has no religion. This is clear from **Article 27 and 28** of the Constitution.

**Article 27** states that no tax can be levied for promoting any particular religion. **Article 28** says that no religious instruction shall be given in any educational institutions wholly maintained out of state funds. **Article 25(2)(a)** empowers the state to regulate secular activities associated with religious practices. **Article 15** prohibits any kind of discrimination on the ground of religion. Above all freedom of religion is made subject to other fundamental rights, apart from the reasonable restrictions on the grounds of public order, morality and health.

In **Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain & Anr.**, the Supreme Court of India said “the state shall have no religion of its own’.

### **Can India become a theocratic state?**

A theocratic state with majority religion as the state religion is an unworkable proposition. A **theocratic state functions on the basis of religious laws**, which in India means the Dharma Shastras according to which only a particular caste has the right to rule and a large majority of the population will have no right to be a part of the power structure. This may lead to perennial conflicts and the eventual disintegration of society.

### **What should be done?**

India can only survive as a secular state where the state has no religion and does not promote any religion. Secularism was chosen as the foundational principle of the republic to keep the nation united.

## **MARITAL RAPE AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **4. A far reaching verdict that ends a regressive exception**

**Source:** The post is created based on the article “**A far reaching verdict that ends a regressive exception**” published in **The Hindu** on **04th April 2022**.

**News:** In the case of **Hrishikesh Sahoo v. State of Karnataka**, the Karnataka High Court pronounced the end of marital rape exception in **Section 375 (Rape) of Indian Penal Code**.

In the case, a husband approached the High Court seeking to quash the criminal proceedings against him. The charges framed were under Section 376 (rape), notwithstanding the marital rape exception. The High Court refused to quash the charge of rape against the husband.

### What does the judgment say?

The Judge held that if a husband is exempted from his acts of sexual assault it **would destroy the women's right to equality**, which is the soul of the Constitution.

The exception to marital rape in the IPC amounts to **discrimination because a wife is treated as subordinate to the husband**.

The Constitution guarantees women fundamental rights under **Articles 14,15,19 and 21**. These include **the right to live with dignity, personal liberty, bodily integrity, sexual autonomy, right to reproductive choices, right to privacy, right to freedom of speech and expression**.

### What are the previous judgements?

In **Independent Thought v. Union of India (2017)**, the Supreme Court of India diluted the exemption. Earlier the exception stated that sexual intercourse with wife over the age of 15 years is not rape. The Court changed the **minimum age to 18 years**. The Court stated that a girl **cannot be treated as a commodity**. The human rights of a girl child are alive whether she is married or not.

### What are the basis of the judgement?

The exception to marital rape is based on the principle of common law that by marriage a woman gives up her body to the husband. Due to which, husband could not be guilty of raping his wife. This was also adopted in the Indian Penal Code.

In United Kingdom, the case of **R v. R (1991)**, abolished the principle. The House of Lords held that the **duty of the court is to take steps to alter the rule** according to the position of society. Hence, a rapist remains a rapist subject to the criminal law, irrespective of his relationship with his victim.

GS1 – HISTORY - ART AND CULTURE

## IDOL THEFT IN INDIA

### 5. Solving India's idol theft problem

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Solving India's idol theft problem**” published in **The Indian Express** on **14th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS1 – Art and Culture

**Relevance:** Loss of cultural heritage in the form of antiquities

**Context:** Article, citing a CAG report, shines a light on the issue of the antiquities being stolen from monuments/sites and from Site Museums in India.

### What were the findings of the CAG report?

The 2013 report on “Preservation and Conservation of Monuments and Antiquities”, by the CAG found that 131 antiquities were stolen from monuments/sites and 37 antiquities from Site Museums from 1981 to 2012.

In similar situations, worldwide, organisations took effective steps including

- checking of catalogues of international auction house(s)
- posting news of such theft on websites

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- posting information about theft in the International Art Loss Registry
- sending photographs of stolen objects electronically to dealers and auction houses and intimate scholars in the field.

### On ASI's role:

- ASI never participated or collected information on Indian antiquities put on sale at well-known international auction houses viz. Sotheby's, Christie's, etc. as there was no explicit provision in the AAT (Antiquities and Art Treasures) Act, 1972 for doing so.
- ASI was also a nodal agency to retrieve stolen or illegally exported art objects. From 1976 to 2001, 19 antiquities had been retrieved by the ASI from foreign countries. But after 2001, the ASI had not been able to achieve any success.

*India is a signatory to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. India ratified it in 1977.*

### **Has the situation improved over the last few years?**

Yes.

Around 200-odd idols have been returned by the US, Britain, Canada and Australia. Credit largely goes to increased citizen awareness and to the initiatives & success of the India Pride Project (*It is a group of art enthusiasts who uses social media to identify stolen religious artefacts from Indian temples and secure their return*)

A stolen Buddha statue has also returned from Italy.

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

India should also sign the 1995 UNIDROIT (International Institute for the Unification of Private Law) Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects.

India can take lessons from global best practices, like those followed by Italy –

**a)** A specific law on protecting cultural heritage, with enhanced penalties; **(b)** Centralised management before granting authorisation for archaeological research; **(c)** Specialisation in cultural heritage for public prosecutors; **(d)** An inter-ministerial committee for recovery and return of cultural objects; **(e)** MOUs and bilateral agreements with other countries and international organisations to prevent illegal trafficking; **(f)** Involvement of private organisations and individuals in protection; **(g)** A complete inventory of moveable and immoveable cultural heritage, with detailed catalogues; **(h)** Monitoring and inspection of cultural sites; and **(i)** Centralised granting of export requests.

**TIME BANKING FOR WOMEN AND RELATED ISSUES**

**6. Why time banking is a crucial tool to empower women**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Why time banking is a crucial tool to empower women**” published on **13/April/2022** in Down to Earth.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Role of women, Social empowerment

**Context:** Unpaid work is crucial for development of the society and economy, but is often invisible. Women perform 75% of the world’s unpaid care work.

The largest source of women’s unpaid labor is domestic work. These include household chores like grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning as well as caregiving to the children, elderly and infirm.

**What is time poverty?**

Time poverty is defined as “not having enough time” to pursue interests beyond unpaid domestic/ care work.

Unpaid labour is often devalued by men and creates time poverty. The situation leads to emotional strain.

Time poverty has a direct bearing on the ability of women to contribute to or participate in the labour market and/or public or political life, leading to declining female labour force participation rate.

**What is time banking?**

Time banking can be viewed as an opportunity cost of an unpaid activity in terms of the time sacrificed. In time banks, one hour equals one *time credit*, regardless of the service being performed or the level of each person’s skill or gender.

Time-banking can benefit women, their families and their communities by alleviating time poverty through the system of exchange services through time credits.

For each hour of a service exchanged, the service provider receives one, time credit and the beneficiary pays one, time credit.

**What are the benefits?**

There are time banks operating in more than 30 countries in the Americas, Africa and Europe as well as in Russia and China. Time bank networks can be utilised for increasing political participation of women in the following ways:

- **Directly:** Through utilisation of time credits for campaigning for office
- **Indirectly:** By educating themselves or others on local issues or understanding their rights, accessing government programs and mobilising others.

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Across the world, there are examples in our everyday life of intra- and inter-family examples of informal time-sharing. However, for tangible results on a community or economy scale, the concept needs scaling up and formalisation.

### How to formalise time banking?

The most relevant case study on time banks is that of Senegal, where time banking was made a formal system and integrated into a vocational training centre for women. It allowed women to earn time credits by working at the centre or caring for members' children and exchange them for classes and workshops.

To make time banks a formal set up, GRADES introduced a simple framework. Each member of the community identified needs that he or she can address. The community then translated the service performed by the individual into time credits which could be exchanged for hours beyond unpaid work.

### Way forward

Time banking, if made a formal arrangement, has the potential to act as the catalyst to women empowerment by formally recognising the economic value of unpaid labour and tapping the same across communities

GS1 – SOCIETY – INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

## LANGUAGES IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

### 7. Is Hindi or English beneficial as the link language?

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Is Hindi or English beneficial as the link language?**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Indian Constitution, Govt policies and interventions

**Relevance:** Hindi Language as the national language

**News:** Recently, the **Union Home minister** said that the citizens of States should communicate with each other in the “language of India”. They should choose Hindi as an alternative to English. This has sparked criticism from the opposition and various sections of Indian society.

### What are the arguments against use of Hindi as a communication language across Indian states?

According to Census 2011, Hindi was reported as the **first choice of language** for communication by residents of only 12 of the 35 States and Union Territories (UTs)

**Hindi is not spoken by the majority.**

– 43% of Indians who speak “**Hindi languages**” include **56 languages** like Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Hindi and Chhattisgarhi. Out of this, only 26% speak Hindi specifically as their mother tongue.

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There is a positive correlation between a **higher standard of living** and a **higher share of English speakers**. For example, the States/UTs having a **higher share of English speakers** have higher HDI scores in comparison to States having a **higher share of Hindi speakers**.

The **Hindi-speaking States** have been witnessing **net out-migration**. It means more people have been migrating towards the **non-Hindi speaking states** (*Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab and Delhi*) in search of better livelihoods. This has been validated by an analysis of **railways passenger** data referred to **the 2017 Economic Survey** and **the 2011 Census data**.

GS1 – SOCIETY – URBANISATION

### **URBAN PLANNING AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **8. A greener, safer future for Indian cities**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**A greener, safer future for Indian cities**” published on **12th Apr 22** in **The Indian Express**.

**Context:** The IPCC’s latest report shows how smart urban planning can mitigate the effects of climate change.

#### **What is the need for smart urban planning in India?**

India is witnessing one of the largest urban growth spurts in history.

By the time **India turns 100, nearly half the population will be living in urban areas**, making it imperative to not only nurture India’s megacities but also facilitate tier-2 and tier-3 cities to gear up for the future.

Therefore, **the Union Budget 2022** had announced the formation of a **high-level committee** of planners, economists and institutions to make recommendations on urban sector policies.

#### **What are the challenges wrt urban infra in India?**

Town and country planning acts in India have largely remained unchanged over the past 50 years, relying on techniques set up by the British.

Cities still **create land use and regulatory control-based master plans**. The focus of planning continues to be the strict division of the city into various homogeneous zones such as residential, commercial and industrial.

**Master plans face prolonged delays** in preparation, sanctioning and implementation. **Inter-agency negotiations remain out of the scope** of the master planning process. They tend to take a **static, broad-brush approach** to cities that have dynamic fine-grained structures and local specificities.

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

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Globally, cities are moving to the practice of developing **strategic plans and projects along with local area plans**.

The projects should be designed and developed in the context of land that can be made available and capital resources that can be raised.

**Strategic plans should be developed every five years** to increase a city's competitiveness and help it achieve its strategic goals with respect to sustainability and economic development by identifying key projects to be implemented.

Finally, **local area plans should be developed** to ensure the health, safety and welfare of citizens through public participation, contextualising local challenges, needs and ambitions.

Cities should also aim to mainstream the **use of spatialised social, economic and environmental data** to create robust links across the urban- rural continuum.

### Way Forward

Building consensus around future growth and development, with a focus on climate action, economic and social integration, is crucial. Such a **participatory process** is what will help build a vibrant, inclusive and liveable urban India.

GS1 – HISTORY – ART AND CULTURE

### **PRADHAN MANTRI SANGRAHALAYA**

#### **9. Art museums and the craft of democracy**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Art museums and the craft of democracy**” published in **The Hindu** on **23<sup>rd</sup> April 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** the Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya

**News:** Recently, the **Prime Minister of India** inaugurated the **Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya** on the grounds of **Teen Murti House** in New Delhi. While doing so he declared that the new museum would help youth value the expansion of **constitutional government** in India since Independence.

#### **History of National Museums**

Large art museums emerged in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They emerged alongside the rise of **nations, colonial empires, and industrialisation**. For example, the World's most visited **Louvre Museum** in Paris was founded during the French Revolution.

After decolonisation, museums were built in newly independent countries along western lines to bolster their national narratives. They inspired a new **national consciousness**. Currently, India has the **National Museum** which is located on the Janpath Road.

#### **About the Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya**

New museum would be located on **Raisina Hill**. It will open by 2026. It will “vividly demonstrate different aspects of **India** or **Bharat**”.



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The Museum will be equipped with **augmented reality** technology, computerised kinetic sculptures, holograms, and smartphone applications.

The primary purpose of the museum is to nurture **patriotism** and showcase **triumph**.

### What will be the challenges for the new museum?

The new museum acknowledges **India's continuing diversity** including its many conflicts.

Ensuring that **irreplicable antiquities** are not subjected to excess heat, cold drafts, humidity, and harsh light.

### The Way Forward

#### Administration

The government can promote **accountability**. It can usher **transparency** in administering a **premier cultural institution**.

#### Design and Architecture

The new museum may emulate **Charles Correa's commitment** to create accessible spaces in the public buildings like Auditoria, courtyards, concert halls, and cafes etc.

The new museum can have a host of **different galleries**. For example, one gallery can show the **connected history** of the **Indus Valley Civilization** with ancient civilisations of **Mesopotamia** etc. Other galleries can house coins and portraits related to Kushans etc.

#### Others

The new museums can display the **entire collection** of the **National Museum** Or at least as much of the collection that can be safely displayed.

The new museum should be seen as a **laboratory** for the future. It should be used as a **multi-purpose building** dedicated to quarrying new histories and fostering fresh deliberations.

The new museum should also collaborate with the **contemporary artists** like **Jitish Kallat** and other forward -looking museums in the country like, **Bhau Daji Lad Museum**.

GS1 – SOCIETY – URBANISATION

### URBANISATION – GOVERNANCE RELATED ISSUES

#### 10. Urbanisation and development

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Urbanisation and development**” published in the **Business Standard** on **21st Apr 22**.

**Context:** World Bank has projected that every seven of 10 people will be living in urban cities by 2050. Therefore, the emphasis on urbanisation and its correlation with sustainable development has never been stronger.

It not only gives a clear picture of the degree of concentration of people in a region, but also highlights the underlying patterns that lead to the formation of a city.

#### What is Urbanisation?

Urbanization refers to the process of increase in population in cities and towns compared to rural areas. It rests on the following pillars that shape the very character and nature of the process:

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- Technology
- Tolerance
- Talent
- Territorial Assets

### What is the new understanding wrt the process of Urbanisation?

Historically, the rise of city centres coincided with the industrial society reaching its heights. For the longest time, therefore, migration to urban spaces was only understood unilaterally in the **context of employment opportunities** alone.

However, in recent years, urbanisation has also been closely associated with globalising forces that aim at **integrative development and poverty reduction**.

Cities have become the centre of connectivity globally, fostering vigorous efforts toward reducing income inequality and increasing the ease of living for their population.

Today, people migrate from the countryside to the cities in search of leading a better life.

This urbanisation also impacts the rural regions, as remittances from the city result in a higher rate of consumption and asset holdings.

Urban cities, as the drivers of growth and development, also **foster economic competition**.

- City competitiveness, is the ability of cities to create strong markets that produce goods and services that represent good value in relation to comparable products of other urban regions

### What are the global trends wrt Urbanisation?

**Global South is experiencing an acceleration in the pace of urbanisation.** This fast-paced urbanisation has also complemented the emergence of competitive markets from the developing world at the global centre stage.

The timing of these spatial transformations in the developing world is rooted in historical processes. The period from the 14th till the 19th century witnessed urbanisation in the now developed countries.

### India

In India, the first two decades of the 21st century saw a sustained rise in the degree of urbanisation:

- From around 27% in 2000 to nearly 35% of the total population living in urban areas in 2020.
- With a growth of about 7.2%, the World Bank data shows a **gradual rise** in the percentage of the population concentrated in urban cities. The average economic growth rate in the country was recorded at 4.4% in the same period. Globally, the economic growth rate stood at a mere 1.4% in the 2000-2010 period.

### Other developing countries

Among other developing countries, the same trends are visible: **A rise in the degree of urbanisation has positively resulted in a rising economic growth.**

**South Africa**, the period from 2000 to 2020 saw a 10.4% rise in the degree of urbanisation. In the same period, the economy grew by almost 0.69%.

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**Thailand** experienced a 20.44% rise in urbanisation from 2000 to 2020, with the average economic growth rate at about 2.87%. This is not to say that the economic growth rate was only driven by urbanisation but that the latter is an important variable and needs to be given attention.

What is the relation b/w economic growth and Urbanisation?

The relation between economic growth rate and the degree of urbanisation is **mutually reinforcing**, as higher economic growth results in high incomes that influence the rate of urbanisation.

At the same time, an increase in urbanisation leads to a spurt in innovation and greater adoption of technology among the masses leading to the creation of investment opportunities that further trigger the process of job creation.

What are some challenges being faced by the cities?

In the rapidly urbanising world, maintaining the quality of services, achieving sustainable development and preserving competition are some of the significant challenges facing the cities.

What is the way forward?

Urbanisation is influenced by several historical and developmental processes. As a companion to development, it is pertinent to closely watch the pace of urbanisation in India, as it will only lead to the creation of sustainable pathways.

GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN RELATED ISSUES

### **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

#### **11. Women entrepreneurs need digital empowerment**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Women entrepreneurs need digital empowerment**” published in **Livemint** on **27th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS1 – Women empowerment

**Relevance:** Digital empowerment of Women entrepreneurs

**Context:** A digital gap highlighted by the covid pandemic must be bridged for progress to be made on entrepreneurial gender parity.

Why women entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged in the society?

**Better educated and healthier generations:** Encouraging women entrepreneurship could play a pivotal role in uplifting India’s economy and bring about improvements on various social indicators linked to the quality of life and well-being of families.

As their role as primary caregivers in the family, women tend to **prioritize the well-being of their families**. Therefore, they spend a considerable portion of their income on ensuring better education for their children along with the health and nutrition of family members. This results in better educated and healthier generations.

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**Positive impact on the GDP:** Past studies have indicated that promoting women's participation in employment and entrepreneurship in India can potentially increase the country's gross domestic product (GDP) by **\$0.7 trillion by 2025**.

**What is the present situation wrt women entrepreneurship in India?**

The contribution of women to India's GDP is estimated at just **17%** as compared to the **global average of 37%**, with the share of women-led micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) being a meagre **14%**

**What are the reasons for low participation in workforce and entrepreneurship?**

**Deep-seated patriarchy:** Patriarchy dictates that women should only engage in household chores rather than in income-earning activities. As a result, women entrepreneurs often face a lack of information, technical know-how and access to technology, which adversely impacts the sustainability and scalability of their startups.

**Little or no access to digital information and platforms:** In India, digital penetration in terms of mobile-internet usage by women was likely to be **33% less** than that of men. Even among families that do own smartphones or have internet connections, male counterparts are usually in possession of these digital resources instead of women. **Only 54% women have a mobile phone** that they use on their own.

– This has caused women entrepreneurs to suffer more in the wake of pandemic-induced disruptions, as their low internet usage for business purposes meant they had very limited capacity to make a quick shift towards internet-based solutions.

**What are the various measures that have been taken to bridge this digital gap?**

Gender equality and digital development are intimately linked, making the adoption of digital solutions by women entrepreneurs imperative.

### **Global level**

The **Digital Development Global Practice** adopted by the **World Bank** recently focuses on these five pillars of women's digital empowerment: **a) digital infrastructure, b) public platforms, c) financial services, d) businesses and e) skills**.

### **Domestic level**

**Various initiatives of the government**—such as the Digital Literacy Mission, Pradhan Mantri Grameen Digital Saksharta Abhiyan, Aadhaar-enabled payment systems and Digi Dhan Abhiyan, among others—have focused on this aspect as a tool for empowerment.

**Niti Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform** has also proven helpful as a one-stop-shop for women entrepreneurs to access information, learning modules and also loans, support and mentorship digitally.

**Corporate-led initiatives** have also have worked to bridge gaps in internet access and generate awareness among women entrepreneurs.

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- Google Internet **Saathi**
- EdelGive Foundation's **UdyamStree campaign**
- Facebook **Pragati**, etc,

**Banks and other financial institutions** have also conducted 'going-digital' camps aimed at helping micro-entrepreneurs gain access to digital financial means.

The **FICCI-FLO Empowering the Greater 50% mission** also lays a special emphasis on the digital inclusion of women.

[What is the way forward?](#)

There needs to be a **better adoption of these initiatives at the grassroots level** in order to empower women entrepreneurs across the country. Not only must they have access to digital technology, they should also feel confident of using it to conduct their enterprise operations.

As smartphones can prove to be expensive for micro-scale firms, **awareness of financing options for smartphones** is paramount.

If the India is to realize its vision of achieving a \$5 trillion economy, digital technology must henceforth be an integral part of all its entrepreneurial development programmes for women.

GS1 – SOCIETY – URBANISATION

### **URBAN PLANNING AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **12. Cities will drive growth, but only if we build right: Follow master plans, develop transit networks, grow vertically, conserve water, recruit urban managers**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Cities will drive growth, but only if we build right: Follow master plans, develop transit networks, grow vertically, conserve water, recruit urban managers**” published in **The Times of India** on **26th Apr 22**.

**Context:** Urbanisation will be the single biggest agent of growth in the next few decades in India, but only if we design optimum policies alongside.

[What is the scale of urbanisation in India?](#)

India is already the **second-largest urban system in the world** with 11% of the total global urban population living in Indian cities. This is more than the urban population of the US, Germany, Japan and UK.

The UN estimates that around **416 million people will be added as urban dwellers** in India between 2018 and 2050, and the country will be more than 50% urban by 2050.

This year's Budget takes cognisance of urbanisation and has listed not one but multiple actions to steer a paradigm shift.

[How can India ensure sustainable Urbanisation?](#)

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

### **Master plans are critical for managing urbanisation.**

The urban system of India consists of 7,933 settlements, comprising **statutory towns** and **census towns**.

– We have 3,892 census towns which are classified as urban in the census as they meet the relevant criteria. However, they continue to be **governed as villages** and **do not have urban local bodies**. Plus, it's estimated that in addition to the existing census towns identified by Census 2011, another 2,231 census towns have come up by 2021. These census towns account for almost 72 million 'urban' population and remain under the ambit of **'uncatered' or 'ignored' urbanisation**.

– Almost half of our statutory towns are expanding in an unplanned, unscientific manner **without any master plan** to guide their growth. None of the census towns has a master plan. This is leading to **haphazard growth with piecemeal interventions** leading to urban sprawl. The first and foremost challenge is to prepare scientific master plans for all statutory towns and govern census towns as urban local bodies and prepare their master plans to guide their spatial growth.

**Transit Oriented Development:** Indian cities must grow and evolve on the back of Transit Oriented Development. Planned development along the mode of a rapid transit network has multifold benefits. **a)** It reduces the number of cars, **b)** increases walkability and bikeability, **c)** brings people and offices closer to each other through compact and vertical development. All of this leads to **agglomeration and enhanced productivity**.

Therefore, urban planning in Indian cities must support bus rapid transit, light rapid transit, mass rapid transit and non-motorised transit systems like cycling and walking.

**Densify and increase FSI:** There is a need to densify our cities, build them vertically and reap agglomeration benefits of enhanced economic productivity and lower transaction costs.

The maximum Floor Space Index (FSI) in Singapore is 25, Tokyo 20, New York 15, whereas in Mumbai it is 1.33, Pune 1.25, Ahmedabad 2 and Delhi 3. 5.

Restricting the FSI to such low levels **a)** creates distortions in the land market, **b)** pushes development to the peri-urban areas, **c)** reduces availability of serviced land within cities, particularly for low-income groups, **d)** increases commuting distances and their environmental costs.

People from rural areas will continue to move to cities in search of livelihoods.

Keeping FSI artificially low to control the densities is a failed strategy.

**Sustainable management of water:** Water will be a key determinant in our ability to sustainably manage our cities and enhance the quality of life of our citizens.

– Indian cities need to collect, treat and reuse used water on a vast scale, and need to be fully seweraged to collect all used water.

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- Construct separate drainage and sewerage systems to facilitate used water reuse.
- There is also a necessity for **rational and pragmatic policy for pricing water**. The pricing mechanism should be based on “pay as you use” with direct benefit transfer of a subsidy for those who cannot afford to pay.

**Strengthen urban governance:** States need to build up a cadre of professional urban managers and create an ecosystem of light-touch regulations, reform building bye-laws and use technologies like geospatial systems. Moreover, states need to provide **greater financial autonomy and administrative freedom** to cities.

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# General

# Studies

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#### **UIDAI AND RELATED ISSUES**

##### **1. Safeguard Aadhar: CAG's audit of UIDAI reveals worrisome laxity. It needs to improve fast**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Safeguard Aadhar: CAG's audit of UIDAI reveals worrisome laxity. It needs to improve fast**” published on **7<sup>th</sup> April 2022** in Times of India.

**Syllabus:** Statutory bodies

**News:** CAG presented its performance audit of Aadhaar's regulator, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). The audit covered its mature phase, from 2014-15 to 2018-19. CAG's audit portrays an unsatisfactory picture of the systems and processes in UIDAI.

#### **How does the UIDAI function?**

UIDAI operates Aadhar through a layer of subcontractors. So, when an applicant's biometrics are uploaded to the Central Identities Data Repository, it may be executed by the third layer of subcontractors. A similar system is in place when a financial intermediary seeks to authenticate the identity of a potential customer by using the Aadhar database.

#### **What does the CAG report state?**

CAG's report shows **looseness in the process:**

1. UIDAI **neither has granular data nor is it able to pinpoint the cause of failure.** For example, UIDAI is unable to identify the cause of authentication failures, which causes people to pay to update their biometrics.
2. Issue of **duplicate Aadhaar**
3. Lack of **oversight of subcontractors:** Many failed to get their operations audited annually.

All these have bearing on data security.

#### **Way forward**

UIDAI must have more robust systems in place. Need for better grip on data and subcontractors is required.

#### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM**

##### **2. Closing the gaps in criminal justice**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Closing the gaps in criminal justice**” published in **The Hindu** on **09th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the Supreme Court observed certain **deficiencies** and **inadequacies** which occur during the course of criminal trials. Therefore, the court has issued certain guidelines in this regard. Further, the essential notification and the necessary changes has been issued by the Guwahati High Court in January 2022.

#### **What directions have been given by the Supreme Court?**

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**Preparing a site sketch:** Traditionally, as per The Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), the investigating officer prepares a **site sketch** that shows **details of the crime scene** and **collects evidence**. As per new guidelines, I.O. is required to prepare a **scaled site plan of site sketch**. **It is mandated to be prepared by a police draftsman.**

As per the guidelines, the police are required to develop its **own cadre of draftsmen**. **They will prepare a scaled site plan.**

A printed format of the human body must be accompanied with **every medico-legal certificate** and **post-mortem report**. It shall contain all the reverses and injuries from both sides of the body.

**An inquest report** must be produced. Its purpose is to ascertain whether a person has died an **unnatural death**. If so, then what is the nature of injuries and the apparent cause of death'. In this case, a criminal case has to be registered and regular investigation has to be taken up immediately without waiting for any formal complaint.

The post-mortem report is a 'document'. It is not a piece of **substantive evidence** by itself.

In case of **custodial death**, the magistrate or the IO must inform the hospital to arrange for photography and videography for post-mortem examination. The I.O. has been mandated to seize such photographs and video graphs and obtain a certificate for evidence for them under the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

**The government has been directed to** develop trained photographers at police stations. It was also mandated in the ***Shafhi Mohammad vs the State of Himachal Pradesh*** Case (2018).

The state governments should appoint **advocates**, other than **public prosecutors**. They will advise the investigating officer during investigation (Currently, a public prosecutor advises the I.O).

In reality, the **investigation** and **prosecution** are different facets in the **administration of criminal justice**. Therefore, the SC has directed to separate the two wings in the criminal procedure.

### Way Forward

For the time being, **investigating officers** and **medical doctors** must be trained in order to implement the **Supreme Court's directives**.

The creation of a cadre of **draftsmen** and **photographers** should be undertaken at the war scale.

Chhattisgarh has sanctioned a **cadre of law officers** to assist the investigating officers. They will work independently of the public prosecutors. They will have no role in the court. Other States should also follow suit.

The guidelines must be implemented sincerely. They have also been issued earlier. For example, the **NHRC** and the Supreme Court in ***People's Union for Civil Liberties vs State of Maharashtra (2014)*** have issued similar guidelines for deaths in exchange of fire with the police. In addition, the **NHRC** issued similar guidelines related to body sketches in an inquest report and a post-mortem report.

### **ISSUES WITH THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM – PENDENCY OF CASES**

#### **3. Big headache: Minor offences majorly clog courts and harass individuals and businesses. Decriminalise them**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Big headache: Minor offences majorly clog courts and harass individuals and businesses. Decriminalise them.**” published on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in Times of India.

**News:** The GoI has given a renewed push to decriminalize minor offenses. It has the potential to **clog courts, promote ease of doing business** and **relieve citizens** fighting criminal cases for non-serious violations. Example – In 2020 provisions of the Companies Act were decriminalized.

#### **Examples of laws causing high pendency:**

**Section 138 of Negotiable Instruments Act** (cheque bounce cases), criminalised in 1988. Arguments that this deters issuing of bad cheques must contend with high judicial pendency i.e., 15% pendency in subordinate courts.

**Bihar prohibition law** that jammed courts and prisons was amended to put emphasis on monetary penalties, still errs towards criminalisation.

#### **What should be done?**

Introduction of liberal approaches such as **compounding of offences, Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) or community service.**

This also has the potential to free up judges to focus on heinous crimes and enforcement of contracts.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – CIVIL SERVICES

### **CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE OF IAS**

#### **4. Has IAS Failed The Nation? Not Really**

**Source:** The post is based on the article, “**Has IAS Failed the Nation? Not really**” published in **The Times of India** on 7<sup>th</sup> Apr 22.

**Context:** Recently, the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) has come under severe criticism from different quarters, including from several senior retired IAS officers.

Therefore, it demands both constructive criticism and introspection for the improvement in the premier institution of the Indian bureaucracy.

#### **What are the problems the IAS is facing?**

There is a perception that the IAS has “lost its ethos and its way” over a period of time. They have become “**cogs in the wheels of complacency and acquiescence**”.

The Indian bureaucracy has been facing the **biggest issue** of **politicisation**. It has resulted into the deeply flawed system of incentives and penalties for the IAS officers. It is the biggest problem of the IAS officers.

#### **Why the IAS has not failed?**

The IAS service has played its role in Indian democracy while adhering to the **principle of the primacy** of the political executive. In fact, is the most important principles of a democratic country

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The IAS officers are **wrongly blamed for every policy failure or its implementation failure**. They are disproportionately blamed because of the premier status of the IAS. There are other services or institutions involved in the policymaking and implementation process as well.

As per findings of a detailed study on the effectiveness of the IAS in 2017, it was found that the IAS has been very effective in preserving **national unity** and upholding the **constitutional rule in India**.

In fact, every **single state reform** and improvement in **public service delivery** in India happened due to the effort of a **competent IAS officer** (As per the World Bank study in 2006-07). These are '**unsung heroes**' of India. Such efforts are often replicated and also publicized as good work by the LBSNAA.

### What are the reforms that need to be implemented?

Reforms must start with changes in the entry examination, say, the **maximum age and number of attempts should be reduced**.

In order to improve performance, there is a need to do away with the **distinction** between **promotion** and **empanelment**.

The government needs to establish a very **robust appraisal system**. It should be executed through the UPSC. Those who do not qualify in the appraisal system should be pensioned off.

The **state civil service officers should be promoted to the IAS by a competitive examination**. It would ensure younger persons come into the IAS service. It will also strengthen the federal character.

It should be ensured that the **transfer is not used as an instrument of coercion** and the IAS are not targeted post retirement.

**Discourage post-retirement positions** of the IAS officers.

### What is the way forward?

IAS comprises an "extraordinary pool of skills and talents". They have rich experiences in various fields, understanding of the functioning of the government, and understanding of delivery systems for development". Therefore, they are best positioned to lead our developmental efforts.

Moreover, if the IAS officers are properly empowered by politicians, they can be transformed into an effective instrument for innovation in service delivery.

GS2 – POLITY – CONSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER BODIES

## **CBI AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **5. A candid conversation about the caged parrot**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "**A candid conversation about the caged parrot**" published on **7<sup>th</sup> April 2022** in The Hindu.

**News:** The Chief Justice of India (CJI) recently gave a candid appraisal of the state of India's investigating agencies.

The CJI called upon investigators to stand up to the unethical pressures in order to uphold the confidence entrusted in them by the public. He stated if middle-and senior-level investigators deviated from the path of objectivity and neutrality, they will be held accountable for it.

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### Has the judiciary made similar observations earlier?

In 1997, **Justice J.S. Verma** has rebuked the then CBI Director in **Hawala case** for stalling the investigation at will. He went on to prescribe a new clinical procedure for the selection of the CBI chief. Also giving the chief fixed tenure of two years to insulate the CBI director from the caprice of the executive.

### What is the bright spot in CBI?

It has some of the brightest Indian Police Service officers in its higher echelons. There is a fear among CBI officers that the judiciary could intervene if an investigator is arbitrary and dishonest.

It has acquired greater uprightness than before. Allegations of political interference have been blown out of proportion, because only about 10% of the cases handled by the CBI have political overtones.

There have also been some big cases in the net of investigators – a former CM of Bihar and a former Home Minister of Maharashtra.

### What should be done?

The CBI needs to have **the strongest leader with a distinct belief in the law and ethics**. A Director who is able to explain issues to higher authorities in a rational and reasonable manner and efficiently protect his deputies.

An umbrella organization, as suggested by CJI, to oversee all investigating agencies can prove to be impractical. Such a body can generate its own problems – of turf wars and ego clashes.

The **focus should be on weeding out the dishonest officers** and **rewarding those who have proven themselves to be honest** and professionally innovative.

## GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

### UAPA AND RELATED ISSUES

#### 6. How the UAPA is wrecking lives

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**How the UAPA is wrecking lives**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, an accused in “the Delhi riots cases” who was charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967 was denied bail by a Sessions Court in Delhi. He was involved in a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019.

#### What is the concept of bail in criminal law?

The bail is based on the principle of ‘innocent until proven guilty’. It ensures that an individual is not unjustly treated, and liberty is not denied when a person is under trial or he/she has not been proven guilty.

In normal circumstances, the bail is granted if an accused is not at risk of escaping or is unlikely to tamper with evidence or intimidate witnesses.

#### What are the problems wrt bail provisions in UAPA?

The UAPA prohibits a judge from granting bail to an individual if he/she is satisfied that there are **reasonable grounds** for believing that the **accusation is prima facie true**.”

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The **bail hearings** under the UAPA are like a **mini-trial**. It is subjected to a lot of hearings on lines of a **criminal trial**. Therefore, this process of grant of bail takes a lot of time.

In these bail hearings, the judge makes **decision** based on the **arguments of the prosecutor/police version only**. Unlike trial, in which the **defence** is entitled to **cross-examine** the prosecution's witnesses, the defence is **not entitled to cross-examine**. It is done based on the presumption that everything in the police report is **true**.

**A trial under UAPA often takes more than 10 years**. If the bail is denied to a person, then it is likely that he/she will have to spend a **decade or more** behind bars. In addition, the **conviction rates** under the UAPA are **very low**. It means that most of the under trials are **innocent**.

In the UAPA case, the outcome of the bail hearing also determines the outcome of the case itself. For example, the **denial of bail** is like an accused has been found **guilty**.

In fact, in a notorious judgment in **National Investigation Agency v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali (2019)**, the Supreme Court forbade the lower courts from in-depth scrutiny of the police case.

### Way Forward

In the immediate future, the UAPA provision related to **bail prohibitions** can be diluted. The police case may also be subjected to **stricter scrutiny** during bail hearings.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – WELFARE SCHEMES
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GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – ISSUES RELATED TO CHILDREN
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## SCHEMES FOR CHILD WELFARE

### CHILD HEALTH

#### 7. On Mission Vatsalya: The child at the centre

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The child at the centre**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th Apr 22**.

**Context:** Mission Shakti, **Mission Vatsalya**, **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 were launched recently to provide integrated benefits to women and children**.

The intent behind these schemes is to provide integrated benefits to children and women.

#### **What are the components under Mission Vatsalya?**

Components under Mission Vatsalya include

- Statutory bodies
- Service delivery structures
- Institutional care/services
- non-institutional community-based care
- Emergency outreach services
- Training and capacity building.

#### **What are some associated concerns?**

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ChildLine (1098), the 24-hour toll-free helpline for children in distress, will be manned by the Home Affairs Ministry under Mission Vatsalya, because of the need to 'preserve data sensitivity'.

A road map to implement the scheme is not yet available, but it is understood that police personnel will first answer the call, handing over implementation to NGOs later.

– This is problematic as children do not feel comfortable confiding in police personnel.

### What is ChildLine?

ChildLine, set up in 1996, has been in operation for over 25 years, growing gradually to become one of the largest global networks to assist and rescue children in distress.

It has functioned as a public-private partnership (PPP) between the government and civil society organisations to provide a first-responder safety net, and kick-start the process of rescue and rehabilitation of children.

ChildLine seeks to reduce the burden on the police force, and invokes their assistance only if the circumstances necessitate.

*During a short-lived experiment in Chennai around 2003, when ChildLine calls were diverted to All Women Police Stations (AWPS) — they were flooded with calls, hampering regular work. Sometimes, all the children wanted was to spend some time talking to someone, or they were making multiple blank calls before they picked up the courage to tell all. In many cases, police intervention was not needed at all.*

### What is the way forward?

The govt must consider the issue from the perspective of the key beneficiary of this scheme — the child — and make sure that his/her safety, security and happiness are ensured.

## GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – MANUAL SCAVENGING

### **MANUAL SCAVENGING AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **8. The manacles of caste in sanitation work**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**The manacles of caste in sanitation work.**” published on **8<sup>th</sup> April 2022** in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – **Welfare** Schemes for vulnerable section of the population

**Context:** Even today, the Indian government and civil society continue to grapple with the inhuman nature of manual scavenging. While in 1993, the government promulgated an Act to stop construction of unsanitary dry latrines and employing manual scavengers, the problem still continues.

#### **Issues with the Act:**

**Problematic descriptions:** The act defined dry latrine as “latrine other than a water-seal latrine”. Manual scavenging was not just a practice related to dry latrines, but also insanitary latrines and open defecation.

In 2013 the Supreme Court forced the Central government to conduct a survey of manual scavengers, on the basis of a PIL filed by Safai Karamchari Andolan. The survey found continuation of practice and hence, **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act** was passed.

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The construction of dry latrines reduced but **the deaths remained high**. The government had plans to amend the 2013 Act to completely mechanise the cleaning of sewer and manholes and build new sewers. But the **issue of labour safety remains unaddressed**.

### Issues of dignity of the sanitation workers:

Most sanitation contracts are given to private contractors – such staff hardly have ID cards, leave alone medical insurance policies.

Unlike other labour forces, the sanitation workers do not have a separate rule book that lays down guidelines for their work timings, holidays, a proper place for roll call, removal from duty etc.

There are no vehicles for sanitation workers to travel to their designated workspaces. There are hardly any exclusive trade unions for sweepers. Dalit movements have also been found wanting in his regard.

In India, sanitation work is caste-ridden and hence, is an urgent need to dissociate caste from labour.

## GS2 –SOCIAL ISSUES – RESERVATION IN INDIA

### RESERVATION AND RELATED ISSUES

#### 9. No quota without quantifiable data

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**No quota without quantifiable data**” published on **6<sup>th</sup> April 2022** in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – **Constitution** features/ Government policies and interventions aimed at development.

**Context:** The Madras High Court recently quashed the 10.5% special reservation for Vanniyakula Kshatriyas with the overall 20% quota for Most Backward Classes (MBC) and Denotified Communities (DNC). It has again highlighted the importance of quantifiable data as a prerequisite for reservation in education and employment.

#### Is there a need for an exhaustive study?

It is a fact that no exhaustive study has been done to collect quantifiable data on the representation of different communities in education and employment since the second BC Commission (1982-85).

The quantifiable data are required for providing any form of quota in favour of any community. The Constitutional stipulation of **adequate representation in the services** has to be met along with that of **social and educational backwardness** for any community to become eligible for reservation in employment.

The Tamil Nadu government should commission a study to compile the data on the way the benefits of reservation got distributed among BCs, MBCs and the DNCs.

#### What is the need for internal reservation?

The need for internal reservation has been felt for more than one reason. Even in the 1970s and 1980s, two BC Commissions found that **certain sections of communities are more backward than others**. The situation has got compounded in the **absence of application of creamy layer rule**.

#### What should the Tamil nadu Government do now?



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As the 69% quota law came into force in 1994, the government can have the data compiled since then with regard to education and employment in government institutions, and make them available in public domain.

Depending on the finding of the proposed study, the government can frame its policies accordingly to ensure equitable distribution of benefits of reservation and social justice.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – ISSUES RELATED TO DEV OF EDUCATION

### **HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **10. To begin with, the UGC needs to get the credits right**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**To begin with, the UGC needs to get the credits right**” published in **The Hindu** on **9th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Social Sector, Education

**Relevance:** Higher Education, National Education Policy, Choice Based Credit System

**News:** Recently, in pursuance of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2022**, various documents related to a four-year undergraduate degree programme have been released for discussion.

These are the **Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)**, the **Learning Outcomes-Based Curriculum Framework (LOCF)**, and the **draft National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF)** document issued by University Grant Commission (UGC).

#### **How is the NEP 2020 going to reform education in India?**

It has proposed a number of changes in higher education. These changes will address the rigid and terribly **outdated course structure** in higher education programmes in India.

At present, students received education only on papers. However, the new changes will enable **choice, flexible, and liberal ethos-based education system**.

#### **What is the concept of a credit system?**

It refers to the **total expected engagement** from the student. It includes **time spent** in lectures and tutorials. For example, a **seven-credit course** mean two hours of teaching per week and remaining hours credited for preparation and assessment. (For example, a seven-credit system is used under the **Bologna Process in the UK**).

A credit also signifies the **minimum skill attainment** for graduating from one level to another in education.

#### **What will be the implications of the proposed credit system in India?**

It will impact the teaching quality and research productivity of the faculty members in the higher education institution in India.

In India, the course credits are going to be directly proportional to the teaching hours. For example, **one credit for one teaching hour**. However, this is not found in the Anglo-American Universities like U.K. university. The faculty teaching hours per course are much lower than what is currently practised in Indian universities and outlined in several UGC documents.

The proposed **credit system in India** is going to increase the **faculty workload**. For example, NEP mandates that it is the responsibility of a faculty to prepare the course content, assessments, and grading. In addition, they cannot teach more than 20 students at one time. So, in a way, a faculty would end up teaching for more hour in a week.

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The overburden the faculty will not be able to produce **research productivity** and **better content and teaching delivery**.

### Way Forward

The standard workload for a faculty is typically decided via **negotiations** between faculty unions and the university administration.

The **faculty workload** should vary between **two courses per year** in a **research-intensive university** to four or five courses per semester in a **community college**. It will increase the productivity of the faculty member of an institution. They will be able to create quality teaching content and engage in research. Indian regulators need to reduce credits per course in line with the practice in **North American universities**.

We need to train students to take more responsibility for their learning. The government can promote **technology-aided larger classrooms** for introductory courses in universities. Further, the graduate students can act as teaching assistants to economise on faculty time and effort.

We need to incentivise stakeholders in the higher education sector to collectively meet the desired outcome.

### 11. Time to revisit the IIM Act

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Time to revisit the IIM Act**” published in the **Business Standard** on **8th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, IIM Ahmedabad (IIMA) witnessed a lot of turbulence over changes in the logo. Other IIMs in the country also witnessed disturbances over a variety of issues.

This has raised questions over governance in the premier management institution of India.

#### What changes have been introduced by the IIM Act 2017?

The Act has given formal shape to the **considerable autonomy** which the IIMs have been enjoying so far. In fact, the Act has enhanced the autonomy of the IIMs in the following ways:

**(1)** The government left the **appointment** of the chairman and the director to the **board**, and secondly, it has decided not to influence the working of the IIMs.

**(2)** The central government and the state government have one **representative** on the board of IIMs. These **nominees** play a passive role. Earlier, they used to be active.

**(3)** The IIM Act says that the **IIM's board** is **accountable** to the government. IIM boards evaluate the **performance** of the institute **once every three years** through an **independent agency**. Then, it would submit an action taken report to the government. Further, the report would be placed in the public domain.

#### What have been the controversies since the enactment of the IIM Act?

**Erosion of faculty governance** in IIMs. Earlier, IIMs used to be called as **faculty-governed institutions**. The faculties used to be consulted in key decisions like admissions, placement, course syllabi, recruitment of faculty, etc. Now, faculties are **not consulted** on proposed changes. The decisions are taken at the level of the **Director** and approved by the **Board** of the institution.

– For example, in **2008**, the Board of IIMA announced a **100% fee hike** for its **post-graduate programme**. Thereafter, the faculty were informed.

– Now, the **logo of IIMA** has been changed by the director and Board without consulting the faculty members.

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The **director appoints the faculty members** to the board. The appointed faculty is supposed to act as a bridge between the faculty and the board. However, **traditionally, the faculty used to elect its representatives** to the board.

In addition, the norms for the appointment of dean, which is a very important post in an educational institution, has not been fixed.

In India, the Board members come and go. They have virtually no stake in the IIMs. There is **no meaningful accountability** of the director or the board in IIMs.

### How can the governance deficit be addressed?

The government should have a **meaningful and active role in the governance** of the IIMs. It should **expedite the creation of a new higher education regulator** in India.

The govt must constitute an **IIM Advisory Board (IAB)**. It will commission an independent performance audit of each IIM every three years. It should also be empowered to propose **chairman and directors** for the IIMs like done by the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) for public sector banks.

The **IIM Act must be amended**. It should include a provision that faculty members on the board are chosen by the faculty and not by the director.

The govt nominees on the board should play a role on important issues. They should demand clearly defined criteria for important posts such as those of dean, membership of the board and membership of the committee that evaluates faculty.

## CUET AND RELATED ISSUES

### 12. The CUET mandate warrants cautious implementation

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The CUET mandate warrants cautious implementation**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, **the University Grants Commission (UGC)** has made it mandatory for the Central Universities to take admission in their undergraduate programmes on the basis and merit of scores in **the Central University Entrance Test (CUET) from this year**.

### What is the situation wrt admission tests in India?

The institutions of national importance (INIs), i.e., the IITs, the IIIT, the NITs, and the IIM, already admit students on the basis of a **single common entrance examination**.

All the **medical institutions** take admission on the basis of **the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test** (undergraduate), or NEET.

**12 central universities** have been admitting students on the basis of a **single common entrance test**.

However, **most central universities** admit students on the basis of their **own entrance tests** which conducted programme by programme. The Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research is also allowed to follow a different approach for taking admission.

### What are the concerns associated with CUET?

It goes against the **principle of academic autonomy**. In addition, the formalisation, uniformity, and standardisation of the education will pull down quality of education to the lowest common denominator.

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There are concerns over the autonomy, competence, credibility and expertise of the **NTA** which will conduct the test. For example, leakage of national level tests.

The entrance tests may undermine the **importance of board examinations**. It can distract students from their studies in schools.

It may pose a huge disadvantage to an overwhelmingly large number of students from the **State Boards** (not the Central Board of Secondary Examination).

In fact, the countries in which the **World-class** universities are situated do not insist on admitting students based on a **quantitative score** of a common test. They grant freedom to evolve **holistic criteria for admission** or in other words they respect the **idea of academic autonomy**.

The higher education is in the **concurrent list**. Therefore, the States must be taken into **confidence** on such matters. In fact, the centrally-funded technical educational institutions, central universities, and deemed universities enrol a mere **5.08%** of students. The remainder, **94.92%**, are enrolled by the state universities, and their colleges (publicly funded or self-financed).

### Way Forward

There has to be **discussion, deliberation** and **consultation** with all the stakeholders. It will develop the best method for admission in the **higher educational institutions**.

Finally, The **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**, as prescribed by the **NEP 2020**, needs to be established soon. It includes the **General Education Council (GEC)** which is a consultative mechanism.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL GROUPINGS AND ORG

## BRICS AND RELATED ISSUES

### 13. Fulfilling the potential of the Bay of Bengal community

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Fulfilling the potential of the Bay of Bengal Community**” published in **The Hindu** on **09th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the **fifth summit** of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was concluded in Colombo. The organization is also celebrating its **25th year of the formation**, which was launched in 1997.

#### What were the outcomes of the summit?

The summit had **three important outcomes**:

- Expanding the **grouping’s agenda**, deepening cooperation between the member countries and planning systematically for consistency and coherence.
- the **BIMSTEC charter** was finalised after more than two decades. It articulates the purpose, principles, legal standing and regular meeting of the organisation. It stipulates that **consensus** is required for **admission of new members** and increasing the **number of observer countries** of the organisation.
- The **Master Plan for Transport Connectivity** has been adopted. It has been proposed to extend the **trilateral highway project** between Thailand, Myanmar and India to Laos and Cambodia. Further, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal have also shown interest in the project. These measures will ensure seamless connectivity through **multi-modal channels**. It will deepen cooperation in the region.

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The organization has proposed to conclude the **regional free trade agreement**. It will give a fillip to the organisation's efforts.

The MoU has been signed for **legal assistance in criminal matters**. Further, additional MOUs have been signed for mutual cooperation between **diplomatic academics** and **training institutes**.

An **Eminent Persons' Group (EPG)** is to be established on the lines of the **EU, G20, and ASEAN**. It will formulate a vision document for the region. It will suggest a roadmap to address the challenges in the future.

### What commitments have been made by India?

India has promised \$1 million to set up a **Secretariat in Dhaka** (As proposed in the 4th Summit in Kathmandu).

India has committed to provide a \$3 million grant to the **BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate**.

India will promote collaboration between **industries and start-ups**, and would help in adoption of international standards and norms.

India proposed an **agricultural trade analysis** based on the **regional value chain**. It will be conducted by the **RIS**.

### Way Forward

The term of the **Secretary-General** of the BIMSTEC may be extended. It would provide **stability** to several of the collective's initiatives.

Besides economic links, the Bay of Bengal countries share a **cultural** and **civilisational legacy**. Therefore, institutions like **Nalanda University** can play a role in promoting research on cultural and civilisational linkage. They can help in the adoption of **sustainable practices** in the region.

## BRICS AND RELATED ISSUES

### 14. BRICS and the creation of a multipolar world

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**BRICS and the creation of a multipolar world**" published in the **Indian Express** on **8th Apr 22**.

**News:** The Russia-Ukraine conflict has brought BRICS grouping at the centre of discussion due to multiple reasons.

The RIC controls 22% of the global GDP, and it accounts for 16% of global exports of goods and services.

Therefore, the current crisis may **consolidate BRICS**, especially RIC. It has the potential to become a **real alternative** to the West. It can create a **real multipolar world**.

### What is the significance of the Ukraine conflict for BRICS?

Russia is now alienated and has been expelled from the G-8 group. It may now wish to increase its bilateral trade with India and China. It will lead to a strong **Russia-India-China (RIC) relationship** or a **north Eurasian integrationist core** within BRICS.

**New alternative arrangements** are being developed. **For example**, India-Russia have agreed **Rupee-Ruble cross currency pairing** to settle payments in non-dollar currencies.

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India is aiming to build a dedicated payment mechanism known as **India's sovereign Financial Messaging Systems (SFMS)** like SWIFT. It will enable energy-related payments, and will challenge the **dollar's hegemony**.

Such measures may push for **internationalisation of the Indian rupee**. In fact, Russia has also decided to export **discounted crude oil** to India to recoil from sanctions.

### How BRICS members have tried to change world economic system in recent years?

In recent years, BRICS members have attempted to change the **world economic system**, through the following efforts:

- Creation of the **BRICS Development Bank**.
- Creation of a **reserve currency pool** (\$100 billion) to offer an alternative to countries in the non-Western world to avert **serious economic crises**.
- BRICS has also demanded an increase in the number of **non-Western states** in international financial institutes.

### How are the BRICS states different, and how do they disagree with the West?

**Brazil and Latin America:** Brazil has strong **left socialist tendencies**. It disagrees with the West on social issues. In fact, Latin America is sensitive to diktats from the North and recurrences of the Monroe Doctrine.

**South Africa:** Some of the local communists belong to the ruling coalition. The West has been accused of abetting the old order.

In **Russia** and **India**, people do not like the moral values of the West. Both are determined to oppose diktats of the West.

### Way Forward

The **present crisis** has increased the weight of India. India is at the centre of a **diplomatic triangle** in the **Indo-Pacific**. It is witnessing high-profile visits from the US, Australia, Japan, China and Russia.

Therefore, New Delhi could be looking at a new dawn.

## GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS

### INDIA – NEPAL RELATIONS

#### 15. Repairing the complex India-Nepal relationship

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Repairing the complex India-Nepal Relationship**” published in **The Hindu** on 7th Apr 22.

**News:** Recently, the Nepal Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba completed his visit to India which was also his first bilateral visit abroad.

#### What is the convergence of interests between India and Nepal?

Recently, Nepal ratified the agreement with the **U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)**. China claimed that it was part of the **U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy** to contain China. Therefore, it will provide welcome synergy between India and Nepal.

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**35 km cross-border rail link** from Jayanagar (Bihar) to Kurtha (Nepal) was operationalized, the **90 km long transmission line** connecting Tila (Solukhumbu) to Mirchaiya (Siraha) was inaugurated.

Nepal has been inducted into the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**. In addition, agreements have been signed for **technical cooperation** in the railway sector, and ensuring regular supplies of **petroleum products** (*it was signed between Indian Oil Corporation and Nepal Oil Corporation*).

Both sides have signed **the Mahakali Treaty** (1996). The treaty covers the Sarada and Tanakpur barrages and Pancheshwar Multipurpose project. It will enable power sector cooperation between both the countries.

### What are the differences that have emerged in the India and Nepal relationship?

The political narrative has changed in both countries.

In 2019, Nepal government raised and expanded **the Kalapani boundary issue**. It soured Nepal's relations with India.

Now, the **1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship** is being viewed as a sign of an unequal relationship. It is seen as a sign of Indian imposition. (Note: *It provides for an open border between India and Nepal. It allows Nepali nationals to have the right to work in India.*)

India has been blamed for interfering in the **Constitution drafting process** of Nepal. It was also condemned for **"unofficial blockade"** in Nepal. This reinforced the notion of **Nepali nationalism** and **anti-Indianism** in Nepal.

**China's growing role:** **a)** China considers Nepal as an important element in its growing **South Asian footprint**. **b)** In 2016, Nepal and China concluded a protocol. It allowed Nepal to have access to four seaports and three land ports of China. **c)** Both China and Nepal had joint military exercises, **d)** China has overtaken India as the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Nepal, **e)** China has hiked its annual development assistance to Nepal and **f)** China is also engaged with airport expansion projects at Pokhara and Lumbini in Nepal.

### Way Forward

India and Nepal share a **'special relationship'** based on ties of a shared culture, language and religion.

It is necessary that bilateral issues be discussed, behind closed doors and at Track 2 and Track 1.5 channels.

At present, there is a need of revising and updating the **1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship**.

Although **98%** of the **India-Nepal boundary** has been demarcated. These boundaries had been fixed in 1816 by the British. But two areas, **Susta** and **Kalapani** remain in limbo. Both sides should avoid rhetoric on **territorial nationalism**, and should solve these issues through **quiet dialogue**.

The Indian Prime Minister launched the **"neighbourhood first" policy** in 2014. India should uphold this policy and be a sensitive and generous partner.

### INDIA – AUS RELATIONS

#### 16. Sending a strategic message

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Sending a strategic message**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, India and Australia, struck a trade deal known as the **India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)**.

The deal was brokered after two decades of efforts. It is said to be a “**watershed moment**” for bilateral relations for both India and Australia.

#### What has been proposed under the trade deal?

It will enable **elimination** or **phased reduction of tariffs** on a range of **Australian exports to India**. The range of products includes coal, lentils, sheep meat, wool, lobsters, rare earths, wine and agricultural products.

The deal will promote **services exports**. It will strengthen our **people-to-people links**. For example, the trade deal will provide a quota for **chefs** and **yoga teachers**, Indian students will be provided a post-study work visa of 2-4 year, and professional services will be mutually recognized. Others things that will be included are licensed/regulated occupations, and work and holiday visa arrangements for young professionals.

It will help in taking advantage of the **Indian diaspora** which is called as the **national economic asset** of India. For example, one in five overseas students that live in Australia are from India.

#### Why is the deal important?

Seeks to **double bilateral trade and investments** between India and Australia in the next five years.

Will **eliminate tariffs** on more than 85% of Australian goods exports to India (valued at more than \$12.6 billion a year).

#### Strategic importance –

- Both nations share norms and democratic principles and support a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. Therefore, both nations are members of the Quad.
- Further, both share **economic** and **geopolitical risks** in the **Indo-Pacific region**. In this context, a trade agreement shows the diversification of its strategic and economic approach for both the countries.

#### What are some issues in Indo-Aus bilateral relations?

##### Past

- In the past, Indo-Australia ties were derailed due to multiple reasons. For example, Australia responded against **India’s nuclear tests** conducted in **1988**.
- The relations were also derailed due to over-the-top reaction by Indian media’s attacks on **Indian students in Melbourne** in 2009-2010.

##### Present

- Recently, both India and Australia **responded differently to the Russian invasion of Ukraine**. India has been criticized for doing a ‘balancing act’ in wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Both hail from **opposite sides of power blocs during the Cold War**.



### 17. India's trade pact with Australia will click: it ticks the right boxes

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India's trade pact with Australia will click: it ticks the right boxes**” published in the **Live Mint** on **04<sup>th</sup> April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, India has signed the **first trade agreement** with a large developed economy in the world after more than a decade. It was a path-breaking trade agreement known as the **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)** signed with Australia.

#### About India's trade agreements

India already has trade agreements with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Japan, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia. In the case of **developed countries**, this is the third trade agreement that India has signed with any **OECD** country, after the trade agreement India had with **Japan** and **Korea**.

#### Why is the Indian Industry showing a lot of enthusiasm for new trade deals with the UAE and Australia?

The India Industry was consulted at every stage of trade negotiations. Therefore, it has helped Indian industry members to articulate their **interests** in **overseas market access**.

The Indian government has identified the **right set of countries** for trade deals, i.e. Australia and the **UAE**. In addition, it has ensured **meaningful market access** for Indian exports.

Unlike, in previous FTAs in which India bargained mainly for market access for business professionals under **Mode 4 (Movement of Natural Persons)**, this time Indian government's focus has been on **access to foreign-market for all our merchandise exports**.

#### Why is the Indo-Australian trade deal significant for India?

The trade deal may lead bilateral trade between India and Australia to touch \$45 billion in five years.

**Address the tariff disadvantage:** Indian exporters face a tariff disadvantage of 4-5%. It was present in many **labour-intensive sectors**. It was posed by China, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia in the Australian market. Now, Indian exports will not have to face this disadvantage in the Australian Market.

**Increase in exports of goods and services:** The **merchandise export** will increase in textiles and apparel, select agriculture and marine products, leather, footwear, furniture, gems and jewellery, pharma and engineering products, etc.

In addition to merchandise export, India will get meaningful access to the Australian market for service sectors too. For example, Annually, 1800 Indian traditional chefs and yoga teachers can enter Australia as contractual service suppliers, Indian students will get a post-study work visa, and mutual recognition of professional qualifications etc.

The Australian government will also stop taxation of the **offshore income** of Indian firms providing technical services to Australia. It will enhance their competitiveness in the international market.

Many Indian industries in sectors like steel, aluminium, power, engineering and so on will become competitive. They will get cheaper raw materials from the Australian exporter.

India's particular sectors like milk and dairy, among others where Australia has a comparative advantage, will remain protected under the ECTA. It is because the Indian government has **not offered concessions on these sensitive products**.

#### What will be the challenges?

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Currently, Australia has 16 operational FTAs. Therefore, India would be competing with China, ASEAN, Chile, Japan, Korea and New Zealand, which have already-functional FTAs with Australia.

### **INDIA – SOUTH KOREA CEPA**

#### **18. India's zinc-trade deficit with Korea tells why we need industry input on deals**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India-zinc trade deficit with Korea tells why we need industry input on deals**” published in the **Live Mint** on **5th Apr 22**.

**News:** India aspires to be the **3rd largest economy** in the world by the **year 2047**. The government is working hard to make India self-reliant and play a bigger role in the global economy.

In this context, Indian industry has been requesting the government to look into the existing trade pacts, especially India-South Korea CEPA that includes provisions which are threatening domestic industry.

#### **What was the trade position before signing of the CEPA between India and South Korea?**

When the India-Korea CEPA was signed, India used to export a sizeable quantity of zinc to the Republic of Korea (RoK). Korea had low production and India had weaker domestic demand.

The RoK increased its manufacturing capabilities, over time it enhanced its smelting capabilities. It also has lower logistical costs. In addition, it was also helped by the “**smart free trade agreement negotiations**”. Therefore, RoK has been able to supply zinc at highly competitive prices to India.

India's import of zinc and zinc alloys products from South Korea increased manifold since 2013-14. It happened because the duty was phased down to zero for the Republic of Korea (South Korea).

In 2020, the RoK became the leading exporter of zinc. It accounted for around 10.5% of global exports, despite having no mines.

#### **What are the issues in the Indian Zinc Industry and CEPA b/w India and Korea?**

**It is facing tough competition from low-cost imports from the RoK.**

– India has a lot of domestic manufacturing capabilities. For example, India was the 5th largest country for zinc mining (with 5.67% share) in 2019, after China, Peru, Australia and the US. In India, 100% of the value addition can be done within the country.

**Increased negative trade balance with the RoK.** It has adversely impacted several downstream industries.

The India-Korea trade pact has resulted in a large and growing trade deficit in zinc products. It happened because India overlooked imports from South Korea as a threat to domestic market while signing the pact.

A large deficit between India and South Korea occurred due to the Rules-of-Origin (RoO) in the India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

#### **Way Forward**

There is a need to **re-examine the India-Korea CEPA**. It needs to talk about the existing product-specific RoO for zinc. India also needs to discuss a change in tariff subheading (CTSH) and other aspects in the trade pact.

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India needs to **take lessons from the India-Korea zinc-metal trade case history**, and be cautious in its new trade deals with Australia, the UK, Canada and the European Union(EU).

India needs to have a **regular engagement with domestic industry** before signing trade agreements with other countries.

GS2 – POLITY – BILLS AND RELATED ISSUES

### **CRIMINAL PROCEDURE BILL**

#### **19. Parliament has just passed a dangerous bill**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Parliament has just passed a dangerous bill**” published in the **Indian Express** on **8th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, the Rajya Sabha has passed the **Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022**, just two days after it was passed by the Lok Sabha.

In fact, Maharashtra has become the first state to launch its biometric database of undertrials and convicts.

Such moves are being objected to on account of the violation of the **right against self-incrimination guaranteed** under **Article 20(3)** of the Constitution of India.

#### **What constitutes right against self-incrimination in India?**

In the **Kathi Kalu Oghad case (1962)**, the court held that giving **palm impressions** or **fingerprints** could not be called **self-incriminatory**. The reason is that such impressions cannot be changed. However, the **compulsory extraction** of an **oral** or **written statement** from the accused are prohibited in the Constitution.

In 2005, the **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)** was amended. It allowed a magistrate to order any person to give their **handwriting samples** for the purpose of an investigation or proceeding.

In 2019, the Supreme Court, in **Ritesh Sinha v. State of UP Case**, ruled that handwriting samples could include **voice samples**. This would **not violate** the right against self-incrimination

#### **What are the issues in the proposed bill?**

The **1962 judgment's logic** used to interpret what would violate the right against self-incrimination is unlikely to apply to technologies in use today. The proposed bill authorizes the agencies to use **new** and **emerging technologies** for processing, sharing, and dissemination of data.

The Bill is **vaguely worded**. It may lead to new forms of coercion of accused persons. It may lead to new forms of surveillance and the stifling of dissent.

The new technologies would be used in **policing** and **the criminal justice system**. They have new implications for the right against self-incrimination. They will be used to find patterns like **one's personal beliefs** or **behaviour**. In other words, such a pattern of an accused person might be enough to incriminate him.

The law can lead to **unchecked abuse of power** by the police. It can lead to harassment of the de-notified tribes' children, men and women etc. The local police stations have to maintain history sheets of these people as they are labelled as “Habitual Offenders”.

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The new piece of legislation could lead to **harassment of a person** who is merely alleged of a crime, and not convicted.

Also, the “measurements” are to be stored at the national level for 75 years. There is **no clear procedure outlined for destroying the information**.

The process of digitisation could push the **process of criminalisation** of oppressed caste communities from the **local and state-level** to the national level.

### Way Forward

Parliament must make laws that protect against such blatant attacks on fundamental rights and freedoms, rather than enable them.

## 20. Criminal Procedure bill will not make Indians safer

**Source:** The **post** is based on an article “**Criminal procedure bill will not make Indians safer**” published in **the Indian Express** on **5th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, the government has introduced the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill in the Lok Sabha. It seeks to replace the Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920 which regulates how the police can gather data from convicted or suspected criminals.

The bill has generated a lot of controversy.

### What are the issues with the bill?

– Read [here](#)

### What has been proposed in the bill?

It expands the type of data collected by the police from basic fingerprint and footprint impressions to a range of other samples, including iris and retina scans, behavioural attributes, and “biological samples”.

It mandates the National Crime Records Bureau to collect that data and keep it for 75 years.

Read [here](#)

### What is the rationale behind the bill?

The government has asserted that the **present prisoner identification law** is a century old law. It is inadequate for the present day. The technological and scientific advancements have transformed crime and law enforcement since 1920.

### What are the issues in particular which make this bill disturbing?

It will give the police free hand to collect personal data of anyone, say, detained protestors. It can be used against them at a later date.

The national data protection legislation has not been enacted for years. For example, **the Justice Srikrishna Commission (2018)** released its report in 2018. The **first Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB)** that was drafted based on it has a number of weaknesses. It allowed the Centre to exempt any of its agencies from the provisions supposed to protect privacy in the name of security. The proposed “**Data Protection Authority**” could not act as an independent regulator”.

Read [here](#)

### Way Forward

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The Parliament may refer the Bill to a standing committee. Efforts should be made to increase the accountability framework in the Bill.

India already has the Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and System (CCTNS) which has played a significant role in modernising Indian policing.

### GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

#### **ISSUES RELATED TO PUBLIC HEALTH**

##### **21. Better early than late**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Better early than late**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th April 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to health

**Relevance:** Regarding the autism spectrum disorder

**News:** Early intervention programme that prevents disabling conditions in newborn children, is better than one that tries to mitigate the effects once disability has set in.

##### **What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?**

**Autism** is a condition related to brain development that impacts how a person perceives others and socialises with them, causing problems in social interaction and communication. It also includes limited and repetitive patterns of behaviour.

The term ‘spectrum’ in Autism Spectrum Disorder refers to the range of symptoms and severity.

##### **What is early intervention?**

The set of services towards identification, assessment and a multipronged therapeutic approach to disabling conditions in the 0-3 age group is referred to as early intervention.

While physical disabilities are evident from birth, intellectual disabilities take time to manifest. Autism Spectrum Disorder leads the list.

##### **Why early intervention is more effective?**

Early intervention programmes take advantage of **neural plasticity** or the ability of the brain to mould itself to stimuli.

The greatest changes as a result of intervention are observed in the ages 0-3. This is not to say that programmes beyond this age are not effective, but they take more effort and time.

##### **What are the challenges to early intervention?**

The three big challenges to early intervention are:

- parental ignorance
- An unwillingness to accept facts
- Social stigma attached to seeking specialised services.

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

The child should be assessed by a team comprising an occupational therapist, special educator, speech therapist and physiotherapist. A plan of action should be put in place. Communication within the team is of critical importance in helping the child. The child should receive a **combination of therapy and special education** for one to two hours every day.

**Parents need to be educated** on home plans and in dealing with the condition and behaviour of the child. Sometimes, the **extended family also needs to be counselled** on how to provide the right environment to nurture the child.

Children who have been part of early intervention programmes show remarkable progress, and the process of their integration with the mainstream is faster.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

### **DEATH PENALTY AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **22. Explained: Reforming death penalty**

**Source:** The post is created based on the article **“Explained: Reforming death penalty”** published in **Indian Express** on **04th April 2022**.

**Context:** This week, the Bench headed by Justice Lalit agreed to comprehensively examine procedures in death penalty cases. It is to ensure that judges who have to choose between life imprisonment and the death sentence have **comprehensive sentencing information**.

#### **What has caused the SC to examine practices in death penalty sentencing?**

The Supreme Court has acknowledge concerns with the manner in which death penalty sentencing is being carried out. While the death penalty has been held to be constitutional, the manner in which it has been administered has triggered accusations of unfairness and arbitrariness.

#### **How are judges supposed to choose between life and death sentences?**

In **Bachan Singh’s case**, a **“rarest of rare cases” framework** was developed for judges to follow when they had to choose between life imprisonment and the death penalty. It made clear that **life imprisonment would be the default punishment** and judges would need to give “special reasons”. The judges must consider both **aggravating and mitigating factors** concerning the crime and the accused when deciding if the death penalty is to be imposed.

#### **What has happened to this framework in the four decades since Bachan Singh?**

The Supreme Court has repeatedly lamented the inconsistency in application of the Bachan Singh framework. A study by **Project 39A** looking at 15 years of death penalty sentencing in trial courts has shown that the Bachan Singh framework has broken down, with judges attributing to it multiple and inconsistent meanings.

#### **What is the reason for this?**

One of the main reasons is that **very sparse sentencing information** about the accused is brought before the judges. It is an empirical reality that the vast majority of death row prisoners are economically vulnerable and very often receive poor legal representation.

Also, there has been **no real guidance** on how judges must go about assigning weight to aggravating and mitigating factors, and how they should approach weighing one factor against another.

#### **What is mitigation, and what are mitigating factors?**

It is a fundamental tenet of criminal law that sentencing must be individualized, i.e., in the process of determining punishment, the judge must take into account individual circumstances of the accused.

The idea of mitigation is to present an individual in all their complexity and the various factors that contributed to a set of decisions and actions in their lives.

### Who can collect all this information?

The judgments in **Santa Singh (1976)** and **Mohd Mannan (2019)** have recognised the interdisciplinary nature of such an exercise, and that it requires professionals other than lawyers to collect such information. For instance, American Bar Association's 2003 Guidelines for the **Appointment and Performance of Defence Counsel in Death Penalty** recognises the **role of a mitigation specialist** with a clearly defined role that goes beyond what lawyers can do.

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

### INDONESIA'S PALM OIL CRISIS

#### 23. Explained: Indonesia's palm oil crisis, and its implications for India

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Explained: Indonesia's palm oil crisis, and its implications for India**" published in **The Indian Express** on **8th Apr 22**.

**News:** The world's largest producer and exporter of palm oil, Indonesia, is facing domestic shortages, leading to price controls and export curbs. What explains this situation, and what are the implications for India?

#### What is the present situation wrt palm oil in Indonesia?

Indonesia has witnessed the **domestic prices of branded cooking oil** spiral, between March 2021 and March 2022.

On February 1, the Indonesian government **imposed a ceiling on retail prices**. The price caps, however, led to the product disappearing from supermarket shelves, amid reports of hoarding and consumers standing in long queues for hours.

Besides domestic price controls, the government also made it **compulsory for exporters to sell 20% of their planned shipments in the domestic market**, at predetermined prices.

#### What are the possible reasons behind the price rise?

There are two plausible reasons:

**1]. Supply disruptions**, both man-made and natural, in other cooking oils, especially sunflower and soyabean.

– **Russia's invasion of Ukraine** has resulted in port closures and exporters avoiding Black Sea shipping routes. Ukraine and Russia together account for nearly 80% of the global trade in sunflower oil.

– **Sanctions against Russia** have further curtailed trade in sunflower oil, the world's third most exported vegetable oil

Soyabean oil, too, is facing supply issues due to **dry weather in South America**.

Supply tightness in sunflower and soyabean — from war and drought, respectively — has, in turn, transmitted to palm oil.

**2]. The second factor is linked to petroleum, more specifically the use of palm oil as a bio-fuel.** The Indonesian government has, since 2020, made 30% blending of diesel with palm oil mandatory as part of a plan to slash fossil fuel imports. Palm oil getting increasingly diverted for bio-diesel is leaving less quantity available, both for the domestic cooking oil and export market.

#### What are the implications for India?

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India is the **world's biggest vegetable oils importer**. Out of its annual imports of 14-15 mt, the lion's share is of palm oil (8-9 mt), followed by soyabean (3-3.5 mt) and sunflower (2.5).

Indonesia's restrictions on exports take into account its domestic demand obligations and its ambitious bio-fuel programme. So in that sense, India must get used to a lower supply from Indonesia.

### **RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT**

#### **24. The road to Ukraine peace runs through Delhi**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "The road to Ukraine peace runs through Delhi" published in 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International relations: Effect of policies and policies of developed nations on India's interests.

**Context:** Nearly 40 days ago, Russia launched a military invasion of Ukraine. Despite peace talks, direct negotiations between the conflicting parties have failed to make much progress. India can play an important role in its resolution.

**Mediation** as a conflict resolution tool that can assist the parties in identifying their hidden 'interests'. It is a **flexible conflict resolution tool facilitated by a neutral third party**. Due to its potential, the **Article 33 of the UN Charter** recognises the promise of mediation for a peaceful resolution of international disputes.

The best known example of mediation is the U.S. President Jimmy Carter who mediated peace between Israel and Egypt (known as **Camp David Accords of 1978**). It resulted in 44 years of peace.

A neutral third party can act as a 'go-between' (**shuttle diplomacy**) to gather more information and help parties identify their hidden interests.

#### **Why mediation can be an effective tool?**

Mediation as a tool would help focus on number one priority. i.e., the safety of the Ukrainian people through a complete ceasefire. Russia will also be obliged to participate as opting for mediation is the only way left for Russia to save face and escape the sanctions that have crippled its economy.

For the West, going ahead with mediation presents itself as an opportunity to include Russia in the security infrastructure of Europe (like it did with East Germany after the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989).

#### **India's role as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia**

Recent visits from various foreign dignitaries show that the world expects India to play a more active role in the Ukrainian crisis.

It can be **India's golden chance** to establish itself as a global power. It is in India's **long-term interest in countering the China threat**. The U.S. and its allies need India as a strategic partner to **balance the rise of China in the Indo-Pacific**.

For now, India is right in not taking sides. India must step up and live up to its claim of being a **'Vishwa-Guru' (or world leader)**.



## **INDIA – US RELATIONS**

### **25. Is India's position on Russia affecting its relationship with the U.S.?**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Is India's position on Russia affecting its relationship with the U.S.?**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, India's neutral position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine has antagonised the U.S.

In fact, the U.S. has issued a warning against conducting local currency transactions through Russia's central bank or constructing an alternative payment mechanism that subverts or circumvents the U.S.'s sanctions against Russia.

#### **What are the issues with India's neutral stand on Russia's invasion of Ukraine?**

Around 140 nations (apart from the western countries) have condemned Russia's actions in the United Nations General Assembly. **India seems to be isolated in its position** of being supportive of Russia.

The west is wary of **India's purchase of discounted Russian oil**. On the one side, the rest of the world is trying to isolate Russia. On the other side, India's move may lead to boosting up the Russian economy.

If nobody stands up for the territorial sovereignty of other countries (Here, Russia invading Ukraine), **it will prompt China to do something aggressive with Taiwan**. China may also create another border crisis with India.

Russia is **not a dependable partner** for India. The crushing sanctions which are going to be faced by it will destroy its economy.

**India's move** could impact the strategic cooperation of India with three nations in the QUAD.

#### **How is India's stand not wrong?**

Although, India has not directly named while condemning Russia, it has sufficiently criticized Russia.

– **Statements have been issued** against the transgression of international law; violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty; and the civilian killings.

– In addition, India has supported an **independent inquiry**.

India has been adopting the policy to be neutral since 1956. For example, India has done so in **Hungary in 1956**, in the **Czech Republic** (which was then Czechoslovakia) and in Afghanistan in 1979.

The **U.S. sanctions have double standards**. The US has carved out waivers for Europe on energy purchases, as the continent is dependent on Russia. But the US has ignored India's defence dependency on Russia

As per international law, the U.S. sanctions do not have any legal backing. These are “**unilateral coercive economic measures**” having validity in U.S. laws and European Union (EU) laws.

India is a developing country. It has not come out of the COVID-19-related economic shock. It has **huge economic needs**. For example, Petrol, and Food prices are increasing.

In fact, the amount of oil that India imports from the Russian Federation is very small. Also, India's moves for diversifying defence purchases **will take time**.

### Way forward

The U.S. should **take other countries on board while taking international actions**. It is because when the US takes unilateral action, it also impacts other countries, and as strategic partners, India has a right to request them to be more understanding of its needs than they have been.

Both countries should **discuss their differences over Russia**. They should elaborate on the bilateral agenda

The **2+2 meeting is a good opportunity to work on other aspects of Indo-US relationship** while exchanging views quietly.

The US needs to look beyond the battlefield. Now, the security covers a vast array of non-traditional areas. For example, like mobility, climate change, health, technology and maritime security.

### INDIA – SRILANKA RELATIONS

#### 26. Lessons from the implosion of Sri Lanka's tiny economy?

**Source:** The **post** is based on an article **“Lessons from the implosion of Sri Lanka's tiny economy?”** published in the **Live Mint** on **5th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, Sri Lanka's entire cabinet resigned over inability to handle the ongoing country's worsening economic crisis. It is undergoing a state of emergency due to a deteriorating food and fuel crisis.

#### **What were the reasons behind Sri Lanka's economic crisis?**

In 2019, the newly-elected government of Sri Lanka has been accused of announcing a series of populist measures like tax cuts, 50% reduction in value added tax, eliminating capital gains tax etc.

Tourism, remittances and the apparel export are the top **three foreign-exchange earners** for Sri Lanka's economy.

- **Inward remittances** dropped before the Pandemic.
- Tourism revenues fell down due to the pandemic.
- In addition, the **apparel exports** too have been hit during the pandemic.
- Its **tea export** which is a crucial forex earner was also hit due to decline in the production. It happened due to a ban on the use of chemical fertilizers.

Sri Lanka depends upon the import of crude oil for transportation and energy. But, the **prices of crude oil have been spiked** by the Ukraine war.

In addition, there is an **inflation** of more than 19%.

Sri Lanka is facing both domestic and foreign debts. As a result, it has **twin deficits** – fiscal and the current account deficit. It is burdened by the Chinese debt. China has invested in Sri Lanka as part of its Belt and Road Initiative.

#### **What steps are being taken by Sri Lanka to overcome the crisis?**

Sri Lanka is trying to raise forex by floating **sovereign dollar bonds**. But it may turn ugly. If Sri Lanka borrows someone else's currency, it will not have the freedom to either repudiate or print its own currency out of a debt hole.

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India has provided emergency aid via food and fuel shipments.

### What lessons can be learnt by India?

Sri Lanka's crisis was in the making from much earlier than the pandemic or Ukraine war. Populist measures proved to be a major cause of it.

India is also witnessing a lot of **populists welfarism** at the state level and the Centre level.

– The state of finances of certain states of India, such as Punjab, Bengal, Delhi, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh is going to face a lot of challenges. For example, they are providing a lot of freebies from their respective budgets like free electricity, free water, etc.

– In fact, the states of Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan may shift their pension regime. They may shift away from the National Pension Scheme of 2005.

The fiscal burden of the central government is also likely to increase. The major causes behind this could be One Rank One Pension scheme, new extension to free rations scheme among others.

## INDIA – AUS RELATIONS

### 27. India's trade pact with Australia will click: it ticks the right boxes

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India's trade pact with Australia will click: it ticks the right boxes**” published in the **Live Mint** on **04<sup>th</sup> April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, India has signed the **first trade agreement** with a large developed economy in the world after more than a decade. It was a path-breaking trade agreement known as the **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)** signed with Australia.

#### About India's trade agreements

India already has trade agreements with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Japan, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia. In the case of **developed countries**, this is the third trade agreement that India has signed with any **OECD** country, after the trade agreement India had with **Japan** and **Korea**.

#### Why is the Indian Industry showing a lot of enthusiasm for new trade deals with the UAE and Australia?

The India Industry was consulted at every stage of trade negotiations. Therefore, it has helped Indian industry members to articulate their **interests** in **overseas market access**.

The Indian government has identified the **right set of countries** for trade deals, i.e. Australia and the **UAE**. In addition, it has ensured **meaningful market access** for Indian exports.

Unlike, in previous FTAs in which India bargained mainly for market access for business professionals under **Mode 4 (Movement of Natural Persons)**, this time Indian government's focus has been on **access** to **foreign-market** for **all our merchandise exports**.

#### Why is the Indo-Australian trade deal significant for India?

The trade deal may lead bilateral trade between India and Australia to touch \$45 billion in five years.

**Address the tariff disadvantage:** Indian exporters face a tariff disadvantage of 4-5%. It was present in many **labour-intensive sectors**. It was posed by China, Thailand, Vietnam, South

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Korea, Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia in the Australian market. Now, Indian exports will not have to face this disadvantage in the Australian Market.

**Increase in exports of goods and services:** The **merchandise export** will increase in textiles and apparel, select agriculture and marine products, leather, footwear, furniture, gems and jewellery, pharma and engineering products, etc.

In addition to merchandise export, India will get meaningful access to the Australian market for service sectors too. For example, Annually, 1800 Indian traditional chefs and yoga teachers can enter Australia as contractual service suppliers, Indian students will get a post-study work visa, and mutual recognition of professional qualifications etc.

The Australian government will also stop taxation of the **offshore income** of Indian firms providing technical services to Australia. It will enhance their competitiveness in the international market.

Many Indian industries in sectors like steel, aluminium, power, engineering and so on will become competitive. They will get cheaper raw materials from the Australian exporter.

India's particular sectors like milk and dairy, among others where Australia has a comparative advantage, will remain protected under the ECTA. It is because the Indian government has **not offered concessions on these sensitive products**.

### What will be the challenges?

Currently, Australia has 16 operational FTAs. Therefore, India would be competing with China, ASEAN, Chile, Japan, Korea and New Zealand, which have already-functional FTAs with Australia.

## INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

### 28. Ukraine and the anatomy of India's neutrality

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Ukraine and the anatomy of India's neutrality**" published in **The Hindu** on **8th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, India has chosen a non-condemnatory approach and abstention approach in the United Nations (UNs) forum on the Ukraine-Russia conflict.

India's stand has pushed India at the centre of the debate in the international community.

### What has been the nature of India's foreign policy?

In 1957, Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru advocated a foreign policy guided by a **non-condemnatory approach**. India more or less followed the same line in the Soviet interventions in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) or Afghanistan (1979), or the American invasion of Iraq (2003)

In fact, India also condemned the civilian killings in Ukraine without calling any names.

### Why do the western countries want India to embrace the anti-Russian stand?

**(1) From a political point of view:** The U.S. considers the assault on Ukraine as an assault on "the free world". Therefore, its narrative would look weak if the world's largest democracy (India) does not take the side of the West.

**(2) From an economic point of view:** The sanctions imposed by the US on Russia would not work if India continues to trade with Russia. Importantly, China, the world's second largest economy, refuses to abide by the American sanctions. Further, the adherence of Japan, South

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Korea and Singapore, the only three Asian nations which have backed the sanctions, would not be strong enough to deter Russia.

**(3) From a strategic point of view:** US sees India as a counterweight to China in the Indo-Pacific region. Therefore, it wants India to choose sides.

### How the global order has changed?

Since the last two decades, the global order is witnessing rapid changes. There seems to be **three great powers** (*the US, Russia and China*) and several **middle powers**.

The US is an existing power, Russia is a wounded bear with an imperial nostalgia. It is economically weak but in terms of land mass and military might, it remains a superpower, and China is rising fast and seek to displace the American order at the global level.

India is itself a middle power. In the present conflict, two out of three global powers are India's partners and one is a competitor. Therefore, it is not wise for India to take side. Taking sides with one partner, would make China (India's competitor) stronger.

### Why India's present foreign policy is right?

It seems **India is being selectively targeted**. India's position is not isolated.

– For example, **South Africa** and the **United Arab Emirates**, a close American ally, abstained from a vote in the UN Security Council. In fact, Israel, and Turkey, both refused to join the sanctions regime.

The **foreign policy of a country does not depend upon the moral commitments**. It is based on its national interests. For example, The U.S.-led NATO bombed Yugoslavia in 1999, invaded Iraq in 2003, and destroyed the state of Libya while pursuing its national interest, rather than moral commitments.

**India's national interests lies in non-alignment**. In addition to defence and energy security, India wants Russia for continental security (geopolitical reasons), especially after the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan. On the contrary, India wants the U.S., Japan and Australia for India's maritime security.

India is **not a client state** of any great power. In fact, the client states of the West have not joined the sanctions regime.

India is **not an ally of the US**. For example, the Quad (India, Australia, Japan and the U.S.) is not an alliance.

India's core national interests need pragmatic realism. The strategic autonomy keeps channels open with both sides. It serves our national interests.

## 29. Realism versus liberalism in international relations

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "**Realism versus liberalism in international relations**" published on **7<sup>th</sup> April 2022** in **The Hindu**.

**Context:** Russia's invasion of Ukraine has rekindled the realism versus liberalism debate in international relations. The liberals call the war an attack by "authoritarian Russia" on "democratic Ukraine". The realists argue that the war was the culmination of the post-Cold War power games in Europe.

### What are the theories of liberalism?

Liberalism has 3 core beliefs:

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1. State are the main actors in the international system;
2. The internal characteristics of each state vary from the other and these shape the state's behavior;
3. Some governance models are good (democracies) and some are bad (dictatorships)

According to them, good states are supposed to make peace while bad states seek to expand their power at the expense of others.

There are three different but interconnected theoretical approaches: **economic interdependence, democratic peace, and international institutions**. Therefore, the ideal world order that liberals want is the one where democratic states are connected through economic globalization and function in a system regulated by the international organizations (Ex – UN).

While liberalism offers an optimistic view of global order, it is more about what the world ought to be. Realism is more about what the world is.

### What is the premise of realism?

For realists, a peaceful global order is desirable, but that's far from reality. They also consider nation states as the primary actors in the international system.

The three main streams of realist theory in international relations – **human nature realism, defensive realism and offensive realism**. All seek to explain why states seek more power.

**Human nature realism** is based on the argument that humans' lust for power can have a profound impact on the nature of states as states are led by human beings. They continue to seek expansion of power, leading to conflicts. **(Hans Morgenthau in Politics Among Nations)**

**Defensive realists argue** that the fundamental aim of the states is survival. The global order is anarchic and this factor forces the states to compete with each other. **(Kenneth Waltz in The Theory of International Politics)**

**Offensive realism** bases its arguments on structural factors rather than human behaviour. Power always seeks to maximise power at the expense of rivals. A state's ultimate goal is to be the hegemon in the system. **(Jon Mearsheimer in The Tragedy of Great Power Politics)**

### 30. Playing the strategic autonomy game

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Playing the strategic autonomy game**” published in **The Hindu** on **04<sup>th</sup> April 2022**.

**News:** The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to a rush of foreign diplomats to India. India has welcomed Chinese and Russian leaders. They have come for a personal meeting with the Indian Prime Minister.

### Why has India's decision to continue trade with Russia not faced any public criticism so far?

India very well **understands the sensitivities** and the nature of the engagement of the Western interlocutors with a given country.

India is a developing country. It is **fighting serious economic hardships**. It is recovering from the impact of COVID-19.

It will not be wise to expect India not to buy discounted Russian oil. In fact, some of India's critics are still buying energy from Russia.

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India has a unique and very important **geopolitical location**. Therefore, India needs an unrestricted supply of defence equipment.

India's decision to abstain from condemning Russia is **based on a geopolitical rationale** (just like India did not condemn the American invasion of Iraq in 2003).

Further, India does not want to alienate Russia. It is because India cannot afford to have yet another **unfriendly country** in a deeply unfriendly region.

In fact, even if India takes a side in the favour of the West, the West may also not stand by India in the future if India enters into a conflict with China

### Why does the West want India to pick up a side?

The west is of the notion that **1)** The Russia-Ukraine war is a broader conflict between democracies and non-democracies. Therefore, India must decide to pick upsides. **2)** In case India enters into full-fledged conflict with China in the future, Russia is unlikely to help India.

### What are the challenges between the present and future?

First, India will be **relegated** to a **weaker position** in the region after the Ukraine war is over. **Indian primacy** might end in the region.

Second, the U.S. has withdrawn from Afghanistan, and it is currently focusing on Russia and Ukraine.

Third, Russia is weakening, and fourth, Beijing is actively playing a geopolitical game with money and muscle power in the region.

Therefore, the **continental geopolitics** of **Southern Asia** is now becoming China-centric. There are chances that there will be a rise of a China-centric geopolitical order in Asia in the coming future.

### What should India do?

New Delhi may indeed be on the side of the Western Countries, but not in the manner they would like India to be. India cannot fully ally with either side. It needs to maintain good relations with both, and India needs to adhere to its **strategic autonomy**.

## 31. Playing the strategic autonomy game

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Playing the strategic autonomy game**" published in **The Hindu** on **04<sup>th</sup> April 2022**.

**News:** The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to a rush of foreign diplomats to India. India has welcomed Chinese and Russian leaders. They have come for a personal meeting with the Indian Prime Minister.

### Why has India's decision to continue trade with Russia not faced any public criticism so far?

India very well **understands the sensitivities** and the nature of the engagement of the Western interlocutors with a given country.

India is a developing country. It is **fighting serious economic hardships**. It is recovering from the impact of COVID-19.

It will not be wise to expect India not to buy discounted Russian oil. In fact, some of India's critics are still buying energy from Russia.

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India has a unique and very important **geopolitical location**. Therefore, India needs an unrestricted supply of defence equipment.

India's decision to abstain from condemning Russia is **based on a geopolitical rationale** (just like India did not condemn the American invasion of Iraq in 2003).

Further, India does not want to alienate Russia. It is because India cannot afford to have yet another **unfriendly country** in a deeply unfriendly region.

In fact, even if India takes a side in the favour of the West, the West may also not stand by India in the future if India enters into a conflict with China

### Why does the West want India to pick up a side?

The west is of the notion that **1)** The Russia-Ukraine war is a broader conflict between democracies and non-democracies. Therefore, India must decide to pick upsides. **2)** In case India enters into full-fledged conflict with China in the future, Russia is unlikely to help India.

### What are the challenges between the present and future?

First, India will be **relegated** to a **weaker position** in the region after the Ukraine war is over. **Indian primacy** might end in the region.

Second, the U.S. has withdrawn from Afghanistan, and it is currently focusing on Russia and Ukraine.

Third, Russia is weakening, and fourth, Beijing is actively playing a geopolitical game with money and muscle power in the region.

Therefore, the **continental geopolitics** of **Southern Asia** is now becoming China-centric. There are chances that there will be a rise of a China-centric geopolitical order in Asia in the coming future.

### What should India do?

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GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HATE SPEECH

## ISSUE OF HATE SPEECH IN INDIA

### 32. Hate speech is violent in itself and must be called out

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Hate speech is violent in itself and must be called out**" **published** in the **Indian Express** on **15th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Social issues

**Relevance:** Hate Speech

**News:** Recently, the chief priest of an ashram in **Uttar Pradesh's Sitapur district** publicly threatened sexual violence against Muslim women. It implies that the Hate speech has become a frequent phenomenon in public sphere of India.

### Why hate speech is a big issue?



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It has become one of the biggest challenges to the rule of law and to our democratic conscience. It is anti-constitutional and anti-secular in India.

It is at the root of many forms of violence.

### Hate Speech laws in India

The **Sections 153A, 295A and 298** under the **IPC** criminalises “the promotion of enmity between different groups of people on grounds of religion and language, alongside acts that are prejudicial to maintaining communal harmony”.

**Section 505** of the IPC **criminalises** speech/statements intended/likely to induce fear or alarm to the public, instigate/incite public disorder, class or community violence and inter-community hatred.

**Section 125 of the Representation of People Act** makes promoting feelings of enmity and hatred on grounds of religion and caste, punishable with imprisonment up to **three years** and fine or both.

### What have been issues in combating hate speech in India?

In recent years, hate speech and **disinformation campaign**, has been **mediatised** i.e., acquired a systemic presence in the **media**, and **social media platforms** (like Facebook and YouTube Platform).

– 2018 was considered as “the year of online hate”. There have been **anti-minority sentiments** on these platforms.

There is a lack of political will, **blatant inefficiency** and **bias of the administration**.

– For example, In 2019, the SC reprimanded the **Election Commission** for not taking action against hate speech during the election. The ECI responded by saying that it had limited powers to take action in this matter. In fact, there has been shocking apathy of the judiciary as it has not taken any stand against it

The hate speech is increasingly used for **electoral mobilisation** along **communal lines** across India.

### Ways Forward

The Indian republic should be committed to working within the framework of constitutional democracy and the rule of law.

Hate speech, in itself, must be understood and treated as a **violent act**. Hate speech must be unambiguously condemned and the law must take its course.

The Law Commission in its **267th report** recommended introduction of **new provisions** within the penal code that specifically **punish incitement to violence**.

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The Supreme Court should act decisively in response to allegations of hate speech in the judicial cases.

The EC must assume more responsibility related hate speech during the election period.

The media should play the real role of watchdog.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVERNANCE AND RELATED ISSUES

### **DATA GOVERNANCE**

#### **33. Data divide between state, citizens is bad for democracy**

**Source:** The **post** is based on an article “**Data divide between state, citizens is bad for democracy**” published in **The Indian Express** on **15th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – **Design** and implementation of policies and programmes; and Governance

**Relevance:** **Public Data**

**News:** The Economic Survey focused on improving the quality and quantity of data, so that it can be used for better and **quicker assessment** of the state of the economy.

While amassing of data is no doubt essential, facilitating its access to the citizens is critical for a healthy and informed public discourse on issues of policy relevance.

#### **Importance of Public Data**

It can improve **people’s life** in myriad ways. For example, **data on migrants** collected during the pandemic can be used for **effective public policy** on migrants.

It can lead to **informed public discourse**. It is critical for accountable and transparent governance in any democracy. For example, **The Right to Information** has been a useful instrument.

It can help **tackle corruption and better targeting of beneficiaries**.

#### **How is the citizen’s access to data is limited in India?**

The **political factors** prevent its **dissemination of data among** the public. There are fears that access to data can increase the **accountability** of the government and create a roadblock in the **administration**.

The **autonomy of statistical agencies** is compromised for immediate political gains. For example, data from the **consumption survey 2017-18** has not yet been released. Similarly, the first PLFS (2017-18) was released only after the 2019 general election.

- The **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)** has not been seriously treated.
- The Water and Sanitation Survey data 2018 has not been released.

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The India government has been working upon the **UIDAI** and **JAM** (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar -Mobile). Huge amounts of data has been collected under JAM (Jandhan – Aadhaar – Mobile), thereby breaching privacy of the citizens.

The government has collected an enormous amount of data during the **pandemic** and immunisation process. However, the government has **suppressed information** on pandemic induced deaths.

### What are the impacts of inadequate data access to citizens?

The data divide between the state and its citizens is a potential threat to the **smooth functioning of a democracy**.

It will not lead to full realization of the potential of modern technology.

The increased gathering of data and lack of sharing with citizens increases chances of the **surveillance state**. It can lead to breach of the **fundamental right to privacy** of the citizens of India.

### Way Forward

The use of data by **different stakeholders** will help the government in the improvement of the governance.

The **statistical wings of the government** should be made independent. It will increase the reputation and credibility.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

## **MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **34. Bitter pill for all: Breakdown of trust between doctors and patients is caused and aggravated by state failures**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Bitter pill for all: Breakdown of trust between doctors and patients is caused and aggravated by state failures**” published in **The Times of India** on **14th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – **Issues** related to Health, Govt policies and interventions

**Relevance:** **Medical** field and Public health

**News:** Recently, a Dausa gynaecologist committed tragic suicide after Rajasthan police booked her for murder over a pregnant woman dying during childbirth. Also, two district hospital doctors in Howrah were severely assaulted after a patient with severe kidney disease died. These confrontations, which are a relatively recent phenomenon, reveal a broken system.

With both doctors’ and patients’ kin demanding justice when such incidents occur, police must proceed with caution and ensure public order until medical experts deliver a conclusive opinion.

What is the situation wrt medical negligence in India?

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NCRB data indicates 552 cases of medical negligence between 2018 and 2020. But given patchy healthcare coverage, actual incidence of medical negligence and deaths avertable with nearer-to-home healthcare facilities would be significantly higher.

**Why do people resort to violence in such cases?**

Broken-down government hospitals and huge monetary demands of private hospitals leave the average low-income Indian citizen helpless.

This may explain the periodic outbursts of violence.

To make matters worse, due process and procedure are still evolving, decades after Independence.

**What is the due process in cases of medical negligence?**

In 2021, National Medical Commission issued the following guidelines –

- Police, prior to making arrests, is required to send medical negligence criminal complaints to the district medical council's medical board.
- The board must send recommendations within two weeks and an aggrieved party (doctor or prosecuting agency) can approach the state medical council's board for another opinion, again not exceeding two weeks.

Eighteen states have a **special law prescribing three years imprisonment** for assaulting doctors, the amended Epidemic Diseases Act prescribes harsher punishment, but police are failing to ensure deterrence.

**What is the way forward?**

NMC must ensure every district has medical boards in place and local police internalise due processes.

Doctors demand that penal provisions must be written into IPC, the handy rule book in thana, to ensure implementation by police.

For patients, approaching consumer courts for civil remedies to medical negligence is futile because of horrible backlogs.

Meanwhile, NMC Act allowing appeals from doctors but not patients to the national-level Ethics and Medical Registration Board against state medical council decisions aggravates patients' disenchantment.

For doctors' professional wellbeing and to deter medical negligence, let's have even-handed rules – and better public health facilities.

### CREATION OF IRMS

#### 35. A merger to better manage the Indian Railways

**Source:** The post is based on an article “A merger to better manage the Indian Railways” published in **The Hindu** on **13th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the government issued a Gazette notification regarding the **creation of the Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS)**.

It has been created after merging 8 out of 10 Group-A Indian Railway services, and marks a paradigm shift in the management of one of the world’s largest rail networks.

#### What is the significance of this move?

It is one of the **biggest bureaucratic transformations** in India since Independence, and will improve the **governance** in Indian railway. At present, Indian railways seem to be governed by the **top-heavy bureaucracy**.

It will create job opportunities for lakhs of applicants who apply through the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

#### Why were the Indian railway services merged?

The operation of Indian railways requires a coordinated work for maintaining safety of operations and ensuring the punctuality of trains.

India is aspiring to become a **\$5 trillion economy** and an **economic powerhouse** in the near future. The Indian Railways will play a very crucial role in achieving

A reinvigorated bureaucracy is needed for implementation of various projects like **Gati Shakti initiative**, a network of **dedicated freight corridors, high speed rail corridors, station re-development projects**, the induction of **Vande Bharat trains** on a large scale, and other projects of strategic importance have been launched.

The adoption of the **latest technology** and improving the efficiency of **logistics operations** require new future leaders.

#### Way Forward

The **existing cadre of officers** (8,000 senior officers of the Indian Railways) need to be imparted with training. They have to work in coordination and not in silos.

The **initial training** along with **mid-career training programmes** may be reoriented for newly recruited IRMS officers.

The IRMS training needs to be a design based on competencies required for different leadership roles. For example, managing the **verticals of operations**, business development, infrastructure development and maintenance, traction and rolling stock, and finance and human resource management.

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**Mission Karmayogi** of the Government of India can be used for mapping domain, function and behaviour-related competencies of the IRMS Officers. Therefore, it can help for **competencies-based postings** of officers.

Further, the **Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) programme** of the Government of India can be instrumental in shaping the career progression of the IRMS officers.

GS2 – POLITY – INDIAN CONSTITUTION

### **ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA**

#### **36. The process of electing India's President**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article **“The process of electing India's President”** published on **13/April/2022** in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Indian Polity

**Context:** The tenure of the current President is set to end in July this year, which is also when the 16th Indian Presidential election will be held to elect his successor.

#### **How is the President elected?**

The Indian President is elected through an **electoral college system**, by **proportional representation by a single transferable vote**. The Elections are conducted and overseen by the Election Commission of India.

The electoral college is based on all **elected members of Parliament (MPs)**, and the **elected members of State Legislative Assemblies and Union Territories (MLAs)**.

Before voting, in the nomination stage, the candidate files nomination with a signed list of **50 proposers and 50 seconders**. These can be anyone from the members of the electoral college from the State or national level. This rule was implemented by EC in 1974. An elector cannot propose or second the nomination of more than one candidate.

#### **What is the value of each vote, and how is it calculated?**

A vote cast by each MP or MLA is not calculated as one vote. There is a larger vote value attached to it.

The value of each **MLA's vote is determined by dividing the population of the State by the number of MLAs in its legislative assembly, and the quotient is further divided by 1000**. For example – U.P. has the highest vote value for each MLAs at 208, while Arunachal Pradesh is just 8. This population is taken from the figure of the **1971 Census (84th Amendment Act)**. This will change after Census 2026.

The fixed value of each vote by an MP of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha is 708.

#### **What is required to secure a victory?**

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A candidate requires a specific quota of votes to win. While counting, EC totals up all the valid votes cast through paper ballots, and to win, **candidates should secure 50% +1 of the total votes cast.**

The voters of the electoral college write the names of candidates on the ballot paper in the order of preference.

### **What can be expected in the upcoming presidential polls?**

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu is reportedly the front-runner for the presidential race nominated by the ruling NDA, unless a second term ticket is given to Mr. Kovind.

Opposition parties are contemplating jointly putting up a candidate for the race.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

## **INDIA – SRI LANKA RELATIONS**

### **37. Understanding the sovereign debt crisis in Sri Lanka**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Understanding the sovereign debt crisis in Sri Lanka**” published in **The Hindu** on **15th Apr 22.**

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

**Relevance:** Sri Lanka’s economic crisis

**News:** The Sri Lankan government has decided to default on all its foreign debt worth \$51 billion as it awaits financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The government stated that it took the decision to preserve its dwindling foreign reserves to pay for the import of essential items. Ratings agencies such as Fitch, and Standard & Poor’s have downgraded Sri Lanka’s sovereign debt.

#### **What is Sovereign debt?**

Sovereign debt refers to the debt issued or accumulated by any government.

– Governments **borrow money to finance the various expenses** that they cannot meet through their regular tax revenues. They usually need to pay interest on such debt along with the principal amount over time, although many governments simply choose to **borrow fresh debt to repay existing debt.**

Historically, governments have tended to borrow more money than they could actually repay in order to fund populist spending.

#### **Can Governments borrow money in local currency?**

Yes. Governments can borrow **either in their local currency or in foreign currency** like the U.S. dollar.

– Governments usually find it easier to borrow and repay in their local currency. This is because governments with the help of their central banks can easily create fresh local currency to repay

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debt denominated in the local currency. This is known as **debt monetisation** and it can lead to increased money supply, which in turn causes prices to rise.

Why repayment of debt denominated in a foreign currency is difficult?

This is because governments depend on the inflow of foreign currency to gather the necessary foreign exchange to pay their foreign debt.

– **For instance:** The Sri Lankan government or the central bank, for example, cannot create U.S. dollars out of thin air to pay their foreign debt denominated in U.S. dollars. Instead, they depend on U.S. dollars flowing into Sri Lanka in the form of foreign investment and payments received in exchange for the export of various goods and services to build up their foreign reserves.

Why is Sri Lanka unable to pay its sovereign debt?

**Tourism sector hit hard:** Sri Lanka depends heavily on its tourism sector to bring in the foreign exchange necessary to import essential items such as food and fuel.

– The tourism sector contributes to about 10% of Sri Lanka's gross domestic product. Since the coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns, Sri Lanka's tourism sector has been hit hard. This, in turn, has affected the inflow of U.S. dollars into the Sri Lankan economy.

Thus, the Sri Lankan government has been finding it hard to obtain the U.S. dollars necessary to make good on its foreign debt obligations.

**Efforts to fix exchange rate failed:** Sri Lanka's efforts to fix the exchange rate of the Sri Lankan rupee against the U.S. dollar in order to raise the price of the rupee may have also played a role in the foreign debt crisis. The country's central bank at a certain point banned the payment of more than 200 Sri Lankan rupees for one U.S. dollar.

This rate was way below the actual market price of the dollar, which caused trades to be pushed into the black market and also caused a drop in the supply of U.S. dollars in the forex market.

What is the cost of defaulting on foreign debt?

**International lenders may be reluctant to lend** any more money to the Sri Lankan government unless such lending is part of a restructuring agreement.

**Impact on ratings:** This fact will also be reflected in the ratings that international ratings agencies give to debt issued by the Sri Lankan government.

Going forward, the **cost of fresh borrowing is likely to be high for the Sri Lankan government** as lenders will be incurring greater risk while lending to a government that has been unable to make good on its previous commitments.

### INDIA – CHINA RELATIONS

#### 38. Decoding dragon: GoI should upgrade strategic thinking on China

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “Decoding dragon: GoI should upgrade strategic thinking on China” published in **Times of India** on 16th April 2022.



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**Context:** Given that China today is our main strategic challenge, India's defense and strategic establishments need to up their game in decoding China. The Indian army is trying to address its capability voids in Mandarin and boost specialization on Chinese issues among its ranks.

### What steps have been taken by the army?

The army is working to increase basic and advanced levels of Mandarin training for its soldiers, both within the force and through MoUs with universities offering Chinese language courses.

Last year, the army began specialized courses for some of its soldiers on Tibetology.

### What is the way forward?

The best way to enhance our strategic understanding of China would be to support Mandarin and Chinese studies across the entire ecosystem of schools and universities. This is what the US has done over decades, producing dozens of Chinese studies like Ezra Vogel and John King Fairbank.

A civilian-defence academic compact can provide us with a 360-degree understanding of China. In this regard, Government must seriously look at having more Taiwan Education Centres in Indian universities and even fostering Mandarin-language cooperation between Indian armed forces and Taiwanese universities.

## 39. Beijing's move, India's turn

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Beijing's move, India's turn**" is published in **The Hindu** on **14th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations,

**Relevance:** India-China relations

**News:** Recently, India refused to **condemn Russia's military invasion**, and decided to continue trade with Russia. It has abstained from voting on United Nations resolutions.

In this context, a number of **diplomats**, officials, and ministers from across the globe **visited** India. This has raised India's role in global politics.

### What are the ongoing challenges in India-China Relationship?

India and America have seen **convergence of interests** based on the Chinese emergence and assertion.

There is a relative power gap between **the two Asian powers**. For instance, China's economy is nearly six times India's size.

**Indo-China border disputes:** 90,000 Indian and Chinese soldiers have been deployed in Ladakh for nearly two years now. Further, 15 rounds of negotiations have failed to result in **de-escalation** in certain border areas.

India has been **accommodative** of Beijing's sensitivities.

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– For example, the Indian government had instructed the U.S. officials to neither mention the **Chinese aggression** in any joint statement nor raise it in a strong manner otherwise. India did not criticise China's clampdown in **Hong Kong**, and mistreatment of **Uighurs in Xinjiang**. In addition, India has kept the activities of the **Tibetan community** (including Dalai Lama) in India within limits that do not provoke Beijing.

However, China is unconcerned about **Indian sensitivities**.

– For example, China signed a provocative statement on Kashmir at the **OIC meeting** in Islamabad. In addition, China has allowed **South Korean and Pakistani students** to return to China. However, it has not been extended to India.

In fact, India has remained defensive about the criticism of its own strong-arm policies in Kashmir.

### Other Foreign Policy Challenges for India

India is the centrepiece of the Joe Biden administration's **Indo-Pacific strategy**. In fact, India's **Quad partners** (U.S., Japan, Australia) have imposed trade sanctions on Russia, and provided military aid to Ukraine.

**The U.S.** has issued a warning of the consequences for India and other countries if they actively attempt to **circumvent** or **backfill the US sanctions**". For example, India and Russia are exploring ways of conducting **bilateral trade** by bypassing the **dollar-based financial system**.

China praised India for pursuing an **independent foreign policy**. It wishes India to move away from the Quad. It wants to reset its larger strategic interest with New Delhi. If there is any **reset in India and China ties**, it will alter **New Delhi's relationship** with the U.S. Further, It will impact the **effectiveness** of Quad.

### Ways Forward

India has stated that precondition for return to normalcy in China-India ties: (1) **restoration of status quo ante** of April 2020 in Ladakh; and (2) **disengagement** from remaining "**friction points**".

The Chinese minister offered to create a **virtual G-2** in Asia. He proposed to protect **India's traditional role** and collaborate on **developmental projects** as '**China-India Plus**' in South Asia.

China should pay heed to **India's limited preconditions** for declaring the border crisis resolved.

## INDIA – UK RELATIONS

### 40. India and the U.K.: Crafting a new legacy

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "**India and the U.K.: Crafting a new legacy**" published on **12/April/2022** in The Hindu.

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**Context:** India-UK relationship has been on an upward trajectory, exemplified by conclusion of **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**. The agreement established a **2030 Roadmap of India-U.K. relations**.

### What are the areas of cooperation between India and the U.K.?

In her recent visit, the U.K. Foreign Secretary highlighted the importance of **countering Russian aggression** and developing ties between Britain and India in the **Indo-Pacific region**.

There were talks on **defence related trade deals, cyber security**, and plans to hold **First Strategic Tech Dialogue**.

India is a key strategic partner of the U.K. in the Indo-Pacific as highlighted by the **Defence and International Security Partnership** between Indian and the U.K, signed in 2015.

The U.K. has also confirmed **British investment funding to support renewable energy** in India.

In January, India and the U.K. concluded the first round of talks for an **India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement**. An early harvest deal is expected.

### What are the new areas of cooperation?

British and Indian PM met on the sidelines of COP26 in Glasgow and focused on India-U.K. Climate Partnership. He is also expected to visit in April end.

New areas of cooperation are – **fintech, market regulation, sustainable and green finance, cybersecurity**. For instance – collaboration of **Oxford-AstraZeneca and Serum Institute of India**.

### Way forward

As India seeks to carve out a new role for itself in the evolving global order as a 'leading power' and the U.K. recalibrates its strategic lookout post Brexit, this is a unique moment for India-U.K. ties.

It is time to lay the foundations of a partnership that can respond adequately to the challenges of the 21st century.

## INDIA – AUS RELATIONS

### 41. From Cricket Rivals To Natural Partners

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**From Cricket Rivals To Natural Partners**” published in **The Times of India** on **15th Apr 22**.

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

**Relevance:** India – Aus bilateral relations and geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific

**Context:** India and Australia have largely been known as cricket rivals, but are transitioning rapidly to becoming natural partners. The recent signing of the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement is yet another significant step in the rapid deepening of the bilateral relationship.

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Not only have the top leaders of India and Australia been meeting extremely regularly, the Indian Prime Minister has termed the signing of the ECTA with Australia as a 'watershed moment', as it represents a complete transformation of the bilateral relationship.

What are the key dimensions of the transformed Indo-Aus bilateral relationship?

**1] Membership of QUAD:** India and Australia are members of the Quad, along with Japan and the US.

While India has had independently strong and substantial economic ties with Japan and the US, no such economic pillar underlay the relationship between India and Australia. As members of the Quad, it was clearly important for India and Australia to change that. And it was driven, by most accounts, by the backing of the leadership at the highest levels of both countries. That is indicative of the **strategic nature of the ECTA**.

Moreover, as Quad is not a military alliance, that means it has to be an economic and technological one. Therefore, ECTA is an important step in that direction.

**2] Increasing importance of Australia:** Australia is becoming much more important on the global stage than it previously was. For instance:

– In September 2021, US President Joe Biden had said, *“the United States has no closer or more reliable ally than Australia.”*

Australia has **emerged as an important player on the global stage** today for various reasons.

– It is **strategically located in the Indo-Pacific** from the US perspective. If any conflict were to occur over the Taiwan Strait, the presence of a close, reliable ally in the south of the region would be the perfect complement to the presence of a close, reliable ally in the north (that is, Japan).

– In the Indo-Pacific, Australia is now positioned the way UK is for US in Europe. This also explains the creation of the newest military alliance in the region: **AUKUS**.

**3]. Australia's Rare earth reserves:** Australia also has massive reserves of rare earths, which are critical elements in the global supply chain for semiconductors.

As the US decouples itself (to whatever extent possible) from China, one of the costs it has to bear is the loss of access to China's largest reserves of rare earths. Therefore, the US and like-minded nations need access to Australia's reserves to ensure a global semiconductor supply chain devoid of China.

That is one of the main technological dimensions of the growing closeness between India and Australia as well.

– India is attempting to build its own semiconductor industry, and it realises that ultimately, it will need access to a secure, reliable source of rare earths. And clearly, China cannot be relied upon for that. Australia is the perfect partner instead.

**4]. Cooperation on cybersecurity and intelligence sharing** are likely to be key focus areas as well, as is the easy flow of talent, given the large number of Indian students studying in Australia.

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Strategically, Australia and India will need to come even closer if they are to form the eastern and western flanks of an open, free, stable and multipolar IndoPacific region.

### 42. A trade deal that will create jobs

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**A trade deal that will create jobs**” published on **10/April/2022** in Times of India.

**News:** India and Australia have recently signed a trade agreement called the **India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement** or **IndAusECTA**.

#### What does this mean?

This deal will eliminate tariffs on more than **85% of Australian goods** entering India and **almost all of Indian goods** entering Australia.

Australian exports to India of sheep meat, wool, coal, alumina, metallic ores, including manganese, copper, nickel and critical minerals will be tariff free.

Likewise, for Indian exports to Australia of jewellery, cosmetics, bed linen, clothing, paints, automotive parts and furniture.

Australia will get **access to the fast and rapidly growing Indian market**, while Indian companies will enjoy **cheap supply of energy, raw material and intermediate goods**.

In India, this will **create at least 1 million jobs in labour-intensive sectors** like textiles, leather and pharmaceuticals.

India’s concern about its agriculture and dairy sectors are also respected.

#### Will it also open the door to movement of people?

Through **IndAusECTA**, Australia will help more Indians gain education and experience. Australia will increase post-study work visa durations for Indian graduates.

It will ensure that Australia’s service providers remain competitive compared to India’s future trading partners. Australia will also eliminate double taxation on IT firms.

#### Way forward

A strong and prosperous Indo-Pacific is in the world’s interest. IndAusECTA is our unity ticket for a better future together.

## **GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **43. India's role in a disordered world**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “India's role in a disordered world” published on **11/April/2022** in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations

**Context:** Institutes of global governance are weakening. For instance, the climate crisis is unresolved, vaccines were hoarded by rich countries, and the World Trade Organization is struggling.

#### **How did the institutes of global governance emerge?**

After World War II, new institutions of global governance were established – **the United Nations and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).**

However, the victors retained their veto power within the United Nations Security Council and also control the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO.

The developed non-communist powers, **the US, the UK, France, Italy, Japan, West Germany, and Canada, formed the G7 in 1976.** The European Union was invited to attend in 1977. Russia joined in 1998 – its inclusion was a signal of cooperation between East and West. However, it was thrown out in 2014 after the invasion of Crimea.

**After the Asian financial crisis, the G20 was formed in 1999** with the aim to ensure financial stability. Russia is a member, but Western nations want to throw Russia out now. Meanwhile, India will be the chair of G20 from December 2022.

#### **Have the institutions fulfilled their stated goals?**

Inequalities have only risen. Countries such as the U.S., are also demanding more “socialism” and less unbounded capitalism.

Free market capitalism is not ideologically compatible with a genuine democracy. All western electoral systems began with the right to vote limited to property owners only. Universal adult franchise is a new phenomenon.

#### **What are the tensions between capitalist and democratic institutions?**

Capitalist institutions want to be unfettered by democratic regulations to make it easier to do business. Whereas, Democratic institutions want to rein in the competitive animal spirits, to make it more compassionate.

The simultaneous imposition of free markets and elections has invariably increased inequalities, social tensions, and sectarian conflicts. For example – Iraq and Afghanistan.

#### **What is the need for redistribution of power?**

Power accumulated in societies by the **principle of “cumulative causation”**. Those who already have more power, will not only use the power to improve the world but to also ensure that they remain in power. Those who have power will resist losing it. For instance – anti-colonial movements leading to violence.

### Way Forward:

Global governance needs to become genuinely democratic. Countries must be given freedom to evolve their own democracies and economies and not to be dictated by others. Instances of sanctions by global dictators should end. Calling on democratic country like India, to take their side, must also end.

GS2 – POLITY – BILLS AND RELATED ISSUES

### AMENDMENT TO THE WMD ACT

#### 44. Amending the Weapons of Mass Destruction Act

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Amending the Weapons of Mass Destruction Act**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th Apr 22**.

**Context:** The **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022** was passed in the Lok Sabha recently.

The Bill amends the **WMD and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005** which prohibits the unlawful manufacture, transport, or transfer of WMD (chemical, biological and nuclear weapons) and their means of delivery.

The recent amendment extends the scope of banned activities to include financing of already prohibited activities.

#### What was the purpose of the original WMD Act of 2005?

Its primary objective was to provide an integrated and overarching legislation on prohibiting unlawful activities in relation to all three types of WMD, their delivery systems and related materials, equipment and technologies.

It instituted **penalties** for contravention of these provisions such as imprisonment for a term not less than five years (extendable for life) as well as fines.

The **Act was passed to meet an international obligation enforced by the UN Security Council Resolution** (UNSCR)1540 of 2004.

*UNSCR 1540 enforced three primary obligations upon nation states – a) to not provide any form of support to non-state actors seeking to acquire WMD, related materials, or their means of delivery, b) to adopt and enforce laws criminalising the possession and acquisition of such items by non-state actors, c) to adopt and enforce domestic controls over relevant materials, in order to prevent their proliferation.*

#### What has the Amendment added to the existing Act?

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The Amendment expands the scope to include **prohibition of financing** of any activity related to WMD and their delivery systems.

To prevent such financing, the Central government shall have the **power to freeze, seize or attach funds, financial assets, or economic resources** of suspected individuals (whether owned, held, or controlled directly or indirectly).

It also prohibits persons from making finances or related services available for other persons indulging in such activity.

### What more should India do?

#### Domestic level

– At the domestic level, this Amendment will have to be enforced through proper outreach measures to industry and other stakeholders to make them realise their obligations under the new provisions.

#### International level

– It is also necessary that India keeps WMD security in international focus. Even countries which do not have WMD technology have to be sensitised to their role in the control framework to prevent weak links in the global control system. **India can offer help to other countries** on developing national legislation, institutions and regulatory framework through the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) or on bilateral basis.

### What is the international significance of this legislation? What is in it for India?

#### Significance:

##### Global

- Preventing acts of terrorism that involve WMD or their delivery systems requires building a **network of national and international measures** in which all nation states are equally invested.
- Such actions **strengthen global enforcement of standards** relating to the export of sensitive items and preventing terrorist and black-market networks from gaining access to them.
- Sharing of best practices on legislations and their implementation can **enable harmonisation** of global WMD controls.

##### India

It is in India's interest to facilitate the highest controls at the international level and adopt them at the domestic level.

Having now updated its own legislation, India can demand the same of others, especially from those in its neighbourhood that have a history of proliferation and of supporting terrorist organisations.



### **CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (IDENTIFICATION) BILL**

#### **45. Rethink the Bill**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Rethink the bill” published in the **Business Standard** on **10th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022 was passed by Parliament. The act has replaced the Identification of Prisoners Act 1920.

#### **How is the passed bill an intrusive and dangerous piece of legislation?**

It will lead to forcible collection of personal data, including biometric and genetic data. Therefore, it may violate the right to privacy (Article 19).

It violates Article 20 which envisages the right to silence and avoid self-incrimination

The act enables **forcible** and **intrusive measures** such as scans of the iris and retina. Therefore, it violates the “**bodily integrity and dignity**” envisaged in **Article 21**.

It may lead to violation of the basic structure of the Constitution laid down in **Kesavananda Bharati vs Union of India**.

The term “measurement” in the passed bill has been vaguely defined.

It allows any police officer of the rank of head constable and above to take the measurements. They have discretionary power to collect data. Further, In case of refusals to allow collection of data, it could amount to interference in the execution of duty by a public official.

It is applicable to **criminal undertrials** including those accused of minor offences, and the **preventive detention** (often applied to political detainees and civil rights activists).

The definition of purpose for which collected data will be used has been vaguely defined in the bill i.e., the purpose is for “**investigation and prosecution of crime**”. It violates the concept of “**purpose limitation**”. Therefore, it is prone to misuse.

The draft was not published for **public comments** and **feedback**. It was not reviewed by a **Standing Parliamentary Committee**. The Bill was passed without **consultation**.

There are **no safeguards** to limit the scope of this Act. Reasons include: (1) **The personal data protection law** and (2) **The DNA Technology Regulation Bill** (To govern the collection, use and storage of DNA) has not been enacted in India so far.

#### **Ways Forward**

The amendment should be made to limit use of **personal data** only for a defined, and specific purpose.

The **President** can return it to reflect associated issues with the govt or the act can be challenged in the Supreme Court.

## **TB CONTROL AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **46. The food vaccine as right, more so for TB patients**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**The food vaccine as right, more so for TB patients**”, published in **The Hindu** on **16th April 2022**.

**Context:** The nutrition of the individual is the most vital factor, in the prevention of tuberculosis, along with drugs. It is most unlikely that drugs alone can control TB with low nutritional status in a person.

#### **What are the learnings from History?**

There were no drugs for TB till the discovery of streptomycin in 1943. With improved wages and the higher purchasing power for food, the TB mortality rate came down from 300 people per 1,00,000 population to 60 in England and Wales.

**TB disappeared from socio-economically developed countries** long before the advent of chemotherapy. After the Second World War, in 1946 G.B. Leyton reported a 92% reduction in the incidence of TB among British soldiers. They were fed an additional Red Cross diet of 1,000 calories plus 30 grams of protein when compared to Russian soldiers who were fed only a camp diet.

#### **What is the current approach for tackling T.B?**

The modern therapist tried to **control TB initially with streptomycin injection, isoniazid, and para-aminosalicylic acid**. In the ecstasy of finding antibiotics killing the germs, the social determinants of disease were ignored.

With the use of more drugs, TB bacteria become multidrug-resistant.

There was little done to try to understand where patients lived, what work they did for a living, how much they could afford to buy food, and how much they ate.

#### **Why should we focus on improving the nutritional intake of individuals?**

The fact is that 90% of Indians exposed to TB remain dormant if their nutritional status, and thereby the immune system, is good.

When the infected person is immunocompromised, TB as a disease manifests itself in 10% of the infected.

Various studies have shown a positive relationship between nutrition intake and TB reduction.

#### **For instance,**

1.) The findings of a team at the Jan Swasthya Sahayog (JSS) hospital at Ganiyari, Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh established the association of poor nutritional status with a higher risk of TB. In

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the period 2004-09, among the 1,695 pulmonary TB patients they treated, men had an average body weight of 42.1 kg and a body mass index (BMI) of 16.

2.) The 2019 Global TB report identified malnutrition as the single-most associated risk factor for the development of TB, accounting for more cases than four other risks, i.e., smoking, the harmful use of alcohol, diabetes, and HIV.

3.) Many experts like Dr. Anurag Bhargava (professor of medicine) have deduced that “undernutrition and TB” are “syndemics”. Therefore, the intake of adequate balanced food, especially by the poor, can work as a vaccine to prevent TB.

**Note:** A syndemic is a situation in which two or more interrelated biological factors work together to make a disease or health crisis worse.

### **What are some steps taken to improve nutritional status?**

The central TB division of the Ministry of Health came up with a **“Guidance Document – Nutritional Care and Support for Patients with Tuberculosis in India”** in 2016.

A number of organizations began **providing eggs, milk powder, dhal, Bengal gram, groundnuts, and cooking oil to diagnosed patients along with anti-TB drugs.**

From April 2018, under the **Nikshay Poshan Yojana** of the National Health Mission, all States began extending cash support of Rs. 500 per month to TB patients to buy food.

### **Conclusion**

The food vaccine is a guaranteed right for life under the Constitution for all citizens, more so for TB patients. Thus, the goals of reducing the incidence of TB in India and of reducing TB mortality cannot be reached without addressing undernutrition.

## **NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs)**

### **47. The key phrase is ‘focus on the foetus, for the future’**

**Source:** The post is based on the following article, **“The Key phrase is ‘focus on the foetus. For the future’** published in **The Hindu** on **14th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to health

**Relevance:** Non-Communicable Diseases

**Context:** In 2019, the government declared March 10, as **“National Gestational Diabetes Mellitus Awareness Day”**. It was declared on the birthday of **Prof. Seshiah** who was conferred the Padma Shri in the field of medicine (as a part of the Republic Day honours this year).

Further, the novel coronavirus pandemic has shifted focus on a silent ‘pandemic’ called as the **Non-Communicable Disease (NCDs)** which spans across the world over the last few decades.

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In general, the NCDs include **diabetes** and related conditions such as obesity, **hypertension** and **heart disease**. Women can have **pre-existing diabetes** (or 'pre-gestational diabetes') and **Pregnancy-related diabetes** (or 'gestational diabetes'). Both of these diseases can be categorized as '**Hyperglycemia-in-Pregnancy (HIP)**'.

### How can diabetes become a pandemic in coming years?

In the year 2021, As per estimates of the **International Diabetes Federation (IDF)**, 537 million people were infected with diabetes. However, there are chances that the tally may reach 783 million people by 2045.

### What are the reasons for increasing NCDs, especially Diabetes?

These include an aging population, urbanisation, genetic predisposition, nutrition and lifestyle transition.

In the 1980s, Prof. David Barker hypothesised that most of the **adult disease** can be traced to the **foetus stage**. Any adverse stimulus (say, an increased blood sugar level in mother) inside the **woman's womb**, may permanently affects the **structure**, the **functioning** and the **metabolism** of the developing human body. It happens at the cellular and tissue levels. The borne children develop diabetes or pre-diabetes at this stage. He is also prone to other related NCDs such as hypertension and heart disease.

In fact, the diabetes/HIP disease may even extend to next generations through **unfavourable genetic** and **epigenetic effects** from parent to the offspring. A baby girl is also prone to develop pregnancy-related diabetes.

### Ways Forward

The health of offspring and of further generations depends upon the metabolic health of the pregnant woman.

The 'Diabetes-in-Pregnancy-Study Group of India' (DIPSI) recommended 'all pregnant women' should be subjected to **testing for diabetes in the 'early weeks of pregnancy'**.

The diabetes and other NCDs can be checked well before conception. For example, A woman having pre-existing diabetes should maintain blood sugar level and a healthy weight.

Targeting pregnancy-related diabetes can help in breaking the vicious cycle of **transgenerational transmission**. It can significantly bring down the expanding burden of diabetes and other NCDs.

## UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE AND RELATED ISSUES

### 48. HOPS as a route to universal health care

**Source:** This post is created based on the article "**HOPS as a route to universal health care**" published on **13th April 2022** in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Services relating to Health.

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**Context:** The basic idea of **Universal Health Care (UHC)** is that **no one should be deprived of quality healthcare for the lack of ability to pay**. In the **Bhore Committee report of 1946**, a case was made for India to create its own National Health Service (NHS) type health care system.

### How UHC can be achieved?

It relies on one or both of two basic approaches: **public service and social insurance**.

**In the first approach**, health care is provided as a free public service. The second approach allows private as well as public provision of health care, but costs are mostly borne by social insurance fund(s), not the patient.

**The social insurance model** allows private as well as public provision of health care. However, the costs are mostly borne by the social insurance fund(s), not the patient. Insurance is compulsory and universal, financed mainly from taxation, and run by a single non-profit agency in the public interest. For ex – Canada, Australia, and Taiwan. Other countries have multiple players, for example – Germany.

### What are the challenges?

**In the social insurance system**, public service plays an essential role. There is a need for public healthcare centers to prevent wasteful expenditure.

Another challenge is **regulating private health-care providers**. As they have a conflict between the profit motive and the well-being of the patient.

In this case, the National Health Service model, it needs to have not only good management and adequate resources but also sound work culture and professional ethics. India's public health services do not have a good record on this part.

### What can be the possible route to UHC for India today?

It can be called "**healthcare as an optional public service**" (**HOPS**). The idea is that everyone would have a **legal right** to receive free, quality health care in a public institution if they wish. The public sector would guarantee decent health service to everyone as a matter of right, free of cost.

**For example** – In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, most illnesses can be satisfactorily treated in the public sector.

**HOPS is not as egalitarian as the NHS or insurance model**. But it would be a big step toward UHC. Social insurance can also play a limited role in covering procedures that are not easily available in the public sector.

The main difficulty in HOPS is to specify the scope of the proposed healthcare guarantee, including quality standards.

### Way forward

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A Right to Health Bill would be an invaluable affirmation of the State's commitment to quality health care for all. Tamil Nadu is well placed to make HOPS a reality under its proposed Right to Health Bill.

### **CARE ECONOMY AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **49. Getting serious about supporting the care economy**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Getting serious about supporting the care economy**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the World has celebrated March 8 as International Women's Day. This year, to commemorate International Women's Day, the ILO brought out its new report titled, “**Care at work: investing in care leave and services for a more gender-equal world of work**”.

#### **What is Care economy?**

It includes care work, which encompasses **direct activities** such as feeding a baby or nursing an ill partner, and **indirect activities** such as cooking and cleaning work. The care work may be **paid** (such as domestic workers and anganwadis in India) or **unpaid** in nature.

#### **Importance of focusing on care services**

It is worth mentioning that care work is vital for human well-being and economies across the world.

The care services have the potential to create an **additional 300 million jobs** globally. Most of these jobs will be for women. The focus on care services can ensure **female labour force participation**.

The importance of care work is now widely acknowledged. It has been covered in various international commitments such as the **SDGs** and the **International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Centenary Declaration**.

#### **What are the issues in care work?**

**Unpaid care work:** It is linked to labour market inequalities. It has not received adequate attention in policy formulation.

**Paid care workers:** These also struggle to access rights and entitlements as workers.

At present, the care economy has grown a lot. But the investment in the sector has not taken the same pace.

Maternity leave is a universal human and labour right. It remains unfulfilled across countries.

#### **What are achievements and issues in the story of the care economy in India?**

##### **Good measures taken so far in India**

India offers 26 weeks of maternity leave. It is more than against the ILO's standard mandate of 14 weeks.

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Indian laws mandates the factories and other establishments to provide the crèche facility.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act and the minimum wage legislations have been made applicable to domestic workers in India.

### Issues

The **maternity leave** in India is restricted to a **tiny proportion of women workers**. It is limited to formally employed women. However, **89%** of employed women are in **informal employment**.

The **paternity leave** is not provided in many countries, including India. It further exacerbates gender inequity.

In India, access to quality and affordable childcare, elderly care and care for people with disabilities services is a challenge.

Care workers like childcare and anganwadi workers have not been recognised as **professional work** in India. Therefore, they do not have requisite access to workers' rights and entitlements

The domestic workers do not have access to **decent work**. They do not have **social or health protection measures**. The fact that 26 lakhs of the 39 lakh domestic workers in India are female worsens the situation

India spends less than 1% of its GDP on the care economy;

### Way Forward

There government need to increased percentage of spending on care economy in India.

The government need to develop a **strategy and action plan** for improved care policies and decent working conditions for care workers. It should frame them while **consulting** employers', workers' organisations and the relevant **stakeholders** in the sector.

The decision makers can adopt a **5R framework** proposed by the ILO. It refers to **Recognition, Reduction, and Redistribution** of unpaid care work, promotes **Rewarding** care workers with more and decent work, and enables their **Representation** in social dialogue and collective bargaining.

The domestic workers should have **rights** and access to fair wages, and good working conditions. They should have access to social protection, among other benefits.

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** should take a lead to set **labour standards, develop policies** and **devise programmes** to promote decent work for all women and men. It is the only **tripartite UN agency** that brings together governments, employers, and workers of 187 member States.

The **paternity leave** should be recognised. It acts as an enabler for both mothers and fathers to better **balance work** and **family responsibilities** throughout their lives.

The right steps to improve the care economy can lead to **child development, aging in dignity** and **independent living** and also generate more and better employment opportunities, especially for women.

## **RESERVATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **50. When lack of data gets in the way of affirmative action**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Information inadequacies should not hamper reservation push” published in the **Live Mint** on **13th April 2022**.

**Relevance:** Reservation/Affirmative Action

**News:** Recently, in two separate judgements, the **Supreme Court (SC) of India** has struck down the reservations that were awarded by the Maharashtra government and Tamil Nadu government.

Both judgments identified the same problem – a lack of **evidence-driven policymaking by the state govt** for reservations.

#### **What observations have been made by the Supreme Court in these two cases?**

**Maharashtra Case:** A separate 27% reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBC) in local body elections was struck down.

– It was not based on **empirical data** and **research**.

– In addition, it failed to meet the mandatory **triple test** laid down by the court. There was inadequate

**In Tamil Nadu Case:** The internal reservations of 10.5% for the **Vanniyar community** was struck down. There was absence of quantifiable data or basis for providing a quota specifically for a single OBC community.

#### **What are the reservations related issues in India?**

(1) There are state level differences across the parameters

– **Eligible population: (a)** About 55% of Maharashtra’s population is eligible for reservations. Out of total population, OBCs constitute about 33.8%, and **(b)** In Tamil Nadu, 97.2% of population is eligible and 76% of the population is classified as OBC.

– **Reserved seats:** In Maharashtra, the total number of seats reserved for OBC/SC/ST candidates is capped at 50% (**Indra Sawhney case**). However, in Tamil Nadu, 69% of seats are reserved. In fact, half the seats in Tamil Nadu are reserved solely for OBC candidates.

(2) There is a lack of **reliable caste-level data**. It makes space for an imbalance between caste groups in access to opportunities. It hampers improvements of the affirmative programme.

(3) There is a prevalence of a huge imbalance in the distribution of the benefits. For example, as per the **Rohini Commission report**, over 1,000 OBC caste groups have not received any benefit whatsoever from **India’s reservation programme**

#### **Way Forward**



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We must collect the **right caste related data**. It should include measurements of the impact of reservations at the **caste and community level**, and not merely at a group level (i.e., OBC/SC/ST). It will help in understanding **socioeconomic** and **political backwardness** and the benefits that have accrued from reservations to a particular community.

Many state governments are running a digitization programme for caste certificates. This data can be linked with Aadhaar. It can help track reservation benefits across all castes.

There is a need to estimate the population levels of each caste group. Also, review the proportion of students attending government schools and proportion of the government employees from each caste group etc

### 51. Why central services cannot be exempted from reservation for disabled

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Why central services cannot be exempted from reservation for disabled**” published in **the Indian Express** on **11th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, **the Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (Department)** issued a notification.

It **exempts** all categories of posts in the IPS, the Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli Police Service, the Indian Railway Protection Force Service, and the posts of combatant nature in the paramilitary force from the mandated **4% reservation for persons with disabilities** (PWDs).

#### Is the government competent to exempt the person with disabilities from particular posts?

The **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 [RPwD Act]** empowers the central government of India to exempt people with disabilities from seeking reservation for certain posts.

#### What are the issues in the new rules?

First, the classification between **combat** and **non-combat posts** implies that the PwD are capable of occupying only non-combat posts in the central forces. In fact, no justification for such a classification has been issued so far.

Second, The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has identified a range of ministerial/civilian posts which are suitable for reservation for the disabled. The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** released **Draft Accessibility standards** which states that the police staff on civil duty could be persons with disabilities. Therefore, the proposed exemption goes against the government's own position.

Third, the proposed exemption appears to be a **colourable exercise of power**. This is because the **Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities** has to be consulted before grant of any exemption as per the RPwD Act,

Fourth, the office of the chief commissioner has been lying vacant for many years

#### Ways Forward

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Currently, SC in the **National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled v. Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities and Ors. Case**) has the opportunity to address some of the important issues related to PWDs.

Every disabled person is different. The Court should recognise that the disabled have the right to exist and work in the world just like their able-bodied counterparts.

The SC judgment can ensure non-discrimination guarantee contained in the RPWD Act.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

### **INDIA-US RELATIONS**

#### **52. India-US ties: The scope for literal common space**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “India-US ties: The scope for literal common space” published in Live Mint on 12th April 2022.

**News:** India’s 2+2 dialogue on strategic cooperation with the US has resumed.

After India’s abstentions from 11 votes on the issue of Ukraine at the United Nations, and the shift of the US’s emphasis from QUAD to AUKUS, the present dialogue is very important. It will clear all the doubts related to India-US relations.

#### **How India-US should forward their relations in the space sector?**

India has been a responsible power in the space sector. Under its mission shakti program, DRDO successfully neutralized a satellite in space with its anti-satellite (ASAT) missile on 27 March 2019. It left very little orbital debris, which was also confirmed by NASA’s data.

**First,** India and US can discuss a treaty on space militarization.

**Second,** After the Ukraine crisis, US-Russia tensions flared up, and Moscow’s agency Roscosmos threatened to snap space relations with NASA. It has made it difficult for the US to access the International Space Station (ISS). India and US, in the long term, can explore some opportunities in this field.

#### **53. Recalibrating the India-US relationship**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Recalibrating the India-US relationship**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th Apr 22**.

**Context:** The Russia-Ukraine conflict caught India unprepared, like in the case of Chinese incursions in Eastern Ladakh two years ago. It has also put it into an uncomfortable defensive posture.

#### **Has India’s position changed on Russia-Ukraine conflict?**

India’s position on the war has shifted considerably in the past couple of months as Russia’s actions and its unjustified war became more and more tough to defend in the civilised world.

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Its latest abstention in the UN, was essentially a vote against Russia.

India's deep unhappiness and opposition to the Russian action was conveyed in clear language to Sergey Lavrov last week.

### How will India-US relationship will be affected?

Despite US President describing India as being “somewhat shaky”, at its core Indian and US interests remain as aligned as before.

For all of India's Russia “support”, there is a growing realisation that Russia has driven itself into becoming China's junior partner for the foreseeable future. China won't dump Russia because they share the same adversary, the US.

### What is the way forward?

Nevertheless, it should be a matter of considerable concern that India pays the highest price when the US shoots down its enemies (Iran, Russia sanctions), or scoots from them (Afghanistan). Not only in economic and GDP terms, but in strategic areas as well. Somebody in the establishment needs to do a **serious risk assessment of India's international exposure**, mapping out crises coming down the road.

India and the US need to dig deep into possibly the most important relationship –

– A good start would be to **give India entry into the AUKUS technology partnership**.

India and US should both understand that China is the real challenge.

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

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

### 54. Why the regulation of sanctions matters?

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Why the regulation of sanctions matters?**” published in **the Hindu** on **11th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the western countries have mulled to increase the height of their **economic sanctions** on Russia. This has been because a series of **suspected war crimes** in the Ukrainian town of Bucha has been discovered.

There are apprehensions that Russia may undertake new offensive measures in coming period. In this regard, the **sanction regime** has come into limelight.

### What are the impacts of the sanctions?

A sanction can be defined as “**a measure of coercion of an economic nature** as opposed to diplomatic or military coercion”. Such measures may include **complete or partial embargoes** like trade, travel, financial transactions, freezing financial assets etc.

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These measures can have a huge impact on **human rights** and **populations** of the target country. In addition, the sanctions also lead to serious **medium-term impact** on the very countries which issued because of the **globalised economy**.

### Who can impose sanctions?

The sanction can be **individual sanction** (For example, the US sanctions) or **collective sanction** (For example, by the UN or the European Union).

**(A) The UNSC Collective sanctions** can be taken while adhering to a **strict procedure mentioned below**:

(1) First the “**existence of any threat to peace, breach of the peace, and an act of aggression**” needs to be determined” (**Article 39**).

(2) Second, **complete** or **partial interruption of economic relations** can be undertaken under sanctions. They can be related to rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication. It may include the severance of diplomatic relations. However, the “**use of armed force**” is not allowed under these measures (**Article 41**)

Since 1966, the UNSC has adopted **30 regimes of sanctions**. At present, 14 are operational. They are administered by a sanctions committee chaired by a **non-permanent member** of the UNSC. In addition, the EU has imposed 30 sanctions regimes so far.

**(B) The individual sanctions:** The International trade agreements such as GATT, GATS, and TRIPS along with a number of bilateral investment treaties allow economic sanctions for security reasons.

### What are the issues with the individual sanctions?

Hence, unilateral individual sanctions have no legal basis in a treaty. They go out of the **jurisdiction** as they are clearly **extraterritorial** in nature.

These unilateral sanctions are called “**countermeasures**” in the language of **the International Law Commission**.

The sanctions affect **private actors** and also lead to significant **economic harm** and **disruption** in supply chains.

The individual sanctions are narrower in scope. They cannot be imposed in cases other than security concern. In WTO disputes ‘**Russia – Measures Concerning Traffic in Transit**’ (**DS 512**) and ‘**Saudi Arabia – Protection of IPRs**’ (**DS567**), it was declared that these measures are partially justiciable.

In fact, these sanctions have been declared ambiguous and illegal by the **international tribunal (here ICJ)**. For example, The US sanctions in **the Nicaragua case**, and the U.K. sanctions in **the Bank Mellat case** as it incurred a lot of damage to an Iranian bank.

### Ways Forward

There is a need to regulate and monitor the use of this **political tool** for **economic warfare**.

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The UN has appointed a **Special Rapporteur** on the negative impact of the **unilateral coercive measures** on the enjoyment of human rights.

The individual sanctions must at least a case be properly notified and basic legal due process should be followed.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – ISSUES RELATED TO DEV OF EDUCATION

### **HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **55. Take two: The pursuit of two courses simultaneously in physical mode is problematic**

**Source:** The post is based on the following article, “**Take two: The pursuit of two courses simultaneously in physical mode is problematic**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued guidelines to allow students to pursue two academic programmes simultaneously at higher education institutes (HEIs) recognised by it or statutory councils or the Government of India.

#### About the Dual Degree Programme

The notified guidelines will enable students to simultaneously pursue two academic programmes at multiple levels except for PhD courses.

The UGC has proposed a three-way choice involving a combination of offline only; offline with distance mode; and distance/online only modes for dual programmes.

The guidelines also call for critical evaluation given the nature of competition, accessibility and academic-cum-physical infrastructure issues in colleges and universities.

**Read more:** [UGC issues norms for students to do two programmes at once](#)

#### What are the advantages of the Dual Degree Programme?

**Recognition of HEIs:** According to the guidelines, the Open/distance learning and online mode courses should be pursued only in higher education institutions recognised by statutory bodies. This would also eliminate dubious players in the online education segment.

**Liberty to students:** The guidelines offer students the liberty to enhance their skills and scope of employability through an additional degree.

#### What are the challenges associated with the Dual Degree Programme?

**Reduce the number of seats:** According to the All India Survey on Higher Education Report, 2019-20 the national average college density is 30 per lakh population (in the 18-23 age group). This is considered as a country with low college density.

Pursuing two full-time programmes in physical mode might prompt students, who are academically proficient or with the economic wherewithal, to corner seats in two in-demand courses.

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Apart from that, pursuing dual courses may create logistic, administrative and academic problems.

What should be done to improve Dual Degree Programme?

The **UGC's Furqan Qamar Committee** a decade ago recommended dual programmes with a second degree in open/distance mode. Hence, the UGC may reconsider its guidelines for the physical mode option and also **strengthen and streamline the open/distance learning courses** in parallel.

**Eliminate common curriculum:** UGC's 2004 document for initiation of double/multiple degree programmes in engineering disciplines had proposed a "gap" before an engineering degree holder could enrol for an additional or add-on degree course. This will reduce the duration of the add-on degree by eliminating about 33% to 38% (52 to 60-course credits) of the "common curriculum" of the BE/B.Tech course (a total of 160 credits).

This could be applied to allied courses in arts and science and reduce the duration of the second degree for students.

### ISSUE OF MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

#### 56. India is a nation without a national language. Let's embrace this

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

– **"India is a nation without a national language. Let's embrace this"** published in the **Indian Express** on **14th Apr 22**

– **"The real script behind the call for a Hindi-India"** published in **The Hindu** on **14th Apr 22**

– **"Communication breakdown"** published in the **Business Standard** on **14th April 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

**Relevance:** Hindi language as the official and national language of India

**News:** Recently, the Home Minister of India specifically mentioned the use of Hindi language in the North-eastern states. He has announced to make Hindi compulsory in all North-eastern states.

**Must Read:** [What are various provisions related to the official language in the Indian Constitution?](#)

#### **Argument for and against promoting Hindi language in India**

– Idea of nationalism cannot be imagined without an indigenous national language of the country.

#### **Argument Against**

– In India, language is **business-as-usual** and is the symbol of **competing interests** of **federal and centrist powers**.

– In fact, the **constituent assembly debates** on language were very long and extremely charged. It implies that deep sentiments are attached to language in India.

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Indians manage to **communicate** across linguistic divides. In fact, Both **English** and **Hindi** work as vehicular languages, sometimes one and sometimes the other. Therefore, there is no need to make Hindi lingua franca of India.

The language is not simply about communication in India. It has the **potential** of being used as a **weapon** if one language is imposed upon others. For example, the **1st public immolation in independent India** was on the issue of language.

India has **a unique history** of being a nation without a national language. India has a different model.

A language **evolves slowly**. The government cannot force it to grow. For example, Hindi language is the youngest language among the languages included in the 8th Schedule. However, other scheduled languages have a long history. They have abundance of historical literature than Hindi literature.

**English** is the **global lingua franca**. Furthermore, **Mandarin** is the **world's 2nd most spoken** language. It is the language of China which is the rising superpower. And, Hindi ranks third among the languages.

India's economic growth has been driven by booming IT and IT-enabled services business in India. These services were driven by **India's English-knowing population**.

As per 2011 Census, around **69 crore** Indians remain **non-Hindi speakers**. Thus, Hindi language does not form a majority language of India.

### What are the issues in the growth story of Hindi language?

India's Census data is not **realistic**. The data is collected for the combined **Hindi language group** instead of Hindi language alone. For example, it includes Bhojpuri, and other languages of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand.

In fact, the strength of Hindi speakers would have gone down, if the Census had not included the other languages under **the Hindi group**.

**The Hindi/Hindu majoritarianism** is leading to present language policy changes which aimed at making Hindi compulsory.

**International investors** prefer the English language. For example, **Vietnam** is a more attractive destination than India. **50%** of the **Vietnamese population** can speak English. In India, this share is 10% only.

Lack of focus on English can lead to loss of economic opportunity for the young Indians in the **emerging knowledge economy**. For example, West Bengal witnessed this when English was dropped in the 1990s.

The big power of the world acquired their **global dominance** without any meaningful knowledge of English. For example, less than 10% of the Chinese population speak English.

### Way Forward

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The rest of the world needs to learn from the unique model of India. India should not imitate the **one-language-one-nation model**.

The **Parliamentary Committee for the promotion of Hindi** should consider the declining trend of other Indian languages. It should make the Census data for Hindi more realistic than unrealistic one. It should understand the realism linked to **India's multilingualism**, the **federal structure of India** and the **issue of language sensitivity** across the states.

The **cinema** and **related industry** can promote languages. For example, the Hindi language and Bhojpuri has seen high visibility in cinema, literature, newspapers, songs, theatre and publication industry

**English** should be made **compulsory** as a **first language** in state schools. Further, the students should be allowed to choose a **second language** from a list of Indian and foreign languages (**Mandarin** should be one).

### NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY AND RELATED ISSUES

#### 57. A model struggling to deliver

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**A model struggling to deliver**” published on **13/April/2022** in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Services relating to Education

**Context:** **National Education Policy, 2020**, envisions universalizing Early Childhood Care and Education through Anganwadis. However, the events linked to COVID-19 led to an abrupt halt in the progress.

#### **What are Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)?**

AWCs fall under the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme**. Preschool is one of the six services provided in this package. AWCs are expected to provide education through low-cost, locally sourced material that caters to the sociocultural context of mothers and children below six years.

#### **Have these been effective?**

Evidence on AWCs and private pre-schools indicate that neither model provides appropriate inputs for the holistic development of young children. An all-India survey of young children by **ASER in 2019 found that not even half of the enrolled children between the ages of four and eight could perform age-appropriate cognitive tasks**.

The cause of the learning crisis in Anganwadis lies in the fact that they are **under-resourced and overburdened**. A report on the ICDS by the Ministry of Women and Child Development identifies the **absence of adequate space, lack of play-based learning materials, low investments, constraints of human resource, and uneven implementation of schemes** across states.



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The pandemic has further exacerbated this. In Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Odisha, Aganwadi workers visited homes to conduct activities with children, but these were not uniform and also placed a huge burden on workers.

### How to improve the model?

The potential of Aganwadi is enormous. It is crucial to leverage their vast reach by filling implementation and infrastructural gaps. Such as, **increasing the honorarium of Aganwadi workers, build capacity, investing in research and development** of a meaningful ECE curriculum.

## CHILD EDUCATION

### 58. State of adolescent learning

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**State of adolescent learning**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th Apr 22**.

**Context:** Over the last few decades in India, there has been a massive government drive to push for universal enrolment, extending to secondary as well as primary school children.

Successive Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER) have shown that this drive has been largely successful for both age groups, with high enrolment rates even during the pandemic. But enrolment is only one piece of the puzzle.

### What are the challenges faced by children wrt their education during the pandemic?

Learning at home through online education during the pandemic has been far from successful for the children. As per ASER 2020 and 2021,

#### Access to technology-based resources:

- **Children:** Even though over 70% of children in Classes IX to XII had a smartphone at home, only about 35% of them could use it for studies at all times, while 17% could not use it at all. In the absence of formal schooling, family members often assumed the task of teaching.
- **Adolescents:** The ASER reports show adolescents did not fare well — older children received less learning support as compared to younger ones.

#### Additional task burden:

Additionally, some children — especially older girls — faced competing demands due to **financial stress** and **increased requirement of care work** at home.

- **Gender divide in housework:** Even in 2017, ASER had reported that almost 90% of female youth aged 14-18 did housework on a daily basis, compared to three-fourth of male youth.
- **Pandemic worsened unpaid care work burden:** According to the Building Back Better report by UNICEF, school closures worsened girls’ and women’s unpaid care work, limiting the time available to learn at home. During COVID-19, girls might have had to replace the work done by the missing caregiver, or simply because of gendered expectations.

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In all age categories, girls were more likely than boys to be taking on this additional burden.

### How gender disparity impacts learning outcomes?

The kind of work children did during lockdowns shows that they are exposed to gendered expectations from a young age. A study using ASER, India Human Development Survey and National Family Health Survey data suggests that long before the pandemic, gender disparity had started impacting learning outcomes too. As per the study,

– **Female disadvantage persists in mathematics learning outcomes** over the last decade, and shows no signs of disappearing. The study correlates this finding with “**regressive household practices**” that limit the autonomy of women (such as veiling of the face by women, and the practice of women eating after men). It further finds that female disadvantage in mathematics learning is higher where there is higher prevalence of such practices.

### What is the way forward?

All of the above findings show that there’s an eminent need to **integrate gender sensitisation modules into curricula** for adolescents’ education.

**School-based gender sensitisation programmes** can play a transformative role in ensuring that all children get an equitable environment to grow.

– For example, an attitude change programme in Haryana run by Breakthrough and evaluated by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) showed promising results, with participants exhibiting **gender-equitable behaviours** even two years after the programme ended. It was centred around **interactive classroom discussions about gender equality** in secondary schools.

Scaling up such programmes for all schools and States could help bring about more gender-progressive views among communities.

## ISSUE OF MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

### 59. Being multilingual: Democratic pressure has made political parties introduce English in schools

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Being multilingual: Democratic pressure has made political parties introduce English in schools**” published in **The Times of India** on **10th Apr 22**.

**Context:** Political debates about language convey a different picture while if we approach the subject from the other end, that of voters communicating their preferences, and the picture is quite different.

### What is the situation wrt preference of medium of instruction in schools in India?

The demand from parents has led to a **sharp rise in the proportion of English medium schools** in India. More than a quarter of schoolchildren are now enrolled in English medium, making it the largest after Hindi medium.

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- The Chennai Corporation has now extended **spoken English classes in schools** run by it from just a handful to the entire list.
- Karnataka plans to introduce **spoken English sessions** in primary classes in its proposed model government school.

Political system and state governments are now experimenting with **bilingual textbooks** in government-run schools.

- Telangana, Maharashtra and Karnataka are among states where textbooks have content printed in both regional language and English to get children acquainted with key terms in both languages.

### Why English needs to be promoted in schools in India?

Historical circumstances have given India a national advantage by equipping a sizeable number of people with a knowledge of English, among other languages. It's translated into **big economic gains**, and it's something China is trying to replicate in its education system.

English is the **most important lingua franca** of the world right now.

### What is the way forward?

The issue should not be framed as one language or another. The pragmatic choice is the learning of more than one language.

It's a sensible choice, as **being multilingual confers many advantages**, and the country has moved in that direction.

The task ahead is to find more effective ways of helping children learn more languages.

## GS2 – POLITY – ELECTORAL REFORMS

### ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME

#### 60. **Court must settle challenge to the electoral bonds scheme quickly. The sanctity of elections is at stake**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Court must settle challenge to the electoral bonds scheme quickly. The sanctity of elections is at stake**” published in **The Indian Express** on **11th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** **GS2** – Issues arising out of design and implementation of policies

**Relevance:** Electoral reforms

**News:** Chief Justice of India N V Ramana has assured petitioners that the Supreme Court will take up for hearing a pending plea challenging the Electoral Bond Scheme, 2018. No date or any timeline has been specified, though.

Two NGOs — Common Cause and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) — have challenged the scheme, alleging that it is “distorting democracy”.

### What was the situation prior to the introduction of electoral bonds in India?

The electoral bonds scheme was first mentioned in 2017 when then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presented it as a way to reform electoral funding in the country.

Until then, most political parties used to **bypass scrutiny of their finances** by claiming that they received most of their donations in cash.

Further, since cash amounts less than Rs 20,000 were exempted from scrutiny, parties routinely claimed that most of the donations they received were in cash and in amounts less than Rs 20,000. This led to channelisation of black money into political parties.

To read in detail about Electoral bonds – [Click here](#)

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – CIVIL SERVICES

### INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE AND RELATED ISSUES

#### 61. The Indian Entitled Service

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The Indian Entitled Service**” published in the **Business Standard** on **22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Role of Civil Services in Democracy

**Relevance:** Indian Administrative Services, Group A Services

**News:** Recently, a Standing Committee of the Rajya Sabha in its 112th report has recommended to the Union government to recruit more Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officers.

#### What are the issues with the IAS?

There is a **huge shortage** of more than 1,500 IAS officers in the country. For example, the **gap** between **the sanctioned strength** and **in-position strength** is around 104 in UP cadre, 94 in Bihar cadre and 87 in AGMUT cadre.

The shortage compels the states to appoint **non-cadre officers** to cadre posts. Further, they are given additional charges and remain appointed beyond the permissible time limit.

The inadequate number of IAS offices would compromise the efficiency of administration.

The appointment of non-IAS officers to cadre posts is in violation of IAS cadre rules of 1954.

#### What are the challenges in bringing reform?

Many IAS officers want to reform everything except their own service. Therefore, bringing the administrative services reform becomes the hardest.

Those politicians who try reform lose the next election. For example, first time Shanta Kumar tried to bring Himachal state government employees to heel but he lost elections. Same happened with Jayalalithaa in Tamil Nadu and Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh.

There are certain posts which are reserved for the IAS not by law but by tradition. For example, District Collector, Commissioner, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, etc.

There are issues with the “**non-functional upgradation (NFU)**”. It came into being in January 2006 after the recommendations of the 6th Central Pay Commission. It was done to offset the financial loss to officers for lack of promotional avenues. It secures the pay and pension of all the Group-A civil officers even if some of them are incompetent. No other country has this.

### Way Forward

The Committee recommended DoPT to increase the annual intake of IAS officers.

There is a need to redesign the concept of NF. Even if the concept is needed, it needs to be rethought.

### GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – RESERVATION IN INDIA

#### 62. The Missing I In India

**Source:** The post is based on an article “The Missing I In India” published in the Times of India on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Provisions of the Constitution of India, Indian Politics

**Relevance:** Reservation in India

Everyone grows up with **individual traits** such as gender and intelligence. However, they also have **collective identities** i.e., a Hindu, a Muslim, a Dalit, a Bengali or a Malayali, and so on.

#### Positive side of focus on group identity

It has empowered the socially underprivileged groups. They have the power of the group’s vote. Therefore, they have accrued **bargaining power** for their share of the collective pie. Consequentially, inequality has fallen.

#### What are the problems with group identity?

Group identity politics can perpetuate inequality between groups or disadvantage **within-groups**. In addition, it does not improve the individual circumstances.

In fact, the most disadvantaged members of the group still get the least benefit from group privileges. For example, in the **underprivileged groups**, men have received greater **social** and **economic mobility** than women in reservations policy.

The group identity makes it difficult for the members to raise a **united voice** on various other issues. For example, they would have different interests.

At present, the politics is organized around **traditional group identities**. Therefore, the balance between individuals and traditional groups has shifted towards group identity. It has shifted the focus from the individual circumstances to the group.

Now each group wants a larger share of the pie. Therefore, the group politics have resulted into a **zero-sum game**. For example, states are reserving jobs for the **sons of the soil**. The Jats and Patidars demand reservations today,

It has reduced the level playing field at national level. It has made it difficult to provide equal opportunity.

### Way Forward

The state should focus on upliftment of the **disadvantaged group** or disadvantaged members within a group. It will give a sense of recognition, dignity, and the sense of equality.

There is a need to distinguish between **social disadvantage** and **economic disadvantage**. And different tools should be used for each. For example, When a caste face social discrimination, the government can offer **economic supports** such as reservations. It should continue till social disadvantage is largely eliminated.

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In case of **economic disadvantage**, the state can adopt a **dual approach**. It will involve enhancing **individual capabilities** through good healthcare and education and targeting **government benefits** to the truly economically underprivileged.

The judiciary and the executive should renew its thrust towards supporting the **individuality** and **fundamental equality of persons**, especially for the underprivileged within a traditional group.

The individuals should recognise their **rights** and **duties** as the citizens of India. It will strengthen their identity as citizens. It will improve their economic capabilities and opportunities.

There is a need to **shift** the **emphasis** back from **traditional groups** to the **individual rights** and **circumstances**. Every individual should be given fair and equal treatment.

We can forge **newer group identities**, united by common **emerging challenges**. For example, women facing discriminatory treatment in job, public transport, inheritance laws etc. can create **new powerful coalitions** across religious groups.

We could reach a consensus on a **Uniform Civil Code**. It will empower individuals within each religious group.

### GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVERNANCE AND RELATED ISSUES

#### **SURVEILLANCE IN INDIA**

##### **63. Explained: What laws govern tapping a phone; what are the checks in place?**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Explained: What laws govern tapping a phone; what are the checks in place?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Governance

**Relevance:** Framework regarding tapping of phones in India and related concerns

**Context:** A Shiv Sena leader has claimed that the Centre is protecting IPS officer Rashmi Shukla, now posted with the CRPF.

She’s facing an FIR in Mumbai and is being probed for allegedly tapping the phones of Rajya Sabha MP Raut and NCP leader Eknath Khadse in 2019, when she was heading the State Intelligence Department in Maharashtra.

##### **How are phones tapped in India?**

Today, authorities make a request to the mobile service provider, which is bound by law to record the conversations on the given number and provide these in real time through a connected computer.

##### **Who can tap phones?**

**At state level:** In the states, police have the powers to tap phones.

**At the Centre,** 10 agencies are authorised to do so: Intelligence Bureau, CBI, Enforcement Directorate, Narcotics Control Bureau, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, National Investigation Agency, R&AW, Directorate of Signal Intelligence, and the Delhi Police Commissioner. Tapping by any other agency would be considered illegal.

##### **What laws govern this?**

Phone tapping in India is governed by **The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**.

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**Section 5(2)** says that “on the occurrence of any **public emergency**, or in the **interest of the public safety**”, phone tapping can be done by the Centre or states if they are satisfied it is necessary in the interest of “**public safety**”, “**sovereignty and integrity of India**, the **security of the State**, **friendly relations with foreign States** or **public order** or for **preventing incitement to the commission of an offence**”.

- **Exception:** “**Press messages** intended to be published in India of correspondents accredited to the Central Government or a State Government shall not be intercepted or detained, unless their transmission has been prohibited under this sub-section”.

The competent authority must record reasons for tapping in writing.

**Must Read:** [Who authorises phone tapping and what happens in case of emergency?](#)

What are the checks and balances?

The law is clear that **interception must be ordered only if there is no other way of getting the information**.

**Period of enforcement:** The directions for interception remain in force, unless revoked earlier, for a period **not exceeding 60 days**. They may be renewed, but not beyond a total of **180 days**.

**Review committee:** Any order issued by the competent authority **has to contain reasons**, and a copy is to be forwarded to a review committee within seven working days.

- At the Centre, the committee is headed by the Cabinet Secretary with the Law and Telecom Secretaries as members.
- In states, it is headed by the Chief Secretary with the Law and Home Secretaries as members.

The committee is expected to **meet at least once in two months** to review all interception requests.

**Destruction of records:** Under the rules, records pertaining to such directions shall be destroyed every six months unless these are, or are likely to be, required for functional requirements.

Service providers too are required to destroy records pertaining to directions for interception within two months of discontinuance of the interception.

**Is the process transparent?**

There are multiple provisions aimed at keeping the process transparent.

**Directions for interception are to specify the name and designation of the officer or the authority** to whom the intercepted call is to be disclosed. They should also specify that the use of intercepted call shall be subject to provisions of Section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act.

The directions have to be conveyed to designated officers of the service providers **in writing** by an officer not below the rank of SP or Additional SP or equivalent.

– The officer is expected to maintain records with details of the intercepted call, the person whose message has been intercepted, the authority to whom the intercepted calls have been disclosed, date of destruction of copies etc.

The designated nodal officers of the service providers are supposed to **issue acknowledgment letters** to the security/law enforcement agency within two hours on receipt of an intimation.

– They are to forward **every 15 days** a list of interception authorisations received to the nodal officers of the security and law enforcement agencies for confirmation of authenticity.

It makes the service providers responsible for actions of their employees. In case of unauthorised interception, the service provider may be fined or even lose its licence.

### **CULTURE OF FREEBIES IN INDIA**

#### **64. Freebies are a passport to fiscal disaster**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Freebies are a passport to fiscal disaster**” published in **The Indian Express** on **21st Apr 22**.

**Context:** The strength of the Centre in India lies in the strength of the states. Hence, the macroeconomic stability of the Union is contingent on the macroeconomic stability of both the Centre and states.

It is in this context that the chairperson of the 15th Finance Commission, NK Singh, discusses the political culture of freebies in India, its dangers and why aiming for a higher economic growth rate is the way forward.

He explicitly states that both the economics and politics of freebies are deeply flawed, and is a race to the bottom.

He writes that we must dread the thought of replicating the culture of competitive freebie politics in India.

#### **Understanding difference b/w freebies and public goods expenditure**

There is a need to distinguish between the concept of freebies versus expenditure on public goods having overall benefits. All over the world, these are considered to be desirable expenditures.

**Examples:** Strengthening and deepening of the public distribution system, employment guarantee schemes, support to education and enhanced outlays for health, particularly during the pandemic.

#### **Why freebies are not desirable in the long run?**

**1]. Impact on macroeconomic stability** – The politics of freebies distorts expenditure priorities. Outlays are being concentrated on subsidies of one kind or the other. This impacts the fiscal sustainability of states which are already debt-stressed.

– **Example:** In the case of Punjab, it is speculated that the promise of freebies might cost around Rs 17,000 crore for their implementation. The debt-to-GDP ratio of Punjab is already at 53.3% for 2021-22, which would worsen on account of these new measures.

**2]. Distortion of expenditure priority:** Take, for instance, the change to the new contributory pension scheme from the old scheme, which had a fixed return.

– **Rajasthan** announced that it would revert to the old pension scheme. The pension and salary revenues of Rajasthan amount to 56% of its tax and non-tax revenues. Thus, 6 per cent of the population, which is made up of civil servants, stands to benefit from 56% of the state’s revenues. This can not only cause issues like intergenerational inequality, but also affect the broader principles of equity and morality.

**3].** The issue of intergenerational equity leads to **greater social inequalities** because of expenditure priorities being distorted away from growth-enhancing items.

**4]. Movement away from the environment:** When we talk of freebies, it is in the context of providing, for example, free power, or a certain quantum of free power, water and other kinds of consumption goods. This distracts outlays from environmental and sustainable growth, renewable energy and more efficient public transport systems.



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**5]. The distortion of agricultural priorities:** This affects agricultural practices which do not depend on extensive use of water and fertilisers. The depleting supply of groundwater is an important issue to consider when speaking of freebies pertaining to free consumption goods and resources.

**6]. Debilitating effect on the future of manufacturing:** Freebies lower the quality and competitiveness of the manufacturing sector by detracting from efficient and competitive infrastructure enabling high-factor efficiencies in the manufacturing sector.

**7]. Subnational bankruptcy:** Freebies bring into question market differentiation between profligate and non-profligate states and whether we can have a recourse mechanism for subnational bankruptcy.

What is the way forward?

India must strive instead for a race to efficiency through democracy and federalism where states use their authority to harness innovative ideas and solutions to common problems which other states can emulate.

GS2 – POLITY – PARLIAMENT

### **LACK OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE IN INDIA**

#### **65. Why is there no debate in Parliament?**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Why is there no debate in Parliament?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

**Relevance:** Parliamentary debates

**News:** Parliament’s productivity was around 129% for the Lok Sabha in the last session in 2022. However, under the garb of enhanced productivity, a tradition of intense debate over bills has been lost.

#### **What are the features of a parliamentary democracy?**

In a parliamentary democracy, all the **proposals** or **legislations** must be put to **deliberations** and **discussions**. For example, India’s constituent assembly debates to frame the Constitution went on for 166 days.

In a parliamentary democracy, the MPs are allowed to **take initiative**. For example, private member bills.

#### **What is the situation wrt parliamentary debates in India?**

In the 2021 Session (particularly Monsoon Session), the Lok Sabha cleared over 18 bills. Around 34 minutes were taken for discussion on each bill. For example, the **Farm Laws Repeal Bill (2021)** was passed in just eight minutes (three minutes in the Lok Sabha, five minutes in the Rajya Sabha).

In fact, not even a **single bill** was referred to a **parliamentary committee** in the last few sessions of the parliament.

The **voice vote** has become a norm. As a result, the MPs have rarely mustered in the House to record votes.

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MPs rarely have adequate resources to conduct **in-depth research**. In India, MPs get an allowance of Rs 40,000 per month to hire **a legislative assistant**

In India, long-term development plans are simply not subject to **parliamentary scrutiny**, with just annual outlays approved.

In India, MPs do not have **freedom to take initiative**. For example, In the **UK**, seven private member bills have been passed since 2019, and In **Canada**, six private member bills have been passed.

However, In **India** just 14 private member bills have been passed by both Houses since 1952. For example, the **Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act (1956)** was a private member bill. In India, MPs have the limited ability to drive change in their constituencies.

India has **institutional mechanisms** to **stifle debate** and to **limit initiative by MPs**. For example, the anti-defection law punishes any errant MP or MLA. This law has disincentivised MPs. They go by the direction of the **whip**.

### What steps should be taken?

India can adopt the **Philippines model** for India's MPLAD programme. The Philippine's **Priority Development Assistance Fund** provides funds to senators for small-scale infrastructure and community projects. Its usher's **constituency-specific development**.

The anti-defection law has not served its purpose. It should simply be **scrapped**. If not, MPs will not be lawmakers who ideate and debate.

In **comparison** to other democracies like the US and the UK (92000 people), Indian MPs represent a large number of **representatives** i.e., over **25 lakh citizens**. This number is larger than the population of countries like Botswana, Bhutan etc.

The **time of parliamentary proceedings** should be set aside separately for debates and discussion on legislation. It will **improve the quality** of legislation and improve **consensus**.

To revive deliberation, the government should **raise funding** for parliamentary research. The average allowance given to the MP for a legislative assistant in the UK is very high as compared to India.

In the future, after 2026, there is the possibility that the number of MPs in the Lok Sabha may increase up to 1,000 seats.

In **Westminster**, the **British prime minister** is required to answer questions from MPs in the House of Commons every Wednesday, from 12 pm to 12:30 pm. This was done even during Covid-19 induced lockdowns.

The **accountability** can be ensured through the **parliamentary committees**. For example, in the US, Senate and House Committees scrutinise laws, confirm government appointments, conduct investigations, and hold hearings.

In the UK, in 2013, the House of Commons allowed public to **add comments** to draft legislation via a web portal

It should be made **compulsory** to **refer** all **bills** to a **select committee** or **Department Related Standing Committees (DRSCs)** for scrutiny. For example, it is a compulsory phenomenon in New Zealand.

Ideally, we should set up mechanisms to enable private member bills to gain a hearing and even to be put to vote.

## **DEMOCRACY IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

### **66. Its time to celebrate democratic governance in a war-ridden world**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**It’s time to celebrate democratic governance in a war-ridden world**” published in the **Live Mint** on **21st April 2022**.

**News:** In the light of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the West is trying to shape a global consensus in favour its **democratic governance model**.

This is leading to widening the divide between **authoritarian** and **democratic regimes**.

#### **What have been the arguments against the democratic governance model?**

In last few years, the **Chinese** and **Russian models of governance** were promoted to challenge the **democratic models of political management** that is practiced in the west. These were projected based on the performance registered by both the models in various fields.

The Chinese mode was more **efficient**. It delivered **high rates of economic growth**. It also looked stable. It looked highly attractive as the Western democracies were failing to provide solutions to the myriad problems faced by them in different areas.

The western democracies were seen as **chaotic** and unable to shape **long-term strategic goals**. They were facing **competing domestic demands** within the group of the western nations.

In response to **Biden’s Summit for Democracy** in December 2021, China and Russia together decried the summit as “**anti-democratic**“. It decried the western model of democracy. China asserted that “**true democracy**” exists in China under the Chinese Communist Party.

Such a narrative was developed, because as per **Chinese propagandists**, the confidence in their own model gives legitimacy to China’s rise as a **legitimate power** in the **international hierarchy**.

#### **Why is the democratic governance model better than the Chinese and Russian Model of governance?**

At present, China is being publicly criticized for its covid management.

– For example, China has for the **first time** officially admitted that three people have died in Shanghai due to **covid**. **Historically**, this is the first acknowledgment of any death in the country since March 2020. The authorities are being criticized publicly by the residents of Shanghai city

**At present**, Russia is being globally criticized. It has not been able to achieve **success** in Ukraine, and is facing **operational** and **tactical costs**, and also a wider **strategic failure**.

The Western democracies have been able to rise to the challenge posed by Russia. They have been able to form a relatively **united front** as a push-back against Russian aggression.

China’s “**zero covid**” strategy doesn’t look that brilliant any more. The Chinese model has been exposed by the anger shown by Shanghai’s residents.

A democratic country like India managed to contain covid relatively effectively. It was also able to mobilize the requisite **national resolve** to produce vaccines for the world.

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Democracies are good at **self-flagellation** (*excessive criticism of oneself*). Their **self-critical approach** makes them strive to do better.

### Way Forward

There is a danger that **autocracies** will succeed in shaping the **global narrative** in their favour.

However, this is a **moment** that democracies of the world may unite against a single **threat**. They should make a loud and clear voice that there is **no real alternative** to democracy.

GS2 – POLITY – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

### RIGHT TO HOUSING

#### 67. Bulldozed due process: Courts must step in and stop state/local authorities from ignoring basic principles

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Bulldozed due process: Courts must step in and stop state/local authorities from ignoring basic principles**” published in **The Times of India** on **20th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – **Indian** Constitution, Violation of Rights

**Relevance:** Arbitrary state action and violation of basic principles of the Constitution

**Context:** Bulldozers continued to raze alleged encroachments in Delhi’s Jahangirpuri – scene of rioting on Saturday – yesterday, forcing Supreme Court to expeditiously communicate its stay order to North Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

Constitutional courts located in national/state capitals must respond fast enough to such localised cases of overreach.

Why state action in this case is unjustified?

Razing of homes and shops **hurts entire families**.

**Due process not followed:** Even if there are family members who allegedly rioted or even if structures are illegal, there’s due process – innocent until proven guilty and adequate notice, respectively – to be followed.

Moreover, Delhi has **many other illegal encroachments**. So, singling out Jahangirpuri is not proper.

In terms of legality, the MCD Act has clear provisions:

- Under **Section 317** the Commissioner is supposed to issue notice to remove projections (structures or fixtures) onto streets,
- **Section 343** allows demolition of buildings with a minimum notice period of 5-15 days.
- Only **Section 322** doesn’t require issuing notice, because it involves removing temporary structures like stalls encroaching into public streets. There’s also an **appellate tribunal** under the Act to hear appeals against notices.

**Against natural justice:** Further, those who faced demolitions in Delhi and MP got no time to appeal, contravening principles of natural justice.

**Against the principles set by the Supreme Court of India:** Under the sanctity SC has accorded to fair, just and equitable procedure since 1978, even demolishing temporary structures like a juice stall or a ragpicker’s shed that support livelihoods without notice, cannot evade this due process.

### 68. Demolition drives violate international law

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Demolition drives violate international law**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Indian Constitution, Rights

**Relevance:** Arbitrary state action post rioting and violation of India’s international obligations

**Context:** Communal clashes broke out during Ram Navami processions in several parts of the country including at Khargone in Madhya Pradesh.

Subsequently, the Madhya Pradesh government bulldozed the houses of those who were allegedly involved in rioting. The State government claims that these demolitions are in response to illegal encroachments.

However, the fact that these arbitrary demolitions are being carried out against the alleged rioters of one particular community and in the immediate aftermath of the riots shows that their purpose seems to be to impose collective punishment.

Such an act violates various domestic and several international legal provisions under Right to housing.

What are the various domestic and international obligations being violated?

**Right to housing:** The right to housing is a fundamental right recognised under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Further, it is also a well-documented right under the international human rights law framework, which is binding on India.

**For instance,**

#### UDHR

– **Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that** “*everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care...*”.

– **Article 12 of UDHR prohibits arbitrary interference** in an individual’s right to property. It also stipulates that “everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks”.

#### International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Article 17 further provides that everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property. Thus, arbitrary interference with an individual’s property is a gross violation of the ICCPR.

#### ICESCR

– **Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** recognises “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and *housing*, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”. Under this article, **countries are under an obligation** to take “appropriate steps” to ensure the realisation of these rights.

The rights recognised under ICESCR, according to **Article 4**, can be restricted by States only if the limitations are determined by law in a manner compatible with the nature of these rights and solely to promote society’s general welfare.

Thus, the bulldozing of the houses by the Madhya Pradesh government of the alleged rioters amounts to forced eviction and arbitrary interference with an individual’s home, thus a breach of Article 11.1 of the ICESCR.

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### Domestic law

The international human rights law identified above has been judicially incorporated by the Supreme Court of India into the Indian legal system.

The apex court in cases like **Bachan Singh vs State of Punjab**, **Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan**, and in the **Puttaswamy vs Union of India** has stated that the fundamental rights must be read and interpreted in a manner which would enhance their conformity with international human rights law.

How does UN Human Rights Office details Right to housing?

According to the UN Human Rights Office, an integral element of the right to adequate housing is '**protection against forced evictions**'.

*It defines 'forced evictions' as 'permanent or temporary removal against the will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection'.*

The right to adequate housing also entails **freedom from arbitrary interference** with one's home, privacy, and family.

What is the way forward?

As the custodian of India's constitutional order, it is high time that the judiciary acted and imposed necessary checks on the unbridled exercise of power by the executive. Courts should use international law to counter the nationalist-populist discourse.

GS2 – POLITY – ISSUES WITH JUDICIARY

### 69. The Brittle Middle

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**The Brittle Middle**" published in **the Times of India** on **22nd April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the Supreme Court found serious fault within the high courts. The High Courts have consistently failed to uphold **judicial discipline** while pronouncing orders.

**What are the recent instances in which the HCs have failed to uphold judicial discipline?**

**A Rajasthan high court** bench granted **bail** to an accused of raping his minor niece without specifying any reasons. Here, the HC ignored circumstances like the alleged rapist was a **history sheeter**. He was facing around 20 other criminal cases. The SC witnessed a lot of gaps between the **operative order** and **reasoned judgment** given by the High Courts.

The **Allahabad HC bench**, a **Bombay HC bench** and a **Delhi HC bench** ordered acquittal in murder case(s) and gave the reasoned judgment(s) later after five months, nine months and ten months respectively.

**What are the issues in Indian Judiciary?**

There has been **poor quality of justice delivery** at various levels.

Meanwhile, **collegiums are struggling to attract good candidates to HCs**. This is due to power struggle with GoI and unrealistic service conditions like low retirement age of 62.

**What are the steps that needs to be taken?**

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High courts are invested with the all-important function of superintendence of around 20,000 subordinate judicial officers. Therefore, they should set their standards at a higher level.

Judges carry the burden that **“justice is not only done; justice is also seen to be done”**.

The courts should **promptly** give a **reasoned order**. It also helps **appellate courts** save judicial time and decide appeals faster.

The prompt reasoned order reduces burden on the judiciary. For example, The Supreme Court ordered fresh hearing in a case in which the **Allahabad HCs** failed to give a prompt reasoned order. It would add to pending criminal appeals.

Effort should be made to establish a revised form of the **National Judicial Appointments Commission** to replace the collegium system.

**All India Judicial Services** or a national district judges recruitment examination should be created.

### Way forward

It should be understood that **“Dysfunctionality in the rule of law is a dysfunctionality that affects all aspects of governance”**.

## VACANCIES IN JUDICIAL SYSTEM

### 70. Pendency Begins Here

**Source:** The post is based on an article **“Pendency Begins Here”** published in **the Times of India** on **19th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Functioning of Indian Judiciary

**Relevance:** Judicial appointments

**News:** Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) expressed concern that many names cleared by the SC collegium were pending with the government for a considerable period.

However, the Union law minister told Rajya Sabha that the government has never deliberately delayed the process of judicial appointments.

### Status of judicial vacancies in India

Around **35%** of judge’s seats are vacant in the High Courts.

The most number of vacancies are present in the HCs of Patna (49%), Rajasthan (48%) and Calcutta (46%).

### What is the judicial appointment procedure in India?

#### (A) The Collegium System

The **collegium system** was created through famously known as the **Three Judges Cases (SC)**.

The collegium comprises the chief justice of the court along with its senior-most judges. The collegium is constituted both at the SC level and at high courts.

#### (B) Memorandum of Procedure (MoP)

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It is a collaborative framework between government and judiciary. It was prepared in 1998 pursuant to the Three Judges Cases. It largely governs the judicial appointment procedure in India.

### **For appointment of HC judges:**

The HC collegium suggests names for elevation. The names travel through various departments of the state government, Intelligence Bureau and the central government. Then they are sent to the SC collegium for approval.

The SC collegium considers the names. Then the final list is forwarded to the Central government for appointment.

If the central government has any reservation, the names are sent back to the SC collegium for reconsideration. However, if the collegium deems that the recommendations are sound, it reiterates its stance. Then the Centre is required to make the appointment.

**Timeframe stipulated in the MOP for the appointment procedure:** The Centre forwards the recommendations to the SC collegium within 4-6 weeks after receiving the report from the state government and IB. The SC collegium should submit the final list within 4 weeks to the Centre. The central government should put forth the list for President's assent within 3 weeks. In case of reiteration of recommendations by the SC collegium, the final appointment should be made within 8-12 weeks.

*The Chief Justice of India mentioned that the notion of “judges themselves appointing judges” is a “myth”. The judiciary is just one of the players in the selection process. The judiciary has the first say in the selection process. However, the government has the final say.*

### **What are the issues in the judicial appointment process?**

The stipulated time frame is not followed.

– For example, in 2021, **the government** sent a list to SC Collegium after an average of 18 weeks after taking inputs from IB. Further, the **SC collegium** sent the final list to the central government after an average of 17 weeks. Further, an average of 41 days (6 weeks) were taken from the date of final resolution of the SC collegium to the appointment of judges in HCs.

A **lot of delay** happens in appointment of judges whose names have been reiterated by the SC collegium.

### **What is the impact of delays in appointment?**

Such delays in the appointment process impact the number of vacancies and thus the pendency of cases.

The delay in appointment despite constant reiterations by the SC collegium discourages potential candidates like senior lawyers from joining the judgeship.

For example, senior advocate Aditya Sondhi withdrew his consent for elevation to the Karnataka HC citing a delay of a year.

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

There is a need for **devising realistic timeframes**. It can be done using appropriate data.

The collegium resolutions sent by HCs and some of the intermediary steps **should be made public**. It can bring more transparency about how much time is being taken by the collegium and the government.



## **COOPERATIVES IN INDIA**

### **71. India's policy on cooperation is key to creating livelihood for all**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India's policy on cooperation is key to creating livelihood for all**” published in the **Live Mint** on **19th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Provisions of the Constitution of India; and Design of Polices and Programmes

**Relevance:** Cooperative Sector

**News:** Recently, the Union Minister of Cooperation inaugurated a **two-day national conference on India's Cooperation Policy**. In the programme, a call was made to usher-in a ‘**movement for cooperation**’.

#### **What is the concept of Cooperation?**

The draft National Policy on Cooperatives puts it this way –

- Cooperation is an approach. It is a preferred instrument of execution of public policy especially in rural areas.
- It refers to the attributes of community ties, collective decision-making, mutual trust, shared ownership and social responsibility.

#### **Importance of cooperatives/cooperation for the effectiveness of a policy as learnt from the successful implementation the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana**

The cooperatives are said to be the catalysts for social and economic progress. They can help in creating a society of **self-dependent people** with **adequate livelihood opportunities**.

They can play an important role from farming and food-processing to fisheries and self-help groups (SHGs).

The cooperation works well when there is an affinity, mutual trust and a certain degree of affiliation among members. For example, a group of 200 women in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra have created a market for neem pesticides with their coordinated action.

The output and the bargaining power is increased when individuals comes together for collective actions. For example, a woman group at VDVK in Jharkhand, was amazed to see the quantum of forest produce and their increased negotiating power as traders come to them to buy mahua flowers, etc.

The promotion of co-operatives and Cooperation will lead to convergence of schemes. For example, VDVKs in Odisha and Chhattisgarh are witnessing convergence of schemes for training of beneficiaries.

It leads to empowerment of weaker sections of society. For example, women participate in the SHG meetings.

#### **Way Ahead**

The **PMVDY** offers a classic example of how the **cooperative spirit** can be harnessed. Its features are important for social fulfillment and **economic growth**.

A cleaner (without corruption), rule-based and more efficient cooperative system should be developed.

*Note: Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) which has been made operational under the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY) functions on the attributes of cooperative existence.*

### **CRIMINAL PROCEDURE IDENTIFICATION BILL**

#### **72. Unfounded apprehensions about this Act**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Unfounded apprehensions about this act**” published in **The Hindu** on **21st April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Polity – Bills, Acts and related issues

**Relevance:** Criminal Justice System

**News:** Recently, The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022 received the President’s assent. The act seeks to repeal the Identification of Prisoners Act (IPA) 1920, whose scope was limited in nature with respect to recording measurements and whose measurements were made.

#### **Why are various issues raised against the act incorrect?**

The proposed **scope of ‘measurements’** already exists in other statutes like CrPC.

The Act explicitly merges the scope of ‘measurements’ in the **IPA** and the **CrPC**. For example, The CrPC provides for **‘examination’** of blood, semen, swabs, sputum and sweat, hair samples etc. using **modern scientific techniques** including DNA profiling etc,

The IPA already includes some provisions related to who is subjected to measurement. For example, it includes a person who has given security for **good behaviour** or **maintaining peace**, etc.

A **magistrate** is already empowered to direct any person (including an accused person) to give a signature or handwriting for **investigation** or **proceedings** under Section 311A of the CrPC.

The SC of India in the **State of Bombay vs Kathi Kalu (1961)** has held that taking specimens of handwriting, signature, thumb impressions, finger, palm or foot print etc. do not violate the **right against self-incrimination** under Articles 20(3) of the Constitution. These samples by themselves do not convey information.

**Non-cognisable** and most of **simple cognisable offence** like a chakka-jam (punishable with simple imprisonment up to only one month or fine) do not require measurement of biological samples to facilitate investigation. Only **physical measurements** would be sufficient to record identity.

By expanding the scope of measurements, an individuals’ privacy is not going to be harmed.

The Act will not harass **juveniles**. As per the provisions of **the (Special Act) Juvenile Justice Act, 2013**, the delinquent juveniles are produced before the **Juvenile Justice Board**. The FIR is registered only in heinous offence and the juvenile is arrested. In addition, records of conviction are destroyed in accordance to Act.

The Act does not mandate the **compulsory recording** of all measurements for all types of offences. The measurements shall be taken ‘if so required’ and as may be prescribed by governments.

The purpose is to help the enforcement agencies in the prevention and the detection of crime.

The right of an individual will have to be considered in the background of the interests of society.

#### **What are the exceptions to the measurement?**

The Supreme Court in the **Selvi vs State of Karnataka (2010)** has held that the narcoanalysis, polygraphy and brain fingerprinting are **testimonial compulsions** (*if conducted without consent*).

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They are prohibited under **Article 20(3) of the Constitution**. These tests do not fall under the scope of expression “such other tests” in Explanation of **Section 53** of the CrPC. The Court also laid down certain guidelines for these tests.

The Act does not lay down any **specific scientific tests** for the analysis of biological samples. Therefore measurements would not automatically violate any constitutional provision.

### Way Forward

It would have been prudent to add a provision in the Act for juveniles for clarity and allay any doubts.

The **period of storage of measurements** of adults should be reduced by **10 years**. In fact, the probability of committing a crime by any person after the age of 80 years is negligible. For example, the NCRB data shows that the number of arrested persons over 60 years of age is less than 1.5%.

## DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION AMENDMENT ACT

### 73. The Delhi MCA Act denudes the spirit of federalism

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The Delhi MCA Act denudes the spirit of federalism**” published in **The Hindu** on **21st April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, **The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act 2022** was passed by the parliament.

Subsequently, the **State Election Commission** of Delhi deferred the announcement of schedule for the elections to the three Municipal Corporations of Delhi after the proposed unification of the three municipal corporations.

### What have been the arguments of the Central government about the validity of the act?

The MHA has stated that the **Article 239AA(3)(b)** empowers the parliament to make laws for the State of Delhi “on any matter”.

### What are some associated concerns?

The **Central government** has conferred upon itself various **crucial powers**. It assumed control over the **Municipal Corporation of Delhi** from the State government. For example, the Centre is now empowered to determine the number of wards, extent of each ward, reservation of seats, number of seats of the Corporation, etc.

The Central government has taken over powers from the State to decide on matters such as ‘**salary and allowances**, leave of absence of the Commissioner, the sanctioning of consolidation of loans by a corporation, and sanctioning suits for compensation against the Commissioner for the loss or waste or misapplication of municipal fund or property’.

In 2011, the trifurcation of the **Delhi Municipal Corporation** was done after much deliberation and discussion at various levels. For example, **1987 Balakrishnan Committee Report**, and the **2001 Virendra Prakash Committee Report** proposed the slit-up. Thereafter, it went through a number of consultations. However, the decision to reunify has been done **without any study or consultation** with the Delhi government.

The Centre’s argument of using **Article 239AA** does not hold ground. The **Part IXA of the Constitution** states that the State Legislature is empowered to make laws concerning representation to the municipalities. And, Article 239AA cannot override the general law related to municipalities mentioned in Part IXA of the constitution.

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– Further, Article 239AA was added by the **Sixty Ninth Amendment Act of 1991**. However, Part IXA of the Constitution was inserted into the Constitution later on through the **Seventy-Fourth Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992**.

Recently, the Supreme Court of India in the famous **State of NCT of Delhi vs Union of India judgment** (2018) finally determined the scope of the **Article 239AA**. The Court ruled in favour of a **balanced federal structure**. It mandated that the Union does not usurp all powers and the States should enjoy freedom without any unsolicited interference from the Central Government with respect to matters which exclusively fall within the domain of state government.

The MCD Act 2022 will lead to **litigation** on the aspect of a sharing of powers between the State of NCTD and the Central government.

The act strikes a blow against **federalism** and the celebrated **Indian model of decentralisation**.

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

### **GLOBAL THREATS AND CHALLENGES TO INDIA**

#### **74. This is India's moment of reckoning**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**This is India's moment of reckoning**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, there have been **global developments** of conflict and violence in Ukraine. It has been followed by the imposition of the western economic sanctions on Russia. This has presented new opportunities and threats to the world, especially India.

#### **What have been the trends since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989?**

There was an evolution of a paradigm of **free societies, frictionless borders** and **open economies**.

The **global order** allowed freer movement of people, goods, services and capital across the world. Therefore, **global trade** and **per capita GDP** nearly doubled in this period.

During this period, the Societies and economies in the world became **inter-dependent** in the pursuit of shared global prosperity. It led to fewer conflicts and more peace and prosperity.

#### **What can be the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, especially from an Indian perspective?**

This **global geo-economic conflict** can push the world to the Cold War era of **two dominant power blocs**. It will disbalance the **global economic equilibrium**. The **Russia-China bloc** is a large producer group. The western bloc is today's largest consumer group.

It has dismantled **inter-connectedness** and **trade** among nations. This led to **disruption** and **blockade** of various commodities like Russian natural gas, Russian & Ukrainian Wheat, Russian nickel. For example, Indian farmers run the risk of high fertilizer prices triggered by a global shortage.

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

First, the western group looks to **reduce dependence** on the Russia-China bloc of nations. Therefore, it offers opportunities to India. India can expand trade in the **current global economic structures** of free trade

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Second, the western nations have wished to develop a new paradigm of **'free but principled trade'**. India can gain from this **'principled trade'**. India is the **largest peace-loving democracy**. India can become a large producing nation for the world and a global economic powerhouse.

The present global situation presents the best opportunity to salvage India's economy. It can help create large numbers of **jobs** for our youth and women.

### What are the challenges before India in capitalizing the new opportunities?

The forced and hurried dismantling of the present order of the **American dollar** as the **global trade currency** and replacing it with rushed **bilateral local currency arrangements** can prove to be more detrimental for the global economy in the longer run.

For example, **Indian rupee-Russian rouble agreement** in the late 1970s and 1980s, were fraught with risks.

India's external sector is robust. India has the potential to expand trade. But the bilateral arrangements are unsustainable, unwieldy, and perilous.

### Way Forward

**Mahatma Gandhi** said India must be committed to **peace** and **non-violence**, both at home and in the world.

Earth is a **'Global Village'**. It is home for nearly eight billion people. It works on the transportation networks, the U.S. dollar as the reserve currency and integrated payment systems.

India's economic future depends on trade with other nations. A reversal towards isolationism and protectionism can be bad for India. It needs an accepted and established global currency to trade in and seamless trade settlements.

India needs to get **free access** to the markets to capitalise on the available opportunities.

In the long run, India stands to gain more from the established trading order as well as free access to the western markets instead of **bilateral arrangements** and a new and **parallel global trade structure**.

India needs a **non-aligned doctrine** for the looming new world order. It also needs a **non-disruptive geo-economic policy** to maintain the current global economic equilibrium.

Hence, it should adopt a **strategic economic self-interest doctrine** within the larger paradigm of its **non-alignment foreign policy**.

India needs to balance the **current geo-economic equilibrium**, and needs to maintain its **domestic social equilibrium**. It requires people of all religions and castes to work together in factories.

Therefore, the government should address mutual distrust, hate and anger among citizens. It should promote **social harmony** which is **quintessential** for **economic prosperity**.

## RUSSIA – UKRAINE CONFLICT

### 75. Don't rush into export 'opportunity' presented by Russia-Ukraine conflict

**Source:** The post is based on an article "Don't rush into export 'opportunity' presented by Russia-Ukraine conflict" published in the Indian Express on 21st April 2022.

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**News:** Recently, the **Russia-Ukraine clash** and the **resultant sanctions** have pushed India to face a strong headwind to growth and Indian exports. This is due to surge in energy costs, elevated geopolitical uncertainty.

However, the clash has come up with a number of opportunities which require deep analysis.

### What are the opportunities?

India gets an opportunity to fill the **shortage of commodities** in the **global market**. Russia and Ukraine together account for 30% of **global wheat exports**. At present, they are unable to export.

However, India is a **wheat surplus** country. The **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** possesses good buffer stock. Therefore, India can export wheat to meet global demand.

### What are the issues with India's rush to "encash the opportunity" for agricultural exports?

There are limited prospects for sustained wheat exports for India. India has an available **surplus** of around **25 million tons**. It was accumulated over five years. This is not a big number. Russia and Ukraine annually export nearly 60 million tons of wheat.

In addition, exporting all the surplus stock would push up domestic wheat prices. Further, it would lead to tariff hikes on future exports like in **case of palm oil in Indonesia**.

In agricultural trade, India has the **dubious distinction** of being an unreliable trading partner. India is the **second-largest producer** of wheat in the world. But has only 1% share of global wheat exports.

Indian's wheat export is not **globally competitive**. The government's **Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Procurement regime** makes it less competitive. The MSP often rises every year. It normally exceeds global prices. Thus, exports would be difficult.

India's lack of export **competitiveness** can be seen from the consideration of the **export parity price (EPP)**. The cost of getting the produce from the farm or factory to the border or the port is high in India. It is due to high **domestic logistics costs** (like **road transport costs**). India's domestic logistic cost is over 13% of GDP as compared to the global best practice of 8%. In addition, India's ports are inefficient.

The **FCI** cannot sell procured grain for **commercial gains** as a result of **India's commitments** under **WTO**. It would be difficult to bring in intermediary.

India had adopted a "**heterodox**" approach for opening up trade. It aims to open on the export side while being restrictive on the import side. This creates political difficulties in trading relations.

India's **non-price attributes** like food safety, quality, and variety of wheat consist of a lot of issues. It restricts the **sustainability of Indian exports**. The food safety and quality of wheat are highly preferred in the global market.

As per recent study, India has the highest number of **consignment rejections** in both European and US markets in comparison to other developing countries.

### Ways Forward

The crisis can be an opportunity for India to fix the fundamentals, like its "**time to trade**", "**costs to trade**" among others

A long-term **sustained export strategy** is needed. The strategy must incorporate the changing nature of global trade.

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There is a need to deliver on **quality** or **honouring commitments**. India can expand trade through new products, varieties and new trade agreements.

### 76. India can criticise Russia's Ukraine invasion

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**India can criticise Russia's Ukraine Invasion**" published in The **Hindu** on **19th April 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** India-Russia Relation

**News:** Recently, India has been facing severe pressure from the west and especially from the US over its stand on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has repeatedly **abstained** on multiple resolutions critical of Russia's invasion in the UN forums. In fact, it has **not directly** mentioned Russia in the statements criticizing the conflict.

#### What has been India's experience and response with respect to the Western Pressure so far?

In 2018, India "**zeroed out**" its oil imports from Iran, after the U.S. warned India to drop its oil imports from Iran or face U.S. sanctions. At that time, Iran was India's third biggest supplier of crude.

In 2022, the **U.S. is pressurizing India** to cut its oil imports from Russia. In addition, India has been warned of "**consequences**" for creating payment mechanisms around sanctions against Russia.

#### India's stand in the India-Russia Bilateral Relations Post Ukrainian Invasion

India's External Affairs Minister has said that India does not recognise **unilateral sanctions** by any country. India recognizes only those sanctions which are mandated by the United Nations (UNs)

India has been increasing import of Russian oil, at a discount. In addition, India is also accelerating coal imports.

The RBI and Russian bank officials have been holding **technical talks** on the **rupee-rouble payment mechanism**. It is aimed to be used for purchases that circumvent sanctions.

#### What explains the Government's refusal to bow to combined western pressure?

India has **dependency** on Russia for **60% defence hardware** and **85% defence spare parts**.

In the energy sector, Indian oil **public sector units (PSUs)** have invested \$16 billion in **Russian oil and gas fields** in eastern Russia. In addition, India's nuclear power plant say, **Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu** has also been built by Russia which fulfils India's energy requirement.

The **long-term sustainability** of the western sanctions on Russia is doubtful. Only 30 to 40 countries have joined the sanctions. However, major economies including **China** and **much of South America** and **Africa** have stayed out. In this situation, it's not beneficial for India to pick the west side in the "**dollar vs non-dollar**" **economic system**.

India's **strategic future** is also inextricably linked with Russia. India needs Russia for its **continental security**. India's primary threats come from northern frontier from China and Pakistan. For example, Chinese troops have transgressed and occupied Indian territory. In this context, Moscow can play a **mediatory role**.

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India is part of regional grouping such as **BRICS**, **RIC** (Russia-India-China) and **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**. These groupings have strategic significance for India.

Russia being a **P-5 member** has consistently supported India's cause in the **UN Security Council**. In addition, support has also been received at other multilateral institutions such as the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** and the **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**.

The **European Union** and the **U.S.** have been critical of India's **Citizenship (Amendment) Act**, the **Jammu and Kashmir reorganisation**, or the treatment of minorities, the media and NGOs. However, Russia has not raised concerns over such issues against India.

**Biden's regime** is not assertive as **Trump's regime** was in case of Iran sanctions. Therefore, it seems India can escape the warning issued by the US.

The Government of India adheres to **non-alignment** and **strategic autonomy principles**. India has refused to entertain western sanctions in the past also. India conducted nuclear tests in 1998. India also refused to bend to U.S. pressure on **Iran oil sanctions in 2012**.

### Why should India criticise Russian actions?

The Russia invasion is a **brutal invasion** of another country. In past, the Indian government has deplored **the U.S. invasion of Iraq** through resolution in the **Indian Parliament in 2003**. This was done despite India's growing partnership with the U.S.

Jawaharlal Nehru in a speech in the U.S. in 1949, said **"Where freedom is menaced or justice threatened or where aggression takes place, India cannot and shall not be neutral."**

**Strategic autonomy** can carry credibility only when it is expressed without fear or favour of the consequences.

## GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

### INDIA – MALDIVES RELATIONS

#### 77. Different narratives: On India – Maldives ties

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"Different narratives: On India – Maldives ties"** published in **The Hindu** on **23rd Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** Indo-Maldives ties and the new Anti-India campaign in Maldives

**Context:** Recently, the Maldivian government disallowed a planned opposition rally in the capital city of Male. The theme of the rally, called out by former president Abdulla Yameen and his Progressive Party, and its ally, the People's National Congress, was 'India out'.

It is in this light that the present article suggests that India should build ties with all political factions of the Maldives while helping the country to meet its needs.

**Must Read:** [What's behind the new anti-India campaign in the Maldives?](#)

What has been the trajectory of Indo-Maldives relations over the years?

**Before 2018**, when Abdulla Yameen (considered to be pro-China) was in power, the relationship b/w India and the Maldives deteriorated.

– His government's ultimatum to India to withdraw two of its helicopters from two atolls had triggered tensions.



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### After 2018

– The relations between the two countries improved remarkably after Mr. Solih's Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) came to power in 2018.

President Solih adopted an '**India first**' foreign policy.

– In the past four years, India has emerged as the **Maldives's main security and economic partner**, committing \$1.4 billion towards its 'socio-economic development needs'.

– In February 2021, it signed the **Uthuru Thila Falhu (UTH) harbour development deal** with Male to develop the National Defence Force Coast Guard Harbour. The Yameen camp stepped up its attack on the government after this deal.

### Why the strategic importance of the Maldives has increased?

India has historically played an important role in the Maldives as a friendly big neighbour.

But China's rise in the Indian Ocean region has raised the strategic profile of this small, import-dependent island-nation of 5,50,000 people, where both countries have competed for influence.

### What can happen now?

Now, while Mr. Yameen is trying to regain his lost support by resorting to Maldivian nationalism and anti-India sentiments, the MDP is trying to counter it with another nationalist narrative. It argues that ties with India, the closest big neighbour of the Maldives, is important for the country's security, including food security.

India can find itself in a difficult situation, as victory is not guaranteed for the MDP, which faces anti-incumbency problems and differences between Mr. Solih and the powerful former President Mohamed Nasheed.

If it loses, India **risks losing the influence it has built over the last few years**.

The challenge before India is to build closer ties with all political factions of the Maldives while helping the country meet its economic and security requirements.

## INDIA – SRI LANKA RELATIONS

### 78. Fishing for workable solutions in the Palk Bay

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Fishing for workable solutions in the Palk Bay**" published in **The Hindu** on **23<sup>rd</sup> April 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** Indo-Sri Lanka Relations

**News:** Recently, India's Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka's Northern Province fishermen died in "**mid-sea clashes**" in the Palk Bay region. In another event, 140 impounded boats of India fishermen were auctioned despite a bilateral understanding on the matter.

### What are the issues in the India-Sri Lanka Fishermen dispute?

#### (A) Sri Lankan Fishermen Concern

A section of Tamil Nadu fishermen transgress the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)** in the Palk Bay, and **poach** in the territorial waters of Sri Lanka,

Use of **mechanised bottom trawlers** by Indian Fishermen. This method is said to be extremely averse to **marine ecology**.

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In addition, the Sri Lankan counterparts are facing the **ongoing economic crisis** in the island nation.

### (B) Tamil Nadu Fishermen Viewpoint

Consequent to the **demarcation** of the **IMBL** in June 1974, there is a **lack of fishing areas** on the India side. For example, the area available for fishing is **shallow**, full of **rocks** and **coral reefs**.

Under **the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1983**, the **mechanised fishing boats** can fish only beyond **3 NM** from the coast. This explains the trend of the fishermen having to cross the IMBL frequently.

### What are the measures that need to be taken?

The **people**, especially **fisherfolk** of the two countries have **common threads** of **language**, **culture** and **religion**. This can be used purposefully to resolve the ongoing dispute.

India-Sri Lankan fishermen problem has to be looked at from **humanitarian** and **livelihood angles**.

The present **Sri Lankan Economic Crisis situation** provides opportunity to solve the issue at the **negotiating table**. The Indian side has already imposed a **two-month ban** on fishing on the east coast of the country. Sri Lanka should take the next step.

There is a need for resumption of the **fisherfolk-level deliberations**. Indian fishermen should propose a roadmap to transition to **deep sea fishing** or **alternative methods of fishing**. Further, the Sri Lankan side has to understand that the transition takes time.

In case Tamil Nadu fishermen damage the **properties** of the Northern Province's fishermen, the Indian government should **compensate** this through the **proper channels** of Sri Lanka.

India should adopt policies for promotion of **deep-sea fishing**. The Central and State governments should implement the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana** in Tamil Nadu in a proactive manner. The scheme covers **alternative livelihood measures** too including seaweed cultivation, open sea cage cultivation, and sea/ocean ranching.

India-Sri Lanka has signed a **memorandum of understanding** for the development of fisheries harbours.

Recently, the **India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group (JWG)** on fisheries held deliberations in virtual format. The JWG has agreed to have joint research on fisheries. The study should cover the adverse impact of **bottom trawling** in the Palk Bay region.

The two countries should explore the possibility of establishing a **permanent multi-stakeholder institutional mechanism**. It should be empowered to regulate fishing activity in the region.

Sri Lanka should take a **lenient view** of the situation. It should refrain from adopting a rigid and narrow legal view of matters.

### Way forward

India -Sri Lanka can develop a model for **collaborative endeavours** in fishing in the Palk Bay Region.

### 79. Not just dollars: Sri Lanka needs deep economic reforms to dig its way out of the crisis

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Not just dollars: Sri Lanka needs deep economic reforms to dig its way out of the crisis” published in **The Times of India** on **21st Apr 22**.

**Context:** A series of positive developments in Sri Lanka have triggered hopes that it'll eventually see through one of the worst economic crisis that it's going through right now.

What are the positive developments?

On the political front, 17 new ministerial appointments were initiated by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, **suggesting an end to the political logjam**.

Separately, Sri Lanka began bailout **talks with IMF**. These talks were backed by India, and the first step is a **Rapid Financing Instrument**, which provides help before a restructuring plan is finalised.

There's a long way to go to attain normalcy but a start has been made.

## INDIA – US RELATIONS

### 80. A vision for US-India economic partnership

**Source:** The post is based on an article “A vision for US-India economic partnership” published in the **Business Standard** on **19th April 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** Indo-US Relations and Indo-Pacific

**News:** Recently, there has been differences between the **United States** and India over India's stand on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This has brought the bilateral relationship between the largest and sixth-largest global economies at the centre of debate and their expected role in the Indo-Pacific Region.

#### What have been the convergence of interests between India and the US?

Over the past 22 years, the United States and India have steadily widened and deepened their partnership. It covers almost every area of human endeavour.

In 2017, the US withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). In 2019, India pulled out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations. This has allowed China to shape the **Asian trade landscape**. China is already part of **RCEP**. It has also applied to join **the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** and **the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement**.

China has adopted an **assertive approach**. It is integrating itself with its neighbours through the **Belt and Road Initiative**.

#### What are the issues in bilateral relations?

Despite efforts, the US-India trade relationship remains a weak component of the strategic partnership.

The flows of goods and services between the two countries are well below the levels.

#### Way Forward

The US and India should rethink their **economic** and **trade strategies**. This is important as China can shape the rules for trade and investment in the Indo-Pacific Region.

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There is a need to enhance **bilateral trade**. It is important for both economies to grow. It will provide a **long-term ballast** to the **US-India strategic partnership**.

Both must play a central role in developing the **economic framework and** regional trade rules for a **free and open Indo-Pacific**.

The Biden administration is going to finalize the **new Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)**. It will build **regional economic architecture** in the Indo-Pacific Region. It provides an important opportunity to build economic ties for India.

The US should reinstate India's **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)** benefits. It will resolve outstanding bilateral issues.

The mandate of the **Quad** can be expanded to include trade. At present, all the QUAD countries already have bilateral trade agreements with each other. These agreements could provide the foundation for a Quad working group on trade.

In future, both India and the US could engage with other **Indo-Pacific partners** like the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** and the **CPTPP**.

### INDIA – UK RELATIONS

#### 81. A new shine to old ties

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**A new shine to old ties**” published in **the Indian Express** on **19th Apr 22**.

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

**Relevance:** India-UK relations

**News:** The Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to host British premier Boris Johnson this week in India. Further, both countries have been working on a roadmap to transform bilateral relations by 2030.

#### What were the issues in India-Britain bilateral relations?

There have been **bitter legacies of colonialism**. These legacies had made it impossible for the two sides to pursue a sensible relationship in the past. India has shown **post-colonial resentments**. London was not willing to accept India's claim for a special role in the Subcontinent.

The **consequences of Partition** and **the Cold War** made it harder for Delhi and London to construct a sustainable partnership.

At present, there are visible differences between both countries over the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Britain was much slower in appreciating India's new **geopolitical salience**. In fact, India's relations with two key countries of the **Anglosphere**(the US and Australia) are better than those with Britain.

Historically, Britain has been tilted towards Pakistan. This has complicated India-Britain Relationship. For example, Earlier **Tories (Political Party)** were empathetic to Pakistan not India.

Now **India's internal issues** are getting politicised in Britain. For example, the **Labour Party** targets India for its position on Kashmir. It is also shaped by the **large South Asian diaspora** in Britain.

#### What are the prospects for India-Britain bilateral relations?

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There are expansive new possibilities in trade, investment, high technology, defence, and regional cooperation.

Pakistan's relative decline in the **Indian Subcontinent** is bound to make it less important in India's bilateral relations with Britain.

Now, The **Tory leadership** has helped build a number of measures aimed to ensure political confidence with India.

**Post-Brexit**, Britain needs a number of partners. The Indian economy is set to become **larger** than Britain's in the next couple of years. Therefore, India is naturally among the top political and economic priorities for Britain.

The **regional** and **international circumstances** provide a new basis for mutually beneficial engagement.

The US has played an important role in transforming the bilateral ties between Delhi and London. It is based on the US premise that a **stronger India** will serve US interests in Asia and the world.

The west is **strategically committed** to assist **India's rise** due to increasing assertion of **China** in **Asia**. On similar lines, London has also released its own "**Indo-Pacific tilt**". Therefore, both can have newer roles in the coming future.

### Why should India engage with Britain?

India is strategically important for India. It is the **fifth-largest economy**, a **permanent member** of the Security Council, a **global financial hub**, a centre of **technological innovation**, and a leading cyber power. It has a significant international military presence and wide-ranging political influence.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

## COVID PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT – IMPACT ON EDUCATION

### 82. We must revamp schools as they open after the pandemic break

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**We must revamp schools as they open after the pandemic break**" published in the **Live Mint** on **20th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, there has been a decline in the severity of covid pandemic. As a result, the schools have been re-opened after a gap of almost two years. In this context, **the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)** was released.

#### What are some recent trends?

There has been a shift in enrolment from **private** to **government schools** between 2018 and 2021 across all grades and among both boys and girls in rural areas. This was more pronounced in the lowest grades. For example, Overall, a total of 17 states saw an increase in enrolment in government schools. Out of all, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala topped the list.

On average in 2021, the **proportion of children** aged 6-14 currently not enrolled in school has increased by 2.1 percentage points compared to the 2018 level. The status of currently-not-enrolled students compared to 2018 in different states is Andhra Pradesh (7%), Manipur (15.5%), Nagaland (19.6%) and Telangana (11.8%).

#### What are the challenges after unlocking schools?

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Students have spent most of their time at home with either **semi-structured** or **no educational activity**.

The already poor state of **school infrastructure** might have further deteriorated in the past two years. The government schools were either closed or used as the isolation centres for covid-positive patients.

As per data from the **Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE)** data for 2019-20, the state of availability of computers, internet facilities, furniture, electricity, ramps for the physically disabled, etc. is very poor in the government schools.

There are existing challenges related to **inadequate recruitment** and **management of teachers, inadequacy of teacher training** and acute scarcity of teachers in government schools.

As per the ASER and SCHOOL survey by **Road Scholarz report**, there is a **learning crisis** in India. The proportion of children who cannot read and do arithmetic operations have increased especially in West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.

### What are the opportunities for the state-run education system?

The rising enrolment levels in government schools offer a chance for the state governments. They can **'seize the moment'** and ensure the retention of students in state-run schools.

### Way Forward

There is a need to address a few key challenges that confront government schools. These are:

The school should be prepared to resume **structured educational activities** and ensure **conducive classroom spaces** sensitive to the prolonged **anxiety, stress** and isolation that students face.

Therefore, starting this academic year, schools should identify the children who are lagging behind. The students must run basic **revison** and **bridge programmes** for them to consolidate their skills of reading, writing, numeracy and comprehension at their own pace.

The National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (**NIPUN Bharat**) is a reassuring step in this direction.

The shift to government schools in a time of **crisis** indicates that people expect the state to play the right role in providing education. The **"right to education"** is a matter of right and not just another **'service'**.

A **revamp** of school infrastructure is the need of the hour. The special focus should be given on **information** and **communication technology**.

The gap in the stipulated **pupil-teacher ratio** in the government schools needs to be bridged.

## TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND RELATED ISSUES

### 83. Initiatives to resuscitate traditional medicine are welcome. There is need to iron out regulatory flaws

Source: This post is based on the article **"Initiatives to resuscitate traditional medicine are welcome. There is need to iron out regulatory flaws"** published in **The Indian Express** on **21st Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to health

**Relevance:** Promoting traditional medicine

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**Context:** Inaugurating the WHO's Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) at Jamnagar in Gujarat, Prime Minister of India talked of the **possibilities offered by therapeutic approaches** that are different from the allopathic medicine system.

Such conversations on **medical pluralism** are welcome. They could pave the way for a healthcare ecosystem in which healing approaches based on diverse knowledge systems complement each other.

For that to happen, however, there must be **thorough stocktaking on why practitioners of different medical systems rarely see eye to eye today**. This would involve clearing misapprehensions but also, and equally importantly, ironing out regulatory deficits.

What is the situation wrt use of traditional therapies in India?

According to WHO data, **65 to 70% of people in India use traditional therapies** at some stage in their lives.

The **turnover** of the AYUSH (*ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, unani, siddha and homeopathy*) industry has **gone up six times** in the past eight years.

What are some issues being faced by this sector?

There is a **lot of misinformation** about traditional therapy cures and their practitioners are spoken negatively at times. A part of the blame for this must be laid at the door of a section of practitioners who make **unsubstantiated claims**.

– **For instance:** During the pandemic, for instance, Baba Ramdev sought to exploit mass anxiety by making wildly inaccurate claims for the products manufactured by his Ayurvedic pharmacy, Patanjali Ayurved.

Reports of **traditional medicine practitioners prescribing allopathic drugs** and steroids are also common.

Physicians have complained about being judged according to criteria designed primarily to ascertain the efficacy of allopathic medicines.

– The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Act, 2020 does try to resolve this predicament — the act was amended in 2021.

What is the way forward?

A section of traditional medicine practitioners is making efforts to sync the practices of these systems with modern research protocols.

Regulatory bodies and initiatives such as the GCTM would do well to rope in such professionals.

### 84. Explained: WHO & traditional medicine

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Explained: WHO & traditional medicine**” published in **The Indian Express** on **19th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations – International groupings and organizations

**Relevance:** Traditional medicine and India's role

**News:** Groundbreaking ceremony for the first-of-its-kind WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) will be held in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

What is traditional medicine?

The WHO describes traditional medicine as –

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*The total sum of the “knowledge, skills and practices indigenous and different cultures have used over time to maintain health and prevent, diagnose and treat physical and mental illness”.*

As per WHO, the reach of traditional medicine encompasses ancient practices such as acupuncture, ayurvedic medicine and herbal mixtures as well as modern medicines.

*According to WHO estimates, 80% of the world’s population uses traditional medicine.*

In India, traditional medicine is often defined as including practices and therapies — such as yoga, Ayurveda, Siddha — that have been part of Indian tradition historically, as well as others — such as homeopathy — that became part of Indian tradition over the years.

- **Ayurveda and yoga** are practised widely across the country
- the **Siddha system** is followed predominantly in Tamil Nadu and Kerala
- the **Sowa-Rigpa system** is practised mainly in Leh-Ladakh and Himalayan regions such as Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling, Lahaul & Spiti

What will be the GCTM be about?

India has committed an estimated \$250 million to support the GCTM’s establishment, infrastructure and operations.

**Aim:** Evidence-based research, innovation, and data analysis to optimise the contribution of traditional medicine to global health. Its main focus will to develop norms, standards and guidelines in technical areas relating to traditional medicine.

The GCTM will support efforts to implement the **WHO’s Traditional Medicine Strategy** (2014-23)

- The strategy aims to support nations in developing policies & action plans to strengthen the role of traditional medicine in pursuing the goal of universal health coverage.

Why has WTO felt the need to advance knowledge of traditional medicine?

The WHO says 170 of its 194 WHO Member States have reported the use of traditional medicine. Moreover, these member states have asked for its support in creating a body of “**reliable evidence and data on traditional medicine practices and products**”.

Jamnagar centre will serve as the hub, and focus on building a “**solid evidence base**” for policies and “**help countries integrate it as appropriate into their health systems**”.

**2].** There is a **need to conserve biodiversity and sustainability** as about 40% of approved pharmaceutical products today derive from natural substances.

- For example, the discovery of aspirin drew on traditional medicine formulations using the bark of the willow tree, the contraceptive pill was developed from the roots of wild yam plants and child cancer treatments have been based on the rosy periwinkle.

**3].** WHO has referred to **modernisation of the ways traditional medicine is being studied**. Artificial intelligence is now used to map evidence and trends in traditional medicine.

- Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) is used to study brain activity and the relaxation response that is part of some traditional medicine therapies such as meditation and yoga.

**4].** Traditional medicine is also being extensively updated by mobile phone apps, online classes, and other technologies. The GCTM will serve as a **hub for other countries, and build standards on traditional medicine practices and products**.

Has India taken up similar collaborative efforts earlier?



Yes.

– **Project collaboration agreement (PCA):** In 2016, the Ministry of AYUSH signed a PCA with the WHO in the area of traditional medicine. The aim was to create benchmarks for training in yoga, Ayurveda, Unani and Panchakarma, for traditional medicine practitioners.

– The collaboration also aimed at promoting the quality and safety of traditional medicine and consumer protection by supporting WHO in the development and implementation of the WHO Traditional and Complementary Medicine Strategy.

MoUs with various institutes, universities and organisations from countries across the globe were signed.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – ISSUES RELATED TO DEV OF EDUCATION

### **HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **85. Explained: UGC rules for tie-ups between Indian and foreign universities**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Explained: UGC rules for tie-ups between Indian and foreign universities**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd Apr 22**.

**Context:** The rules governing tie-ups between Indian and foreign higher educational institutions have been simplified by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to expand the net of academic collaborations.

UGC chairperson recently announced that the commission has approved an amended set of regulations, which will soon be notified.

The article explains the changes in the wake of the amendments.

#### **Which regulations have been amended?**

The UGC sets minimum standards for many areas of higher education, ranging from academic standards to quality of training imparted to teachers.

The **University Grants Commission (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to offer Joint Degree, Dual Degree, and Twinning Programmes) Regulations, 2022** will govern twinning programmes, joint degree, and dual degree programmes to be offered jointly by Indian and foreign universities.

#### **What do the regulations say on twinning programmes?**

In the twinning programme, students will be enrolled in a **degree programme at an Indian institute**, and they will get an opportunity to undergo an exchange programme with the partner foreign university.

Students will have to complete up to **30% of the course’s credits** at the foreign institution by means of an exchange programme. The same will be applicable to foreign students enrolling in a similar programme.

The degree at the end of the course will be provided by the Indian institution.

**Note:** As of now, the regulations allow only full time courses through conventional, offline mode.

#### **How have the rules been simplified?**

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The previous set of regulations gave the UGC extensive powers to monitor the entire process of collaboration, ranging from examining MoUs between institutes to issuing letters of approvals or rejections. The proposed amendments eliminate the need for institutes to seek the UGC's nod.

However, in the case of professional programmes in disciplines such as engineering, medicine and law, the approval of statutory councils or bodies like the AICTE will still be needed.

### How will the dual-degrees be structured?

The **dual-degrees**, introduced for the first time, will enable a student to earn two degrees for a course of the same discipline, and at the same level. Students will have to complete at least 30 per cent of their course credit at the foreign institution.

– **For example**, a student enrolled in a BA English programme in an Indian university can pursue a part of her course at a foreign institution.

At the end of the course, the student will be awarded two degrees, separately and simultaneously, by the Indian and foreign institutions. **This shall not, in any way, be construed as two degree programmes in separate disciplines or subject areas** at two different levels, the UGC has clarified.

This means a dual degree in BA English and BSc Physics, or BSc Maths and MSc Biology will not be allowed under this arrangement.

### How will joint degree programmes be different from dual degrees?

Unlike dual degree, in the case of joint degree programmes, there will be **one degree certificate**, bearing the names of both the institutions.

The curriculum will be **jointly designed by the collaborating institutions** like in the case of dual degrees.

### How can institutes partner with each other and what will be the eligibility criteria?

Any Indian higher educational institution **accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)** with a minimum score of 3.01 on a 4-point scale or featuring in the top 1,000 of Times Higher Education (THE) or QS World University Rankings will be eligible to participate.

**For Indian institutes**, being in the top 100 list of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) is also an acceptable criterion.

**Foreign institutes** willing to enter a partnership must rank in the top 1,000 in either of the two world university rankings.

The Indian institutions willing to enter into such collaborative arrangements will also have to open office for international affairs.

## 86. 'Dual-use' learning

**Source:** This post is based on the article **"Dual-use' learning"** published in the **Business Standard** on **17th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to development of Education

**Relevance:** UGC's two degree proposal

**News:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) **proposal to allow undergraduate and postgraduate students to pursue two degrees simultaneously is a progressive step forward in the higher education sector.**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

What are the potential benefits of this move?

**First**, this policy will help high-school students who are often unsure of whether to pursue the sciences or humanities stream in higher education.

**Second**, by promoting interdisciplinary study, the two-degree proposal addresses a growing requirement among employers for lateral thinking.

*Lateral thinking—a term first coined by Edward de Bono in 1967—refers to a person’s capacity to address problems by imagining solutions that cannot be arrived at via deductive or logical means.*

Today, even the global IT giants, have widened their recruiting focus from graduates in conventional science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, to those with multi-disciplinary exposure — in other words, it’s STEAM graduates, in which the A stands for Arts.

**Thirdly**, the proposal to allow domain experts and not just doctoral degree holders to teach is also a sensible move, since it will address a possible faculty shortage once the demand for dual courses expands.

What are some relevant concerns?

**Quality of higher education courses and diploma programmes:** The market for online courses and for, say, science- or arts-focused universities to start offering cross-over disciplines, will expand. Hence, the UGC will need to be cautious of its approval-granting and monitoring processes.

– All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), is facing problems due to its indiscriminate approval process and lax monitoring. Moreover, IT companies’ complaints of the need to retrain IT and science graduates from scratch after recruitment have been well documented.

**Limited employment opportunities in India:** The problem of unemployment for graduates and post-graduates in India has grown with the increased availability of university seats and the shrinkage of the public sector without the private sector picking up pace. This is one reason Indians tend to stay longer in the higher education system, equipping themselves with multiple qualifications to enhance their employability.

What is the way forward?

Without rapid economic expansion, India will have to deal with the added problem of thousands of dual-course graduates and diploma-holders, without any meaningful employment, a recipe for social unrest.

The government needs to understand the imperative of focusing on upscaling employment.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

### **DEATH PENALTY AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **87. Revisiting death penalty jurisprudence**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Revisiting death penalty jurisprudence**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **29th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Provisions of the Indian Constitution, Fundamental Rights

**Relevance:** Criminal justice System, Capital Punishment, and the fundamental right to life (Article 21)

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

**News:** On April 22, In **Irfan vs State of Madhya Pradesh Case**, the Supreme Court decided to critically examine the routine and abrupt way in which trial judges often impose the death penalty on convicts.

This is a significant development that can radically alter **India's death penalty jurisprudence** relating to the crime, the criminal, and the punishment.,

### **What were the observations made by the court in the case?**

The court has decided to identify the **mitigating circumstances** (the factors that could lead to avoidance of capital punishment). This will help trial courts in reaching a correct conclusion. It will ensure a **convict-centric approach**. This will make the imposition of **capital punishment** rarer, fairer, and principled.

The accused should be judged on an **individualistic approach**. It means the accused should be examined on the basis of the social, economic, emotional, and genetic components rather than the offence. It would lead to a **just and judicious sentencing policy**.

A **'one size fit for all'** approach while considering mitigating factors during sentencing should end”.

The Court would evolve a **legal device** for procurement of a comprehensive report. The report would deal with the **socio-economic** and **hereditary backgrounds** of the accused procured from experts in the fields of social work, psychiatry, psychology, anthropology, etc.

### **What are the arguments against the death penalty?**

In **Bachan Singh vs State of Punjab (1980)** the Constitution Bench refused to declare the death penalty as **unconstitutional**. It suggested a **humane** and **reformist** framework in the **criminal matters**. However, the death penalty can be given but only in the **rarest of rare cases**, that too when **“the alternate option is unquestionably foreclosed”**. This triggered the **person-centric approach** in criminal justice.

In **Lochan Shrivastava vs State of Chhattisgarh (2021)** and **Bhagchandra vs State of Madhya Pradesh (2021)**, the court held that socio-economic backwardness, mental health, heredity, parenting, socialisation, education, etc. can be the reasons to avert the death penalty

### **What are the issues with awarding of the death penalty in India?**

According to **Section 354(3)** in the Code of Criminal Procedure, the judge should specify **“the special reasons”** while imposing the capital punishment.

In fact, there could be **“gaps within Bachan Singh judgement itself”**. The SC has neither elaborated on the **mitigating factors** which could be used to avert the death penalty, in concrete terms, nor explained the issues such as **burden of proof** and **standard of proof** in detail.

The **Bachan Singh principles** have not been followed by the judiciary in letter and spirit.

– For example, In **Ravji vs State of Rajasthan (1995)**, the Supreme Court said that it is the nature of the crime and not the criminal which is important to decide the punishment

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

– In **Machhi Singh vs State of Punjab (1983)**, the Court indicated that inadequacy of other punishments could justify the death penalty. In fact, 13 convicts have been hanged in different reported cases without giving due regards to the *Bachan Singh* philosophy.

In India, the **poor**, rather than the rich, are awarded the death penalty. Further, those who were sentenced were uneducated and illiterate.

The death penalty is violative of the right to life envisaged under Article 21 of the Constitution. Despite the dilution of the penal provisions by the Supreme Court, the state has continued to **overuse or misuse the provisions**. For example, Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code is often invoked vaguely and widely despite dilution in **Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar (1962)**.

There is a possibility that new judicial doctrine and its implementation device may also fail like *Bachan Singh* doctrine.

### Way Forward

The present matter should be referred to a larger Bench to rectify the foundational omission in *Bachan Singh*.

Further, the Supreme Court should analyse the **constitutional validity** of **death penalty** in itself.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – CIVIL SERVICES

### **RULES REGARDING RESIGNATION AND REINSTATEMENT OF IAS OFFICERS**

#### **88. Explained: Shah Faesal will return to IAS; what are the rules for resignation and reinstatement of an officer?**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Explained: Shah Faesal will return to IAS; what are the rules for resignation and reinstatement of an officer?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **30th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Civil Services

**Relevance:** Rules regarding resignation and reinstatement of an IAS Officer

**News:** IAS officer Shah Faesal, who resigned in 2019, has been reinstated by the central government. What is the process by which an IAS officer can resign, or be put back in service? What rules govern these actions?

The first Kashmiri to top the Civil Services Examination (2010 batch), Faesal’s resignation, in January 2019, had not been accepted by the government pending investigation into some of his posts on social media.

#### **What rules apply when an IAS officer chooses to resign?**

A resignation is a formal intimation in writing by an officer of his/her intention or a proposal to leave the IAS, either immediately or at a specified date in the future.

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– Guidelines of the Department of Personnel, the cadre controlling department for the IAS, say that a resignation has to be **clear and unconditional**.

The resignation of an officer of any of the three All-India Services — IAS, the Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service — is governed by **Rules 5(1) and 5(1)(A) of the All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958**.

There are similar rules for resignation of officers belonging to the other central services as well.

### Resignation vs VRS

Resignation from service is entirely different from accepting the government's **Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS)**.

– Those who take VRS are entitled to pension, whereas those who resign are not.

### To whom must the resignation of an IAS officer be submitted?

An officer serving in a cadre (state) must submit his/her resignation to the **chief secretary of the state**.

An officer who is on central deputation is required to submit his/her resignation to the **secretary of the concerned Ministry or Department**.

The Ministry/Department then forwards the officer's resignation to the **concerned state cadre**, along with its comments or recommendations.

### What happens after the resignation is submitted?

The state checks to see if **any dues are outstanding against the officer**, as well as the **vigilance status** of the officer or whether any cases of corruption etc. are pending against him/her. In case there is such a case, the resignation is normally rejected.

Before forwarding the resignation to the central government, the concerned state is supposed to send information on the issues of dues and vigilance status, along with its recommendation.

The government also checks whether the concerned officer had executed **any bond to serve the government for a specified number of years** on account of having received specialised training, a fellowship, or scholarship for studies.

The resignation of the officer is considered by the competent authority, i.e., the central government, only after the recommendation of the **concerned cadre** has been received. The competent authorities are:

- Minister of State at the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) in respect of the IAS
- The Minister for Home Affairs in respect of the IPS
- The Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change in respect of the Forest Service.

Being the minister in charge of the DoPT, the Prime Minister himself takes decisions currently in respect of the IAS.

### Is an officer allowed to withdraw a resignation that has already been submitted?

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Rule 5(1A)(i) of the amended DCRB Rules says the central government may permit an officer to withdraw his/her resignation **“in the public interest”**.

An amendment in the Rules in 2011 states –

– that the period of absence from duty between the date on which the resignation became effective and the date on which the member is allowed to resume duty as a result of permission to withdraw the resignation is **not more than ninety days**”.

– Also, the request for withdrawal of resignation shall not be accepted by the Central Government where a member of the Service resigns from his/her service or post with a view to be associated with any political parties or any organisation.

### **Under what circumstances, the withdrawal of an officer’s resignation is accepted?**

The guidelines say that if an officer who has submitted his/her resignation sends an intimation in writing withdrawing it before its acceptance by the competent authority, the resignation will be deemed to have been automatically withdrawn.

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

### **CHILD EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **89. Building back to avert a learning catastrophe**

**Source:** The **post** is based on an article **“Building back to avert a learning catastrophe”** published in **The Hindu** on **28th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 Social Sector; Education Sector

**Relevance:** State of School Education during Covid-19; and The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery’

**News:** Recently, a joint report by UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank, **‘The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery’**, was released related to the Covid-19 impact on school education.

#### **What were the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Schools in countries around the world were either partially or fully closed. This emerged as the biggest disruption in the field of school education in the last 100 years. It would take many more months in comprehending the **medium- and long-term impact** of school closure.

#### **What are the emerging threats of issues in the coming future?**

Probably the threat of a new wave of Covid-19 has led to suggestions for the **partial closure of schools** or even **temporary**. In addition, there are demands for roll-out of the **hybrid mode**.

This education spending stands at about 3% of GDP at present. This is almost half the average for the education spending of **low- and middle-income countries**.

The mental health issues and needs in school-age children have doubled in the pandemic period.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

### Should schools be closed in future?

The demands for **partial closure** or even **temporary closure** are not scientifically supported. SARS-CoV-2 will stay with humanity in the months and years to follow. Therefore, **'open and shut' mode** for schools is impractical, unnecessary, unscientific and unethical. It could prove a **big threat to school education** in India.

In most cases, students are getting the infection from family members instead of schools because children are a part of family and society. In fact, even before schools were **re-opened**, successive **seroprevalence-surveys** across Indian States have reported that nearly 70% to 90% of all children had already got infection (thus protected).

The **probability of adverse outcome of moderate to severe disease is very low** in case of infected children. The risk of COVID-19 in children is very low. It is far lower than other prevalent health concerns such as dengue, malaria and typhoid.

**Real learning does not happen in the four walls of homes or through online classes.** It happens through **in-person education** or when teachers and other children are in school.

### What are the measures that the Govt needs to take?

The government should ensure that **'no child'** has **dropped out** from the education system, and that every eligible child is enrolled. The special attention be given for the enrolment of all children and girls, especially poor, backward, rural, urban slum-dwellers.

The government should focus on how to deal with **'the learning loss'**. They should assess the learning level of children and strategize for **learning recovery** in the coming months.

The **curriculum** should be **consolidated** and **teaching time** should be increased.

The school teachers should be trained to accommodate the learning levels and needs of children.

For example, the Delhi Government has launched the **mentor teacher initiative**.

The **National Education Policy 2020 recommendations** in the context of pandemic-related challenges should be studied. They should be implemented in an accelerated manner.

The Union and State governments in India should increase **financial allocation** for **school education**.

The State Education and Health Departments need to work together to **ensure regular services** such as **school health, mental health services, counselling** as well as a **health check-up** for schoolchildren.

The **mid-day meal services** are important for the nutritional status of 12 crore children in India. Its absence led to **weakened immunity** and **higher susceptibility** to various infections. Therefore, **supplementary nutrition programme should be launched** to protect children from the severe outcome of COVID-19.

In addition, hand washing; and **water, soap** and **toilet facilities** should be improved. These can prevent the possible spread of COVID-19 & water-borne illnesses in school-age children.



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

Governments, parents, communities and schools need to work together.

GS2 – POLITY – INDIAN CONSTITUTION

### **ONE NATION, ONE LANGUAGE ISSUE**

#### **90. The one nation, one language fallacy**

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The one nation, one language fallacy**” published in the **Indian Express** on **30th April 2022**, and the article “**A step that would trigger language phonocide**” published in **The Hindu** on **30th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 Provisions of the Constitution of India

**Relevance:** Official Language in India

**News:** Recently, the Union Home Minister at the **Parliamentary Official Language Committee** urged the use of Hindi as the lingua franca, rather than English, in inter-State communication.

#### **Background of demand for national language**

V.D. Savarkar articulated the slogan, ‘Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan’. He was first to advocate the idea of Hindi to be declared the national language.

R.V. Dhulekar, a Constituent Assembly member, stated in the Assembly, “You may belong – to another nation but I belong to Indian nation, the Hindi Nation, the Hindu Nation, the Hindustani Nation.”

#### **Why should Hindi not be promoted as the official language?**

India is a **multilingual society**. Indians speak Kashmiri, Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit and others.

Hindi is spoken by not more than **30% of the population**. Therefore, it is neither a lingua franca (a **pan-Indian language**) nor a dominant language of the people of India.”

As per records, the 2011 Census presented Hindi as the ‘mother tongue’ of over 52 crore people. However, it **subsumed nearly 61 other languages** (like Bhojpuri) spoken in parts of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

There is a **linguistic pluralism** in Indian society. As per the 1961 Census, there were a total of 1,652 ‘mother tongues’ in India. Out of the total only 184 ‘mother tongues’ had more than 10,000 speakers.

There are **power dynamics** and **identity issues** related to languages. Therefore, it may lead to **language-based discrimination**. For example, Kashmiri language suffers in its land of birth by the dominance of Urdu (the state language). In addition, many other South Asian languages are dominated by Hindi.

The imposition of one language is based on the **misinterpretation of the political map as cultural map** and linguistic or the misinterpretation of the cultural maps as political map.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

What is wrong with the idea of one nation, one language?

There are problems with the **romantic notion** of “**one nation, one language**” which means imposition of One language over a large geographic zone of **multi-lingual landmass**.

The imposition of one language over others leads to **hatredness** against the imposed language.

For example,

- **a)** Sri Lanka declared Sinhalese as the **sole official language** with the exclusion of Tamil. It led to the eruption of the demand for a separate Tamil nation
- **b)** the Eastern Pakistan (later Bangladesh) partitioned from Western Pakistan because the latter was imposing Urdu on the former. Urdu was being imposed to unify them as Urdu will mediate between the **two distinct cultural zones** in which the former was **a Bengali speaking territory** and the latter was a **Punjabi speaking territory**.

In contrast, the nations that accommodated **linguistic diversity** prospered. For example,

- **a)** Singapore has a **multi-ethnic population** (Chinese, Malay and Indian). In contrast, Singapore opted for **English** as the official language. English language proficiency also made the city state a global business hub. Otherwise, the country would have fallen apart
- **b)** **South Africa's national anthem** is a **five-language lyrical composition**. It has accommodative linguistic policy which helped it to become the emerging leader of the African continent

### Way Forward

India should have a **robust language policy**. Their policy should emphasise on the **quality of language learning** in public universities.

Instead of focusing on how many languages or which language should be taught, the focus should be on how to study language structurally and systematically in a **multilingual landscape** like **South Asia**.

India should emulate the **multi-linguistic accommodative policy** of Singapore and South Africa; instead of the **disastrous linguistic chauvinism** of Pakistan or Sri Lanka.

Imposition of Hindi as a **lingua franca** would initiate the **phonocide** of other Indian languages.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – INSTANT JUSTICE

### ISSUE OF INSTANT JUSTICE

#### 91. Instant justice is not the way of a civilised society

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Instant justice is not the way of a civilised society**” published in the **Indian Express** on **29th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** **GS2** – Polity – Judiciary

**Relevance:** Instant Justice and Mob Lynching

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

**News:** Recently, there have been bulldozing of residential or commercial dwellings of people. This incident has raised eyebrows over the **criminal justice system** and the menace of “**Instant Justice**” in the case of Indian society.

### Trends in the criminal justice system

In the second half of the 19th century, criminals were given **instant justice** and **exemplary punishment**, that too publicly. For example, a criminal was stoned, beheaded or hanged to death in full public view. In fact, there were very few rights available to the person facing the “judge”. The understanding about the criminals, crime and punishment have changed with time. For example, LGBT people are not seen as deviants.

### Why criminal justice system has evolved over time?

The changes have been driven by changes in the value systems of society. The states have moved towards **civilisation**.

There have been changes in the sociology of crime and the rationale of society punishing the “criminal”.

Civilised societies have also recognised the rights of the accused as part of natural justice. The “**rights of a person charged to defend himself reasonably**” have been recognised as part of natural justice.

– For example, an accused is generally considered innocent until proved otherwise. He is provided a lawyer, and is given the **right to appeal** his sentence.

The civilised society is more **compassionate** towards a **delinquent**. It doesn't want to destroy the soul and body of the criminal. But want to make him an integral part of the nation. Therefore, Nation-states that top the human development ladder have abolished **capital punishment**. In India, the courts award such punishment in the rarest of the rare circumstances.

### What are the issues in the delivery of justice in India?

In independent India, **instant justice** has been **abolished** from the books but is **deeply entrenched** in the **psyche** of the people.

– **For example**, the average Indian never misses the chance to give a blow to the pickpocket caught at a bus stop.

– In Nagaland, a mob pulled a rape accused out of the jail and lynched him.

The Indian state government often displays such tendency at times.

– **For example:** In UP, important political and executive functionaries spoke publicly in favour of instant justice. There have been reports of fake encounters by the police department.

### Why the idea of instant justice is popular in India?

There is a **traditional attraction** and **public acceptance** of instant justice due to the inability of the **justice dispensation system** to punish such heinous criminals in a short time frame.

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The state governments are alleged to have accepted this practice because bringing fundamental changes in police procedures, prosecution and courts will involve expenditure, and **instant justice is cheap**.

### Way Forward

The time has come when the nation has to choose between an **expensive civilised justice dispensation system** or a **brute tradition**.

Instant justice makes an **individual barbaric** and similarly, instant justice makes a **society barbaric**. The **rule of law** should be **upheld**.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

### JUNK FOOD AND RELATED ISSUES

#### 92. What Does Junk Food Deserve? Stars, Or Warnings?

**Source:** This post is based on the article “What Does Junk Food Deserve? Stars, Or Warnings?” published in **The Times of India** on **30th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to Health

**Relevance:** **Prevalence** of obesity, rise in Non-communicable diseases and poor nutrition

**Context:** A triple burden of malnutrition – **undernutrition, micronutrient malnutrition, as well as overweight and obesity** – is rising in India. More nourishing freshly cooked home-foods or more natural foods are being replaced by cheaper preprocessed packaged alternatives with **high levels of salt, sugar and fat**. These products fill the stomach, but do not nourish and in fact promote ill health and disease.

Poor dietary choices combined with sedentary lifestyles is leading to rise in obesity and chronic ailments like diabetes.

India is the diabetic capital of the world, with the highest concentration of diabetics in any single country.

Therefore, India must heed countries that have already experienced this disastrous nutrition transition and taken appropriate countermeasures.

Is the Govt taking steps to address the problem?

**Front of Packet Labelling (FOPL)** was introduced in The Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Draft Regulations in 2019.

Subsequently, many studies and expert committees were commissioned by FSSAI to determine specifics to enable implementation.

What are the issues involved?

**The form FOPL should take:** Summary scores, guideline daily amount, traffic light labels and nutrition warning systems have been used in different countries.

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

- FSSAI is favouring **Health Star Ratings (HSRs)** based on summary scores
- **Nutrition Warning Labels (WLs)** are being demanded by civil society organisations and experts.

HSR	WLs
<p>HSRs are summary indicators, indicating only the net result of various calculations.</p> <p>They <b>don't allow consumers to distinguish</b> the reason for a particular star rating (<i>a food product high in salt might be star rated the same as one high in sugar, or as a relatively less processed food</i>). This wouldn't help a diabetic or hypertensive patient.</p> <p>HSR would give stars from half to five for all foods alike: <b>Even the unhealthiest food would get some golden star</b> – a symbol of goodness, confusing the consumer.</p>	<p>WLs, in contrast, can point to higher than desirable levels of <b>specific elements</b>, each carrying its own pictorial warning.</p>
<p>Further, experts in countries using HSR for some years such as Australia warn of their <b>ineffectiveness in influencing consumer behaviour</b>.</p>	<p>WLs, obviously, have a common-sense advantage over HSR and have <b>significantly impacted consumer behaviour</b> in countries like Chile.</p>

**Issue of thresholds:** WHO has set certain standards to declare foods to be too high in sugar, salt and fat for different regions.

- An FSSAI study found that 62.8 % of foods on shop shelves in India would **fail for all three nutrients of concern**, and 96% for one of WHO thresholds.

However, standards under consideration by FSSAI are 2-3 times higher for total sugar in foods and beverages and 1.8 times higher for salt, which is a basic flaw. Such **dilution of standards** would allow the majority of packaged food products to slip through the net.

**Issues of making adoption of FOPL voluntary or mandatory:** Countries like Australia follow the former, Chile the latter.

- Most evidence points to **industry failing to comply adequately with voluntary FOPL**.
- In Australia, only a quarter of products complied with HSR labelling many years after it was proposed.
- India's current plans seem to indicate that whatever form FOPL takes, it would become **mandatory only by 2027**, giving many years of leeway to the industry while NCD acceleration continues unabated.

Way forward

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

All evidence points to the need for mandatory FOPL warning systems without any dilution of WHO standard thresholds to raise consumer awareness and reduce consumption of ultra-processed foods.

In the face of what should be considered a public health emergency, this really needs to happen immediately and without any other consideration whatsoever.

### **ISSUES RELATED TO PUBLIC HEALTH**

#### **93. A look at child and adolescent healthcare systems**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**A look at child and adolescent healthcare systems**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Social Sector; Health Sector

**Relevance:** Children and Adolescent Healthcare

**News:** There are less than eight years to meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. However, many child and adolescent health targets are off track.

Therefore, there is a real risk that nations might completely fail to meet the United Nation’s sustainable development targets.

#### **Global status & achievements of children and adolescents’ health**

Globally, an estimated 8.62 million deaths occurred between 28 weeks of gestation and 20 years of age in 2019.

#### **Achievements so far**

Globally, **child mortality** and **morbidity** has declined. This has been attributed to key **maternal, new-born,** and early childhood interventions in low-income and middle-income countries.

However, there are huge inequities in **children** and **adolescents’ healthcare**. Several children and adolescents do not thrive or survive because low-cost interventions are not deployed to their benefit.

#### **Importance of children and adolescent’s healthcare**

The growth and development are one of the human rights of children. They should also ensure their growth because children are considered the bulwark of a nation’s future.

#### **What are the steps that can be taken?**

The crucial periods in the lifecycle before adulthood forms the foundation for building **human capital**. Therefore, the determinants and building blocks of children thrive from **preconception** through **foetal development** up to 20 years of age.

The **piecemeal approach** catering only to certain age groups may not be the best way to handle the crises. A **holistic approach** is needed to build a foundation. It demands support to children and their families from before **birth** through early adulthood which will last a **lifetime**.

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The **evidence-based interventions** should be scaled up for children under five years, school-going children and the period of transition from childhood to adolescence. For example, addressing mental health, unintentional injuries, non-communicable diseases, and neglected tropical diseases (NTD).

Major focus on improving health and social systems for all children should be made in **low- and middle-income countries**.

The **“structural reforms”** should be undertaken to improve service quality. For example, governing for quality, redesigning service delivery to maximise outcomes, and empowering families to better care for children and to demand quality care from health and social systems.

The **health and social systems** must be better equipped to work together. They should address the emerging needs of children and families as part of the effort to rebuild equitable and resilient services.

The COVID-19 pandemic should serve as a wake-up call to the global community. The gaps exposed in the healthcare system must be given urgent attention.

The comprehensive care should be provided **across age groups** from preconception through the age of 20. The care may span from **nutrition, preventive health, education, economic, and community support**.

The families should be closely involved, particularly in offering support right from the stage of pregnancy, continuing through the relevant years.

### GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HATE SPEECH

#### **HATE SPEECH AND RELATED ISSUES**

##### **94. Preventing harm: On judicial intervention against hate speech**

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“Preventing harm: On judicial intervention against hate speech”** published in **The Hindu** on **28th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – **Social** Issues

**Relevance:** Judicial **intervention** on hate speech

**Context:** After the Supreme Court called for “corrective measures” against the peddling of communal hate from supposedly religious platforms, the authorities in Uttarakhand have prevented the holding of a ‘dharam sansad’ in Roorkee by imposing prohibitory orders against such gatherings.

Recently, many such cases have come to the forefront wherein **inflammatory speeches against particular communities** have been made from supposedly religious platforms.

To prevent any damage to the social fabric of our country, judicial intervention is, thus, supremely important.

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Why a strict action on such incidents is required?

Provocateurs making **hate speeches** are trying to **inculcate a collective sense of fear** among the majority that their interests are not being protected by an allegedly minority-friendly Constitution.

The possible damage to the social fabric is incalculable, as the **language of hatred may seep into the public consciousness** as an acceptable thought process.

The result may be **an atmosphere in which communal harmony and public tranquillity will be at perennial risk.**

### Way forward

Modern democracies make a **clear distinction between freedom of expression and speech that tends to incite hatred** against a public group or section of society.

Keeping this in mind, the Supreme Court in cases relating to lynching and 'khap panchayats', has laid down guidelines on preventive, remedial and punitive measures. While these are to be followed without exceptions, there is also a need for considering new **criminal and penal provisions** to combat hate speech.

Instances of controversial religious figures making unacceptable comments at different places and occasions have emerged as a disturbing pattern, one that the Court may have to arrest by stern action.

### GS2 – GOVERNANCE – WELFARE SCHEMES

#### **PM JAN DHAN YOJANA**

#### **95. From Bihar, the good news on banking: How Jan Dhan has deepened financial literacy among poor women, and in rural areas**

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“From Bihar, the good news on banking: How Jan Dhan has deepened financial literacy among poor women, and in rural areas”** published in **The Times of India** on **28th Apr 22.**

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States

**Relevance:** Jan Dhan Yojana, Financial inclusion via Jan Dhan

**Context:** In Bihar, PMJDY has covered more than 5 crore beneficiaries, of whom more than 3.67 crore are in rural areas. Since 2015, more than 3.8 crore RuPay debit cards have been issued in the state. The reach of this scheme is indeed impressive.

The authors of this article examined the account level data provided by 12 public sector banks for over 73 lakh out of 82 lakh beneficiaries, whose accounts were opened in 2015. Financial behaviour of these account holders was analysed.



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Findings are listed.

**What is PMJDY?**

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, launched in 2014, is a national mission on financial inclusion.

It aims to ensure that all Indians, particularly low-income groups and weaker sections, have access to financial services, including a basic savings bank account, need-based credit, remittances, low-cost life and general **insurance** and **pension**.

The scheme also envisages a **robust financial literacy programme**, with a key objective being to enable the beneficiaries to leverage digital technology and internet-based banking.

**Has access to banking channels resulted in a corresponding inc in the utilisation of banking services?**

The **basic banking services – deposits and withdrawals – have witnessed a significant increase** among women.

– The number of deposits per account per year among women was less than two in 2015 across all 38 districts of Bihar. By 2020, it increased to more than eight deposits per account per year in 26 districts. From 2017 through 2020, women have outnumbered men in the average number of deposits per year.

– These trends are across both rural and urban areas, and could be partly attributed to **central and state government initiatives to make women the primary recipients** of various development schemes.

There has also been an **increase in the per capita number of withdrawals by women** beneficiaries of PMJDY.

– There has been an average annual increase of approximately 59% over the preceding year in the average number of withdrawals among women in rural areas.

**Significance:** The increase in withdrawals is particularly significant as it **indicates a deeper engagement with banking services**. Women are not just passive recipients of benefits from the government but are actively utilising their bank accounts in their day-to-day lives.

**Has financial literacy under PMJDY contributed to increased utilisation of digital banking?**

As per the study, the uptake of digital banking services by all genders has increased. This outcome points to the **efficacy of the financial literacy efforts** as part of the PMJDY.

– In 29 out of 38 districts, digital transactions represented only **10%** of all transactions in 2015. By 2020, **40%** of the transactions undertaken by women across all districts in Bihar were digital.

– Moreover, instead of urbanised districts, it is **predominantly the rural districts** that have witnessed this increase.

The **proportion of accounts undertaking one or more digital transactions** has also shown an upward trend.

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– There is a strong likelihood that the **systematic mapping of each district into sub-service areas** and the large-scale **deployment of bank mitras** have contributed to this increase. These combined strategies ensured that households could find banking services within a short distance or even at their doorsteps, even as financial literacy was enhanced among previously unbanked or under-banked communities.

### **MISSION ANTYODAYA**

#### **96. Mission Antyodaya' should not fall by the wayside**

**Source:** The **post** is based on an article “**Mission Antyodaya should not fall by the wayside**” published in **The Hindu** on **27th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes

**Relevance:** Mission Antyodaya

**Context:** Recently, the **Mission Antyodaya Project** related **report on infrastructure and service gaps** and the other on a **composite index** have been released so far. The Government of India launched the mission in 2017-18 to revive the objectives of the **great democratic reforms** in India. The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** and the **Ministry of Rural Development** act as the nodal agents to take the mission forward.

**What are the constitutional provisions/laws which ushered decentralisation reforms to deliver social justice and progress in rural India?**

The Indian Constitution mandates **population-based representation** to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe communities, and one-third reservation for **women** (in most States, now 50%).

The constitution mandates that the local governments are empowered to prepare and implement plans for '**economic development and social justice**' (Articles 243G and 243W).

It mandates establishment of various Institutions to perform various functions like the **Gram Sabha** facilitate people's participation, the **District Planning committee (DPC)** prepare bottom up and spatial development plans, **the State Finance Commission (SFC)** ensure vertical and horizontal equity,

#### **Background**

The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 revealed very disturbing facts about rural India. Most of the rural households had **no salaried jobs**, were **landless**, many had **no adult member** to support (female-headed households), suffered **multiple deprivations**, engaged in **manual casual labour**, no room or only one room to live, and so on.

**About the 'Mission Antyodaya' project**

#### **Objectives**

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The **main objective** is to ensure **optimum use of resources**. It is done through the **convergence** of **resources** of **various schemes**. For example, the convergence of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the National Rural Livelihood Mission, National Social Assistance Programme, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, etc.) and save administrative expenses.

The planning process is inspired by the **people's plan of Kerala**. The mission wants to make the gram panchayat the **hub of a development plan**.

### Functioning of the Mission

An **annual survey** is conducted to assess the various development gaps at the gram panchayat level. The data is collected for the 29 subjects assigned to PRI. The **assessment-based approach** can foster **economic development** and **inter-jurisdictional equity**. The data enables **sectoral and spatial development planning**, from the village level to the State and the country as a whole. .

### The findings of the 'Mission Antyodaya' survey 2019-20

The **gap report** and the **composite index** has exposed the fact that we have not achieved '**economic development** and **social justice**' so far. This remains a distant goal even after 30 years of the **decentralisation reforms** and nearly 75 years into Independence.

In fact, India has not witnessed rural development, the **goal posts** have been moved to 2022 which coincide with the **75th anniversary of Independence**.

### Way Forward

The government should reduce the **growing rural-urban disparities** across primary health care, literacy, drinking water supply and other issues.

The data can be deployed to **India's fiscal federalism**. It can improve the **transfer system** and **horizontal equity** in the delivery of public goods in India at the sub-State level.

The **strong policy interventions** can help in the attainment of the constitutional goal of planning and implementing economic development and social justice in India.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

### Culture of freebies in India

#### 97. Are freebies affecting the economic growth of India?

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Are freebies affecting the economic growth of India?**" published in **The Hindu** on **29th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Govt policies and interventions

**Relevance:** Freebies and their impact on economic growth

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**Context:** In an address delivered at the Delhi School of Economics recently, N.K. Singh, the chairperson of the 15th Finance Commission, [warned about how the race to provide freebies to voters could be a “quick path to fiscal disaster”](#).

He also noted that freebies could be **harmful for the long-term economic growth of the country**, and emphasised the need to distinguish between productive and unproductive forms of welfare spending.

The article is an interview with two different experts who examine whether there is a case for doing away with freebie culture.

**Must Read:** [Culture of Freebies in India: Issues and recommendations – Explained, pointwise](#)

Freebies by states vs Fiscal stability

There's no simple answer to this question

### **Freebies – Different types**

– There are different kinds of freebies. Some of them are extremely justifiable, some of them are not. But given that in the last 30 years there has been rising inequality and also some level of distress in the last decade, some kind of relief to the population in the form of subsidies may not be unjustified. It **may actually be necessary** for the economy to continue on its growth path.

– **MGNREGA type of spending and subsidy** in the form of food ration schemes need to be expanded. They are not just doles, but go a long way in increasing the productive capacity of the population. One can call these as an investment for the long-term, for improving the productive capacity of the population.

– One of the experts state that he is not in favour of giving away loan waivers, because they have **undesired consequences** such as destroying the whole credit culture.

Centre also engages in giving out freebies not just to the poor people but also to a large number of corporations.

### **Fiscal Stability of states**

Broadly speaking, fiscal stability is a situation in which the government is able to deploy its fiscal policy towards long-term economic objectives, which are high employment and growth rates.

As far as fiscal stability and financial deterioration of states is concerned, if the welfare measures are sustainable and affordable, then that is fine as it is the prerogative of the political executive.

Also, as per the study of the State finances conducted by the RBI, it's seen that from 2005 onwards, in aggregate, **States have adhered to the limit in terms of their gross fiscal deficit** (*gap between the total revenue of the State and the total expenditure*)

Further, the **outstanding debt reduction of states** is going pretty well. From a high of 31% of GDP, it came down to about 22% of GDP by 2014-15. After that, it has inched up about five percentage points by FY 2020.

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– Central government's debt-to-GDP limit is supposed to be 40%, it has now crossed 90% of GDP. So, the problem of fiscal stability is more pressing at the level of the Centre.

### Way forward

There are **nuances to the issue**, and one will have to get into those nuances to take a final call on whether a certain welfare spending is necessary or not.

For instance: Some of the subsidies going into education, such as for laptops and other things have now become necessities for increasing productivity, knowledge, skills, and various other things.

So, we need a more **nuanced understanding** of the issue.

### 98. Let us pause to think about 'freebies' versus incentives

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Let us pause to think about 'freebies' versus incentives**" published in **Livemint** on **27th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Mobilization of resources

**Relevance:** Culture of freebies in India

**Context:** Sri Lanka government cut taxes across the board and provided several **free goods and services**, as a result of which the economy collapsed and the heavily-indebted country has had no choice but to default on its commitments.

As a corollary, the issue of freebies given out by Indian states has come under the lens here.

#### How various states in India indulge in giving freebies and are they justified?

States like Tamil Nadu and Bihar are known for giving women sewing machines, saris and cycles, but they buy these from budget revenues, contributing to the sales of these industries.

- It can be considered a **boost for the supplier industry and not a wasteful expenditure**, given the corresponding production.

**Punjab** has been criticized for giving free water and power that helps rich farmers. The contention is that only the rich have access to pump sets that are run free of cost to extract water.

- Here also, it can be argued that wheat and rice prices would have been higher if those costs were borne. Therefore, this is an **incentive to produce at a low cost**. It is analogous to support-price driven procurement by the Centre, which is also aimed at farm income support.

A similar thing is being done for the industry under **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme**, which promise businesses around 5% of their turnover for meeting investment and sale. The difference is, therefore, in terminology. A 'subsidy' is looked down upon, while an 'incentive' is considered progressive.

**NPAs and Farm loan waivers:** When industry defaults and a non-performing asset (NPA) is created, the payout indirectly comes from bank funds, which includes deposits. With no NPAs,

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depositors could get better returns and borrowers could be charged lower rates, as NPA provisions and write-offs raise the cost of intermediation.

– **Farm loan waivers** involve payments made to lenders from state budgets.

Here too, one cannot accept one and reject the other, as both sectors work under risk and uncertainty.

**Fertilizer subsidies** also ensure that food prices are kept under some control.

[Can states exceed their deficit limits arbitrarily?](#)

It is said that states are habituated to giving freebies, be it in the form of loan waivers or free electricity, cycles, laptops, TV sets and so on.

But, as the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) rules** are more binding on states, so they can't borrow beyond their limits and any deviation has to be approved by the Centre and central bank.

Therefore, while states have flexibility on how they choose to spend their money, they cannot in ordinary conditions exceed their deficit ceilings.

**Centre's role in giving freebies**

Most so-called freebies are given by the Centre rather than the states.

– **For example**, the PM Kisan scheme assures cash transfers to farmers and costs the exchequer about ₹65,000 crore. Can we really object to such outlays, given that Indian inequality remains so stark and has not been addressed by the much talked-about 'trickle-down theory' of growth?

[Way forward](#)

The classic principle of **the greatest benefit to the most disadvantaged** needs to be invoked for government expenditure.

It is true that **states will have to handle their finances better** and a line needs to be drawn on hand-outs. Ideally, a proportion of state expenditure should be earmarked for so-called freebies. This would ensure better overall utilization of resources.

But the term 'freebies' should also be defined better so as to distinguish cash transfers from 'free gifts', as the latter can act as a direct boost to supplier industries.

A fair assessment of these would serve India well.

### **SEDITION LAW IN INDIA**

**99.Scrap sedition: There's no point trying to mend this broken law. It's an anti-constitutional provision that must go**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Scrap sedition: There's no point trying to mend this broken law. It's an anti-constitutional provision that must go**" published in **The Times of India** on **25th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Govt policies and interventions, Constitution, Fundamental Rights

**Relevance:** Regarding sedition law

**News:** The Supreme Court has resumed its hearing of petitions seeking the scrapping of the sedition provision in IPC. This comes at a time when this colonial era law is becoming a major threat to political and personal freedoms.

[Why sedition law must be scrapped?](#)

Section 124A IPC punishes words or actions that attempt to incite hatred, contempt and disaffection towards governments with three years to life imprisonment.

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“Hatred”, “contempt” and “disaffection” are such **broad phrases** that even legitimate criticism or dissent can earn a sedition charge. Not surprisingly, hundreds of dissenters over the years have paid a heavy price after being falsely accused of “deshdroh”.

Political rivals are being targeted by the governments by prosecuting their thoughts and words. This same tactic was used by British imperialists to silence freedom fighters, like Tilak and Gandhi.

The **1962 Kedar Nath Singh judgment** has failed to achieve its objective of narrowing down sedition to offences betraying an “intention” and “tendency” to cause public disorder or endanger state security. Repeated emphasis by the SC and high courts that criticism of governments isn’t sedition has gone unheard, too.

**Sedition cognisable and non-bailable.** Further, it **doesn’t require an actual crime to have been committed.** Not surprisingly, sedition has been invoked against writers, cartoonists, politicians, and even ordinary citizens like the thousands of villagers who agitated against the Koodankulam nuclear plant in Tamil Nadu.

There is now a **growing trend of private complaints of sedition**, where any motivated individual can lodge a sedition complaint and make life hell for people not even remotely connected to the complainant. This must also be noted by SC.

Way forward

Britain, which gifted India sedition, removed it from the country’s statute in 2009. SC should do the honours for India and scrap the sedition provision.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

### **IND-US RELATIONS**

#### **100. Decade Of Emerging Economies**

**Source:** The **post** is based on an article “**Decade of Emerging Economies**” published in **the Times of India** on **30th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** The US decline and upcoming opportunities for Indian Economy

**News:** The US is witnessing **decline** in the global economic. Therefore, it is argued that the US economy is not going to comeback in the coming decade. In fact, it will be an era of the emerging world. For example, 7 out of 10 emerging stock markets are outperforming the US market.

#### **What are the past trends of rise and fall of the US economy?**

The US boom of the 1960s ended in the 1970s. The US boom of the 1990s ended in the dotcom bust. In the 2010s the US came back. In the 2010s almost all the emerging markets (except

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China) lost shares of both global GDP and global market. However, the US boom of the 2010s is showing signs of decline & it is unlikely that the US will revive once again.

### **Why is it difficult for the US to regain its pre-eminence in the coming decade?**

The US pre-eminence is being threatened by the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. American declinists argue that the US is losing ground to China.

Inflation is running well above the global average in the US.

In response to the **financial sanctions** imposed by the US on Russia, many nations have started looking for ways to **reduce dependence** on the dollar, which is the foundation of the **US financial power**.

The **US debt** has risen faster than most other countries. The US debts rose from 17% to well over 50% of its GDP between 2010-2020. The debt has further risen to new heights due to the most **generous stimulus package** rolled out in the US in response to the coronavirus. Such heavy debts have often taken down the **financial empires** in the past.

The **US Federal Reserve's move** to push easy money in the economy has fuelled the rise of monopolies and a new generation of "**zombie**" companies. These firms do not boost the economy but dampen it.

In the 2000s, almost every developing nation witnessed accelerated growth. It led to forecasts that the coming century will be an "**Emerging Market Century**". Various economies in regions from Southeast Asia to Eastern Europe (other than Taiwan, South Korea, or China) have gained strength.

The factories are seeking **cheaper labour** or **shorter shipping routes**. The factories want to move out of China. They are looking for other countries like **Vietnam, Bangladesh and Cambodia**.

There is a demand to build a **greener global economy**. It has resulted into **greenflation** (a rise in commodity prices driven by environmental pressures). This will lead to demand for new supplies into the global market. This will create new opportunities for **major exporters** such as Brazil, South Africa and Saudi Arabia.

At present, the war between Ukraine and Russia will also increase the demand for materials from other commodity-producing nations.

Every crisis creates compulsions for the emerging nations to adopt reforms to **boost productivity and growth**. For example, India has been privatising some of its state-owned enterprises, Indonesia has cut taxes and eased labour laws, and Saudi Arabia is loosening immigration barriers.

The pandemic has accelerated the **digital revolution** in emerging economies than developed ones. The share of the digital economy has been increasing in the GDP in emerging economies. For instance, India is home to as many new technology companies today as is France or Germany.



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Today's **growth rates** in the **developing world** are like the much higher growth rates that were recorded during the early post-World War II decades.

At present, the developed economies are witnessing **slowdown** driven by declining population and productivity growth.

### **Argument against**

China's rising share of global GDP has come largely at the expense of Europe and Japan, not at the expense of the US.

China is facing its own **huge debt problem**. It is also facing the challenge of an ageing population. Therefore, new winners may well be emerging economies outside of China.

## **IND-AUS RELATIONS**

### **101. Common values, shared threats in India-Australia cyber security ties**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Common values, shared threats in India-Australia cybersecurity ties**" published in **The Indian Express** on **27th Apr 22**.

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

**Relevance:** Indo-Aus bilateral ties in cybersecurity

**Context:** The signing of India-Australia ECTA is a concrete example of the bilateral faith in common values, and understanding of threats and goals. A reflection of this is cooperation in cybersecurity.

[Significance of cybersecurity as an important area of cooperation](#)

### **Russia-Ukraine conflict:**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has shown how cyber threat actors, both state and non-state, have become significant players in hybrid or "unrestricted" warfare.

Both countries have used malicious elements in the information as well as operational space. Also, non-state actors like the hacktivist group Anonymous claimed to have caused significant damage to critical Russian and Belarusian financial and military infrastructure.

### **China's actions**

China is accused of having amassed **numerous cyber weapons** and has allegedly carried out sophisticated operations aimed at **espionage, theft of intellectual property, and destructive attacks on internet resources** of some countries.

Australia and India have been at the receiving end of several such campaigns by the so-called Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) groups, supported by or assumed to be located in China.

[Efforts to promote cooperation in cybersecurity b/w India and Aus](#)

At the June 2020 virtual bilateral summit, Prime Minister of India and his Australian counterpart elevated the bilateral relationship to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**.

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– The **new cyber framework** includes a five-year plan to work together on the digital economy, cybersecurity and critical and emerging technologies. This will be supported by a \$9.7 million fund for bilateral research to improve regional cyber resilience.

An annual **Cyber Policy Dialogue**, a new **Joint Working Group on Cyber Security Cooperation** and a **joint working group on ICTs** have been established.

An annual **India-Australia Foreign Ministers Cyber Framework Dialogue** will be held.

India will now be included in a core Australian initiative called the **International Cyber Engagement Strategy**. It began in 2017 to actively conduct capacity-building arrangements in Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand, and support similar activities in Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia.

– In 2021 Australia added critical technologies to the initiative, making it important to the bilateral partnership with India and to the Quad.

In February, the foreign ministers of India and Australia recognised cooperation in cyber governance, cyber security, digital economy, cyber and critical technologies as an essential pillar of the relations between the two countries. A **joint Centre of Excellence for Critical and Emerging Technology Policy**, to be located in Bengaluru, will be set up.

What steps have been taken by both the countries on the domestic front to secure their cyberspace?

### Australia

The **Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC)** in Canberra is the focal point of the country's cybersecurity information, advice and assistance efforts.

– It draws expertise from national law enforcement, intelligence agencies, crime investigation, and national security bodies.

– ACSC has a partnership programme with the corporate world to facilitate intelligence-sharing on threats.

**AustCyber**, another government effort, aims at establishing an internationally competitive domestic cybersecurity industry.

### India

India has set up the office of the **National Cybersecurity Coordinator**, a national **Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN)**, a national **Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Agency (NCIIPC)**

It has also made appropriate **amendments to the Information Technology Act and Rules** to enhance its cybersecurity posture. This has upped India's rank to 10th in the Global Cyber Security Index (GCI) 2020, from 47th just two years earlier.

### **Way forward**

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India and Australia **share common concerns** around 5G rollouts, threats by APT groups, cybercrime, information warfare and threats to a democratic order.

Deepening cooperation can develop avenues for mutual learning and create complementary markets in cyber tools and technologies, boosting bilateral business and strategic commitments on both continents.

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

#### **102. Placing semicon diplomacy at the heart of India's foreign policy**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Placing semicon diplomacy at the heart of India's foreign policy**” published in the **Indian Express** on **30th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** Atmanirbhar Bharat in semiconductor Sector and Semicon Diplomacy

**News:** The PM of India made a clarion call for **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**. Consequently, the government announced the **Semicon India programme** for India's drive for self-sufficiency in semiconductors. It aims to provide \$10 bn fiscal support and other non-fiscal measures for the sector.

#### **How is semicon diplomacy relevant to India's foreign policy?**

Semiconductor chips are the lifeblood of the **modern information age**. These semiconductor chips are the drivers for ICT development.

The semiconductor is the cornerstone of all electronic products. They enable electronic products to compute and control actions.

It can be a great example of **peacetime global cooperation**. This is because the manufacturing cycle of a semiconductor chip changes hands approx. 70 times across international borders.

The global semiconductor market is projected to be \$1.2 tn by 2030, India needs to be well-positioned to capture it.

Placing **semicon diplomacy** at the heart of **India's foreign policy** is essential, both **strategically** and **economically**.

Attaining self-sufficiency in **semiconductor manufacturing** can mean collective growth of **India's neighbourhood** in the **South Asian region**.

#### **What are the issues in the global value chain of semiconductor products?**

The **semiconductor manufacturing capacities** are concentrated in a few **geographies** like Taiwan, South Korea, East Asia and China. The **concentration of capacities** poses many challenges, leading several countries to be vulnerable to a few and prone to **supply chain disruption**.

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The **Covid-19 pandemic** resulted in chip shortages. For example, automakers were hit hard. Now, the Russia-Ukraine Conflict has impacted the supply chain of the raw material resources for the semiconductor chipmakers.

### What are the opportunities for India?

India has the opportunity to become an **attractive alternative destination** for semiconductor manufacturing.

Companies are looking to diversify their global supply chain. They are looking for alternatives to their bases in China.

The establishment of the value chain for semiconductors would ensure a multiplier effect on the entire Indian economy.

Second most **imported items** after oil and petroleum products are **electronics products**. Therefore, domestic production would be **saving forex** and reducing the **balance of payments**, especially vis a vis China.

India can go for self-reliance in the semiconductor sector. It will also encourage growth and prosperity of all, in the spirit of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**.

### Way Forward

The way ahead is conceptualising a **semicon diplomacy action plan**. It can be done by increasing **multilateral** and **bilateral cooperation** across the **value chain of semiconductors** which includes design, manufacturing, and packaging.

Quad can play a very important role in semicon diplomacy. **Australia** can be an important **supplier** of **raw material resources**. The US and Japan support in the **advanced semiconductor technology** & capacity building of India.

The semiconductor manufacturing and testing bases are **heavily concentrated** in East Asia, the **Act East policy** provides an opportunity to connect and strengthen ties with key players in the region.

India can promote **frequent technological exchanges** between a regional bloc like ASEAN via tracks in forums like the **East Asia Summit** and the **ASEAN regional forum** will be beneficial.

The recently announced **Semicon India programme** is a step in the right direction.

India needs to **harness its strengths**, such as the strong presence of global EMS players, diaspora, world-class design ecosystem, demographic dividend, and use it as a pedestal for global partnerships and outreach.

### 103. India's e-belt and road initiative for digital diplomacy

**Source:** The post is based on an article "India's e-belt and road initiative for digital diplomacy" published in the **Live Mint** on **29th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 International Relations; and GS3 Science and Technology – Application of Information Technology

**Relevance:** Digital Diplomacy

**News:** In recent times, India has discovered that its **homegrown digital solutions** have furthered its development agenda. Moreover, it's also argued that these digital solutions can also support India in widening its diplomatic efforts.

#### India's digitization journey

India's **digitization journey** is taking a fast pace. It began in 2010 with Aadhaar to empower Indian citizens.

As of 2021, India had issued more than 1.3 billion **digital identity cards** via its Aadhaar platform and over 1.1 billion digital vaccine certificates through its CoWin platform.

India's **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** recorded 5 billion transactions in a month for the first time in March 2022. It crossed the \$1-trillion mark in transaction value.

#### How can India leverage its digital solutions in the form of digital diplomacy?

Several countries want to either replicate the Aadhaar model or take note of Aadhaar technology to develop their own digital ID systems. For example, Sri Lanka aims to implement a digital ID programme modelled on Aadhaar.

**National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** is assisting many countries to set up **real-time e-payment systems**. For example, Bhutan & Nepal has adopted UPI standards and UPI platform respectively. In April, BHIM UPI went live across the UAE.

The Reserve Bank of India and Singapore Authority announced a project to link their respective fast payment systems.

India's **Digital Infrastructure for Vaccination Open Credentialing (DIVOC)**, an open-source vaccine management platform has been leveraged by Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines, to streamline their covid vaccination programmes.

Indigenous **digital systems interoperable** between jurisdictions can reduce **compliance** and **transaction costs**.

Digital diplomacy can increase **India's soft power**. For example, **Estonia's X-Road open software ecosystem** which enabled cross-border data exchange with Finland has increased Estonia's **soft power**.

#### What are the key factors that have enabled India to emerge as a leader in this field?

**First, India's IT sector** has consistently remained a **key driver** of economic growth. In fact, India's digital infrastructure is growing.

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**Second**, India's **strong political will** and **deliberative policymaking** has steered the digital ecosystem. For instance, the MEITY's Policy on Adoption of Open-Source Software, Policy on Open APIs, Policy for Open Standards, etc, has helped create digital public goods and infrastructure.

**Third**, the government has adopted a **participative approach** in the initial decision-making for building such digital infrastructure as the digital world goes beyond **traditional bureaucratic expertise**. For example, an **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) Council** which comprises experts from the bureaucracy and other expertise areas.

India's **digital public goods**-led diplomacy could play an instrumental role in an emerging **new world order**. The digital infrastructure in critical areas of the global economy will increase **India's resilience** and extend its **strategic advantage**.

### Way Forward

The geopolitical tensions mandate building resilience, for which a new form of cooperation is required. In this context, India can lay out its own digital **'belt and road' network**.

A parliamentary panel of India has already proposed to build an alternative to the **SWIFT network**.

### 104. "India as a democratic superpower"

**Source:** The post is based on an article **"India as a democratic superpower"** published in **The Hindu** on **27th April 2022**.

**News:** India is the world's **third-largest economy**, at least in purchasing power terms. Further, it has been argued that India has emerged as a democratic superpower capable of providing the leadership that the world needs.

### What are the geopolitical and other challenges in front of the international community?

Russia has launched an unprovoked war against Ukraine. It is a war against Ukraine's existence as a **free** and **independent country**.

Russia wants to correct what he sees as the greatest **geo-political disaster** of the last century. It aims to restore **Greater Russia**. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a step in that direction.

China has grown itself based on **China-centred globalisation** over the past couple of decades. It has started asserting itself. It may endanger the **free, and safer world order**.

The ongoing saga in Ukraine will boost the **morale** of China. China would be inspired to take **Taiwan**. China wants to become the **world's top country**.

Further, Beijing and Moscow have minted a **"no limits" partnership**. This is going to be the **greatest geopolitical threat**.

### How can India leverage the opportunities presented by the global geopolitics today?

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India is a member of **Quad**. The group has been organized to resist **Chinese aggression**. And Australia is the key member in this pursuit.

There is a need to **reduce dependence** on China. It could threaten the national security.

India has the opportunity to substitute China. India can become a **trustworthy trade partner** with fellow democracies. The **Australia-India trade deal** can play a major role in this direction.

India should extend the **“make in India” campaign** to all the consumer lines and the intermediate goods currently made in China. The Indian economy is a vibrant **free market, has a booming tech sector, and** a large population base to support the economic activities.

Countries like India having **democratic values** in common can promote **free and fair trade** across the world.

India gained its freedom through **moral suasion** and **peaceful protest**, through satyagraha. After **75 years of independence**, India does not have to be anyone's junior partner in the international community. India can act as the leader of the free world. India should support **free countries** and **free people**.

India shares **traditional friendship** with Russia. It has earned **palpable goodwill** among the ordinary Russians. Therefore, India is uniquely placed to exercise **moral leadership** and appeal to Russian leadership.

Way forward

As per Ex-Australian PM, India has emerged as a democratic superpower, and can provide much needed leadership to the world at present.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

### ISSUES WITH THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

**105. Retire judges later: Constitutional court judges are being pensioned off too early. Their services are badly needed**

**Source:** This post is based on the article **“Retire judges later: Constitutional court judges are being pensioned off too early. Their services are badly needed”** published in **The Times of India** on **25th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Polity – Judiciary

**Relevance:** Early retirement age of the judges and the need to fill the vacancies in the judiciary

**Context:** With seven Supreme Court judges retiring this year and over a third of sanctioned high court judges posts lying vacant, Parliament should urgently consider increasing the retirement ages of SC and HC judges from 65 and 62 respectively.

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Scarce judicial resources are constantly expended in finding suitable candidates for these top constitutional positions. And with replacements rarely happening concurrently, the pendency burden grows faster.

**What is the scale of the problem?**

The vacancy problem is **more pronounced in High Courts (HCs)** where 45% of pending 59 lakh cases are awaiting disposal for over five years.

– While the overall vacancy position is 35% in HCs, in big HCs like Allahabad, Calcutta and Patna nearly 50% sanctioned posts lie vacant.

– The bizarrely different retirement ages for SC-HC judges may be a colonial legacy, but the UK has progressively increased retirement age for judicial office holders to 75.

Even Article 224A's option of allowing reappointment of retired HC judges hasn't been exercised.

**What are the benefits of increasing the retirement age of the judges?**

**Pendency of cases** can be dealt effectively if judges retire late, thereby helping crores of citizens awaiting justice in civil and criminal matters.

**Judicial independence:** Many judges secure positions as judicial members of tribunals and commissions post-retirement. But this strong desire for post-retirement jobs weakens judicial independence vis-à-vis central and state executives. If judges serve till 70 there's minimal incentive to seek post-retirement avenues.

**Attracting the best minds:** A higher retirement age can also attract the best minds to the vocation.

– HC collegiums face great difficulty attracting noted lawyers because of the low retirement age of 62 and delayed appointments.

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

### **RUSSIA UKRAINE CONFLICT**

#### **106. The march of folly**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The march of folly**” published in the **Business Standard** on **28th April 2022**.

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

**Relevance:** Global Geopolitics

**Context:** At present, Russian invasion of Ukraine is facing a lot of criticism from the international community. It seems Russia is not going to win the war.

This is going to be very similar to the Russian and US failures in Afghanistan, and their failed interventions in West Asia.



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### Why is Russia not going to win this war?

Russia is said to be a superpower not on the basis of its economy, but due to its **conventional military capacity**. For example, a vast nuclear arsenal.

The **conventional military invasion** cannot succeed, **fierce domestic resistance** (Underdog strategy) in Ukraine.

Russia's war will remain subject to **local resistance, strong sanctions** and Russia will remain a **pariah state** in the eyes of the West. It will lose the economic links with Europe, which are central to its economic viability, and will be forced into a **subordinate position** in an alliance with China.

### What are the implications of Russian failure for global geopolitics over the next few years?

#### Optimistic Scenario

There can be a **rapprochement** between **Russia** and **Europe**. The reason may be the impact of **economic sanctions, unexpected military setbacks, Europe's dependence** on Russian oil and gas and **Russia's dependence** on access to European markets.

In fact, Europe is still importing energy from Russia & has exempted the banks from the sanctions for making payments for the energy import.

#### Most likely outcome

There can be a **new Cold War** dominated by China and the US-NATO. Russia will be playing the role of a junior partner to China. Its **substantiality** in **global geopolitics** and the world economy will depend on two factors –

- (1) First, Russia may not accept subordination to China. Both have competing interests in the Stans of Central Asia
- (2) China's **geopolitical claims** and **ambitions** in the **South China Sea** and **Taiwan** or its economic, technological and investment linkages with the West. However, **China** will remain cautious to project its power in Taiwan and the SCS. China can face the potential impact of Western sanctions on its economy. It depends on access to the OECD markets and Asian market and investments from the developed world.

#### Pessimistic Scenario

Russia can escalate the war by using **tactical nuclear weapons** or **chemical attacks**. It will deepen the western engagement in the war, and could lead to an all-European war if the conflict extends to border NATO states. This could well become a global war with the inevitable US engagement and a possible Chinese involvement.

#### Subsidiary outcome to pessimistic Scenario

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**Germany** and **Japan** can emerge as **military powers**. They have economic and technological capacity. They can move to **higher military spending**, and can start projecting power abroad. This can influence the power balance in **Europe** and **East Asia**.

### Implications on India

India is caught in the middle of this **geopolitical tension** between the US-NATO and China-Russia. India could not exercise **geopolitical choice** due to its **defence dependence on Russia**.

### Way Forward

India needs a **medium to long-term strategy** to cope with the new Cold War and the threat of escalation.

It should reduce its **defence dependence** on the super-powers, by **balancing** the **dependence** on Russia and the West, and at the same time building up **domestic capacity** more rapidly.

At foreign policy level, India can build a **global alliance** which would act as a **coalition of restraint** on the two adversaries in the **emerging geopolitical conflict**.

– For example, the 58 countries which abstained from voting on the **UN General Assembly (UNGA)** resolution to expel Russia from the UN Human Rights Council can be a starting point. They can revive **old non-aligned movements**.

– If and when the **geopolitical conflict** gets entrenched, India can lead this global alliance to form a **Third Force**. This force would act as a **restraining force**. This would prevent the European conflict from becoming an implicit or explicit **Third World War**.

## INDONESIA'S PALM OIL CRISIS

### 107. How Indonesia's ban on palm oil exports will hurt us

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**How Indonesia's ban on palm oil exports will hurt us**” published in the **Livemint** on **26th Apr 22**.

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

**Relevance:** Palm oil crisis in Indonesia

**Context:** The abrupt ban on palm oil exports by Indonesia, its biggest exporter, is expected to impact household economics globally.

Palm oil is among the world's most-used cooking oils, and India's dependence on Indonesia is expected to deal a supply-side shock.

**Must Read:** [Explained: Indonesia's palm oil crisis, and its implications for India](#)

### How will this ban affect India?

The export ban could lead to an **increase in food inflation**, as India is the largest importer of palm oil from Indonesia.

– The commodity accounts for nearly 40% share of India's overall edible oil consumption basket.

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– So, edible oil prices could surge as much as 100-200% in India if the government fails to find a new source of palm oil.

Cooking oil prices are already at record levels as the Ukraine war disrupted shipments of sunflower oil. Prior to the war, the Black Sea region made up over 75% of global sunflower oil exports.

**Impact on packaged good firms:** Since palm oil and its derivatives are used in the production of several household goods, the impact of the ban could eat into the margins of Indian packaged consumer goods players.

What is the solution to this problem?

**Mitigating the impact of the ban:** Palm oil prices rose by nearly 5% over the weekend after the announcement of the export ban by Indonesia. Finding an immediate solution is going to be a challenge. Even if India manages to find an alternative source, prices will be high.

– The industry expects India to **engage with Indonesia on an urgent basis**, before the ban comes into effect on 28 April.

– Besides, the Centre is likely to **negotiate with other oil-supplying nations in Latin America and Canada**.

**Finding another exporting country:**

India is most likely to turn to **Malaysia**, the second-biggest palm oil exporter, to plug the gap. But Malaysia is also facing a labour shortage owing to the pandemic which has resulted in a production shortfall.

– India could also explore importing from **Thailand and Africa**—they produce three million tonnes each.

GS2 – INTERNATIONALS RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL ORG AND GROUPINGS

### **GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS AND RELATED ISSUES – G20**

#### **108. Ride Between East & West**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Ride Between East & West**” published in **the Times of India** on **28th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations – International Groupings and Org

**Relevance:** India’s Foreign Policy; India’s geo-economic policy; and strategic economic self-interest doctrine

**News:** Recently, **the Group of Twenty (G20)** was facing the heat of disruption. The G7 group of rich nations have ganged. Their leaders walked out of a meeting of **G20 finance ministers** demanding Russia’s ouster. The developed countries have threatened to prevent the convening of the World Trade Organisation’s 12th ministerial meeting.

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### About G20

It was formed in 1999 in response to the **Asian financial crisis**. It was a gathering of **finance ministers** of **globally economically consequential countries**.

In 2008 the group played a very important role in the resolution of the **2008-09 financial crisis**.

### What will be the implications of the ongoing split in the G20?

This is a sign that the weaponization of **global economic linkages** and disruption of **global economic institutions** by developed economies has become a reality now.

The grouping was created to resolve a crisis, not perpetuate an economic crisis. In 2008, **China** and **the US** adopted a cooperative stance that enabled the G20 to restore stability to the world economy unlike the **adversarial stand-off** taken in 2022.

As per Ex-PM of India Manmohan Singh, India should work for **global cooperation** on the **economic front** even if the nations are divided and engaged in geopolitical conflict. The reasons are

(1) The **retaliatory economic sanctions** imposed on Russia have disrupted the **global village**. It has hurt all nations, especially developing countries, including India included. The economic sanctions have contributed to **global inflationary pressures**.

(2) In this fractured G20, India has the opportunity to become leaders in the **emerging world system**. Apart from a **non-aligned doctrine**, India needs to adopt a **nondisruptive geo-economic policy**. It is important for India to adopt a **strategic economic self-interest doctrine** in all global economic institutions, be it WTO, IMF, World Bank, or indeed G20.

(3) The global economic disruption caused by Western economic sanctions and the ongoing boycott of Russia in global economic forums need initiatives from the countries like **India, Indonesia** and **South Africa**. They can act as **bridging powers** between the East and West.

(4) There is going to be a **reshaping** and **realignment** of the **world order**. This will be a unique opportunity for India to reassess its foreign policy, economic policy and geopolitical strategy.

(5) In the post-Cold War era of globalisation, the **North-South economic differences** were brushed under the carpet. The **East-West geopolitical divide** created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought to the fore **North-South geo-economic differences**.

(6) Few major countries helped bridge both the East-West and North-South divides through cooperative approach. They were successful in creating a **multilateral trading system** under the auspices of WTO and the progress on **climate change negotiations**.

**FEDERALISM AND RELATED ISSUES**

**109. States vs Centre on selection of Vice-Chancellors: rules, friction**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**States vs Centre on selection of Vice-Chancellors: rules, friction**” published in **The Indian Express** on **26th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to the Federal Structure

**Relevance:** Tussle between the state govt and the Governor, Appointments of Vice Chancellors (VCs)

**News:** The Tamil Nadu Assembly recently **passed two Bills** that seek to transfer the Governor’s power in appointing Vice-Chancellors of 13 state universities to the state government.

As per the state govt, the Bills were required as the Governor was disregarding the state government’s opinion on the appointments of VCs, an argument also made by states such as Maharashtra and West Bengal in the past.

A look at the rules guiding the appointments of VCs across states reveal wide variations, leaving the field open for dispute, particularly in cases where there are sharp political differences between the state and the Centre, which appoints the Governors.

**What are the highlights of the two Bills?**

**Appointment of VCs**

– **Proposed system:** The Bills passed in Tamil Nadu stress that “every appointment of the Vice-Chancellor shall be made by the Government from out of a panel of three names” recommended by a search-cum-selection committee.

– **Present system:** Currently, the Governor, in his capacity as the Chancellor of state universities, has the power to pick a VC from the shortlisted names.

**Removal of VCs**

The Bills also seek to empower the **state government to have the final word on the removal of VCs**, if needed.

– Removal will be carried out based on inquiries by a retired High Court judge or a bureaucrat who has served at least as a Chief Secretary, according to one of the Bills.

**Are other states trying to curtail the Governor’s role in appointing VCs?**

Yes.

**Maharashtra:** In December 2021, the Maharashtra Assembly passed a Bill amending the Maharashtra Public Universities Act, 2016.

– Under the original Act, the Maharashtra government had no say in appointment of VCs.

– If the changes take effect, the Governor **will be given two names to choose from** by the state government, following a panel’s suggestions.

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**West Bengal:** In 2019, the West Bengal government, took away the Governor's authority in appointing VCs to state universities. It has also hinted at removing the Governor as the Chancellor of the universities.

**Kerala:** In Left-ruled Kerala, the Governor alleged that the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor of Kannur University was done against his wishes. The government in Odisha has also tried to bring appointments to state universities under its control. But it has been challenged by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

### What is at the root of the differences?

In some states, the elected governments have repeatedly accused the Governors of **acting at the behest of the Centre** on various subjects, including education.

The regulations, which differ from state to state, are often **open to interpretation and disputes** are routine.

### What is the UGC's role in this?

Education comes under the **Concurrent List**, but entry 66 of the Union List gives the Centre substantial authority over higher education.

The UGC plays that **standard-setting role**, even in the case of appointments in universities and colleges.

According to the UGC Regulations, 2018, the "Visitor/Chancellor" — mostly the Governor in states — shall appoint the VC out of the panel of names recommended by search-cum-selection committees. Higher educational institutions, particularly those that get UGC funds, are mandated to follow its regulations.

These are usually followed without friction in the case of central universities, but are sometimes resisted by the states in the case of state universities.

### What are SC's observations?

Recently, setting aside the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat's SP University by the state government, the Supreme Court made some key observations.

As per SC

*– any appointment as a Vice Chancellor contrary to the provisions of the UGC Regulations can be said to be in violation of the statutory provisions, warranting a writ of quo warranto.*

## **RIGHT TO HOUSING**

### **110. Demolishing the rule of law**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Demolishing the rule of law**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Provisions of the Indian Constitution

**Relevance:** The Rule of Law; Ethical Governance

**News:** Recently, the Supreme Court ordered **the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC)** to maintain “**status quo**” on the demolition drive against the illegal constructions in the Jahagirpuri Area, Delhi.

Such demolition drives were also carried on the homes of the alleged rioters in **Khargone** in Madhya Pradesh and **Khambhat** in Gujarat which were also hit by communal violence.

#### **What are the arguments of the local authorities?**

The NDMC issued a statement that the demolition was a part of a drive against “**illegal encroachments**”

#### **What are the issues with the recently executed demolition drives?**

These actions of state and local authorities blatantly disregard the **due process of law** and **established judicial precedents** regarding evictions of the people from the permanent establishments.

Such actions undermine the **basic tenets of criminal law**. They imply the **brutal** use of the **state power** for **collective punishment**

In fact, most of the urban residents live on the **margins of legality**. According to the **Delhi Economic Survey 2008-09**, only about 24% of the city lived in “**planned colonies**” and the rest lived in **informal** or **unplanned areas** like *jhuggi jhopdi* clusters and unauthorised colonies.

The **Draft Master Plan of Delhi, 2041** also acknowledges that **unplanned areas** have emerged as important places in Delhi. They provide **high density, mix-use hubs**, in addition to **affordable options** for housing, micro, small and medium enterprises.

The **regularisation** of “**unauthorised colonies**” has become a norm in Delhi Since the 1970s. For example, In the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections in 2020, the Union Government launched the **PM-UDAY (Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana)** scheme which confers property rights to residents of unauthorised colonies.

The **principles of natural justice** entails that **No public authority** can demolish buildings without giving the affected parties a **reasonable opportunity** to be heard. For example, the **Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957** and the **Delhi Development Act, 1957** mandates the authority to serve an **advance notice** before demolishing the permanent buildings.

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In *Ajay Maken vs Union of India (2019)*, the Delhi High Court invoked the idea of the “**Right to the City**” and the “**Right to Adequate Housing**” from international law. The court held no authority shall carry out eviction without **conducting a survey** and consulting the population on eviction and rehabilitation for those eligible. The locals should be given “**meaningful engagement**” with respect to the relocation plans

In the *Sudama Singh vs Government of Delhi (2010)*, The Delhi High Court mandated that the state should comply with **fair procedure** before undertaking any eviction.

The present case of demolition of homes and shops of alleged culprits of **communal riots** is the sign of **majoritarian justice**.

### Way Forward

In addition to **judicial scrutiny**, the protection of the **rule of law** demands a **broader political discourse**. The issue of the **majoritarian upsurge** from the state and society is a great cause of concern.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

### INDIA – EU RELATIONS

#### 111. India’s EU ties could pay off well if we take a discerning approach

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India’s EU ties could pay off well if we take a discerning approach**” published in the **Live Mint** on **28th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 International Relations, Regional Grouping

**Relevance:** India-EU Relations; India-EU Trade relations

**News:** On 25 April, India and the European Union (EU) issued a joint press release on the launch of an **EU- India Trade and Technology Council**.

#### What is the significance?

The Council will promote cooperation between both jurisdictions on issues that lie at the intersection of trade, trusted technology and security.

It will augment avenues for greater market access for Indian technology companies in the EU.

It may prompt the percolation of **European values and ethics** into Indian rule-making on **emerging technologies**.

#### What are the issues in embracing the European Values wrt emerging technologies?

**(A) Compliance burden: The EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** is based on the **value of individual privacy**. It works on a **consent-based framework**. It mandates for user consent before collection of data and processing data for an expressly-stated purpose.



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– The GDPR has increased the **compliance burden** on technology businesses. It has prompted **high rates** of fatigue among European users. They are fed up with privacy notices and consent notices.

**(B) Distortion of the competition:** The EU’s newly-adopted **Digital Markets Act (DMA)**: It works on the value of **fair competition**. Historically, **European competition policy** has placed restrictions on firms which are in **dominant market positions**.

– The restrictions imposed on the big business entities may actually “**hinder or distort competition**” in the European market. For example, the **DMA** primarily targets large technology companies in a bid to support the aspirations of smaller businesses and developers.

The EU has **weaponized** the important **value of fair competition** towards narrow and **protectionist ends**. For example, the EU does not have any large social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter of its own. Therefore, the EU policy on interoperability seek to weaken the position of US tech majors in Europe. It seems to be an **industrial policy** operating under the garb of fair competition.

Similarly, the EU policy can target **Indian digital products** that seek access to the EU markets in the future.

### **What are the areas where the EU-India Trade and Technology Council can be leveraged?**

To ensure that our businesses are able to navigate an **under-penetrated European market** (15% of Indian software services exports enter in EU market).

To work while adhering to the **common values** like ethics in **emerging technologies** like artificial intelligence.

The selection of the European values in rule making should be made in a manner not detrimental to the Indian businesses.

The **Indian Personal Data Protection Bill** should not catch-all frameworks prevalent across the world. It should adopt a **nimble approach**. It should protect **individual privacy** by targeting specific harms.

### **112. India, Europe and the Russian complication**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India, Europe and the Russian complication**” published in the **Indian Express** on **26th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, **Emmanuel Macron** was re-elected as the President of France. This comes amid the geopolitical waves being witnessed in Europe. The **Ukraine war** has persuaded Delhi to recalibrate its **great power relations**. For the **first time since independence**, India’s interests are now aligning with those of Europe as both can help reshape **Eurasia** as well as the **Indo-Pacific**.

### **What are the challenges in India’s relationship with the Europe?**

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India's Russian connection had complicated Indian relations with Europe since early 20th Century. **The Russian revolution of 1917** inspired large sections of the Indian national movement. During the Cold War, India-Russia partnership dominated India's international relations.

In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has compelled Europe to embark on a costly effort to disconnect from Russia. It presents a **major near-term problem** of balancing between Russia and Europe.

### What are the implications of the French Presidential election result?

The elected French President is known to have laid a strong foundation for **India's strategic partnership** with France.

Under the banner of Emmanuel Macron, the role of French in the present geopolitics will remain the same. The outcomes of the election have sent a sigh of relief across Europe and America. It means the present Europe seems to be remained united against Russian aggression in coming days

### What are the factors that facilitate transformation of India's ties with Europe?

India and the EU have talked of a **strategic partnership** for two decades. Although, the partnership has struggled to realise it.

The **Ukraine invasion** has put Delhi in acute **strategic discomfort** in the relationship between Russia and the West. India cannot **sacrifice** its growing ties to the West at the cost of historic relations with Russia. Russia is a **declining economic weight**. Russia's growing **international isolation** begins to simplify India's choices. Delhi has insisted that its silence is not an **endorsement** of Russian aggression. Therefore, Delhi is intensifying its engagement with Brussels.

**China** adds a **new imperative** to India's partnership with Europe. China has emerged as a great power. It now presents a **generational challenge** for Indian policymakers. Now, Moscow & Beijing have announced a partnership **"without limits"**. Therefore, the Chinese **long-term political ambitions** have been exposed after the declaration of Beijing's **geopolitical alliance** with Moscow. Therefore, Europe can emerge as an important partner in letting India cope with the China challenge.

The US is another factor in the **India-EU relationship**. The Ukraine crisis has underlined the **US's centrality** in securing Europe against Russia.

– In **Asia**, the US also act as a critical factor in shaping peace and security amid Chinese assertion. Therefore, the US wants a strong European Union in Europe and Delhi would become a credible provider of regional security in Asia. The US wants India and Europe to build stronger ties with each other.

### Way Forward

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Both India and Europe are trying to reduce reliance on Russia. And over the longer term, a **diminished Russia** is bound to become less of a complicating factor in India's engagement with Europe.

### 113. A new indispensable power

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**A new indispensable power**" published in the **Business Standard** on **24th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations – International Org and Groupings

**Relevance:** India-the EU Relation, Free Trade Agreement

**News:** Recently, the **British Prime Minister** Boris Johnson's visited India. Further, the president of the European Commission is scheduled to visit India in the coming days. Therefore, India-EU relations become the centre of debate

#### What are the various challenges for India to increase its integration with the EU?

The EU comprises a **mammoth bureaucracy**. It is highly complex. Therefore, it is more difficult to conclude an agreement

The biggest hurdle to a **deeper economic relationship** has consistently been **regulatory divergences**. Both the EU and India have taken its decisions in different administrative silos.

There are other **differences** on multiple **regulatory** and **economic fronts**. For example, differences from digital regulation to intellectual property to phytosanitary requirements

At present, there is a lack of **institutional basis** for EU-India co-operation. This derails the **regulatory convergence** and **economic integration** between India and the EU.

India's trade negotiations face challenges from multiple quarters like **lobbies** and **class interests**.

For example, the legal services firms in India do not want to have **foreign competition**.

India's primary concern is market access for **labour-intensive sectors** and favourable investment conditions.

#### What is the importance of the European Union wrt India's interest and vice-versa?

In the **post-Brexit era**, the European Union (EU) might be more vital for Indian economic interests. The United States seems to be more inward-looking.

India aims to enhance its **trade engagement** with the world. India has recently signed a free trade deal with Australia. India-Britain also wishes to conclude free trade agreement by the end of 2022. The trade deal with the EU is also in pipeline

India needs investment for the government's aspirational **National Infrastructure Pipeline** etc.

The public funds in India are not sufficient to build infrastructure necessary to make the Indian economy **environmentally sustainable, globally integrated, and competitive**. Europe is the world's major reserve of **institutional capital**, and if India is to address its **investment deficit**, then convergence between the two economies is vital.

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The EU needs India to partner with the EU on **climate action** and on **Indo-Pacific connectivity**. Fortunately, these desires are also very much in India's interest.

The EU is a **regulatory superpower**. It was the first mover on **data privacy** and on corralling the revenues from Big Tech. It can be beneficial for India in improving regulatory regime

The EU will be influential for catalysing **green finance**. It can play a role in regulating **new technological frontiers** in sectors like energy.

### The Way Forward

An **India-EU Trade and Technology Council** could thus fill a long-identified gap. It will be on the line of a new "**trade and technology council**" established by the EU and the US to coordinate approaches to key global trade and technology issues".

## INDIA-UK RELATIONS

### 114. **Shitij Kapur on why India offers opportunities in educational partnerships**

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Shitij Kapur on why India offers opportunities in educational partnerships**" published in the **Business Standard** on **30th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 International Relations and Bilateral Relations

**Relevance:** India-UK Relation; Educational Partnership

**News:** Recently, Britain formalised a symbolic "self-isolation" through Brexit in 2020. However, despite the economic shocks that were anticipated from both the COVID and the nation's withdrawal from the European Union, Britain attracted more Indian students to its shores during a pandemic.

### **What is the nature of the UK-India relations wrt education?**

Britain's institutions have ongoing ties with Indian universities such as **the Ashoka University** and **O P Jindal**. They work on **student partnerships** and **research projects**.

### **Factors behind more outmigration of Indian students to the UK during COVID**

First, the United Kingdom has managed to keep colleges more accessible to students than some other places.

Secondly, the **UK** has continued to provide **quality education** without the impact of Covid-19. The quality of education has not been sacrificed due to Covid-19

Third, the relaxations have been granted in **postgraduate work visa rules**.

Fourth, the UK government has made an announcement of a significant increase in spending on research budgets.

### **What are the future prospects?**

The announcement of the **National Education Policy (NEP)**, the designation of **Institute of Eminence status** to some universities would facilitate more international partnerships with the Indian Institutions.

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Recently, the Indian government introduced a **common entrance exam** for admissions to central universities in India. It will ensure a level of **standardised assessment** of the school outgoing students.

The **dual undergraduate degree** is an attractive proposition. The world needs people who belong to more than one discipline

### 115. Side-stepping irritants: On India-U.K. ties

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Side-stepping irritants: On India-U.K. ties**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th Apr 22**.

**News:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was in Delhi recently, committing to more cooperation with India on trade, defence, combating climate change and cybersecurity.

*What were the major issues discussed?*

The **deadline to complete the full FTA has been pushed** till October-end or Deepavali, with a view to doubling bilateral trade by 2030.

Of concern to the U.K. is the **lifting of Indian tariffs on Scotch whisky**, which might make some headway, as India has accepted lower tariffs on Australian wine and the U.K. seems **more flexible in increasing visas to Indian professionals**.

**Strengthening of defence ties and cooperating strategically** in the Indo-Pacific.

The two leaders also discussed **green technology transfers and international climate finance**, although India has yet to commit in writing to the Nationally Determined Contributions described at COP26 in Glasgow.

The PM of UK referred to India’s long-standing relationship with Russia, **expressing understanding of India’s position**, in stark contrast to the visit of his Foreign Minister recently. He also brushed aside a question on human rights concerns in India.

A **sub-group is to be set up to study “extremism”** inside India and the U.K.

– Mr. Johnson suggested it would be used to monitor Khalistani groups (as New Delhi desires), but has a broader mandate to counter all groups and individuals “seeking to incite violent extremism and terrorism”.

– In return, New Delhi chose not to press the point too hard on why economic fugitives (Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi) have still not been extradited.

*What is the way forward?*

Both New Delhi and London must ensure more concerted efforts to bring those agreements to a finale in the near future, to reach their ambitious goals under “**Roadmap 2030**” agreed to at the last summit in 2021.

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# General

# Studies

# Paper – 3

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### **AVIATION SECTOR IN INDIA**

#### **1. Up & Up: Airports, Pilots, Passengers, Cargo, Drones**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Up & Up: Airports, Pilots, Passengers, Cargo, Drones” published in **The Times of India** on **7th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, India has opened its airspace for international travel for the first time since the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 after a period of two-year.

The sector is going to witness rebound due to easing in the covid-led disruptions, and simultaneously, due to important reform measures undertaken by the government.

#### **What are the expected trends in the Indian Aviation Sector in the coming years?**

Civil aviation has become a vehicle of economic change in India, and it is going to face strong growth in coming years,

The government has launched its flagship scheme known as **Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik**. It connects some of the most remote cities of India such as Jharsuguda, Odisha. These areas will emerge as new growth avenues for the country.

At present, the **number of airports** stands at 140 in 2021. India will witness growth in the number of both **greenfield** and **brownfield airports** in the next 2-3 years. Therefore, the number of airports is bound to reach the tally of 220 by 2025.

India's **aircraft fleet is also likely to grow**, by 110-120 every year.

In addition, the **number of pilots trained by the Flying Training Organisations (FTO) is also going to increase** in the near future.

**Allied sectors rise during the pandemic period:** Allied sectors of Aviation like air cargo have seen exponential growth in a short span of two years. As a result, India's share in international cargo traffic movement went up from 1.8% to 19%.

Similarly, **reform measures undertaken in the drone sector** will make drones part of almost every sector in the coming years. It will lead to an explosion of start-ups and skilled manpower. It will also bring huge economic benefits to Indian economy.

#### **What are the challenges?**

The civil aviation sector is **highly prone to disruptions** in the future. It may be due to geopolitical disturbances and a new pandemic in the future.

India's **taxation regime on Air Turbine Fuel (ATF)** is very high as compared to the rest of the world. For example, at present, it now costs twice as much as the pre-Covid-19 rates.

The Aviation industry is also **highly elastic to price change**. For example, a minor rise in air fares could adversely impact the demand of air travel in the short term.

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

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**Rationalising ATF:** Recently, 24 states/UTs have executed taxation reform (VAT) on the Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) rates. In addition, there are chances that remaining states/UTs will also join this reform regime soon.

India needs to focus on international travel, as well as the air cargo segment.

### **PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP) IN INDIA**

#### **2. Measures to rejuvenate public-private partnerships**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Measures to rejuvenate public-private partnerships**” published in the **Business Standard** on **6th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, the **New Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)** and the **National Infrastructure Pipeline** were launched by the central government.

As a result, **Public-private partnership (PPP) models** have come under the focus as various projects will be funded under PPP.

#### **What have been the Indian experience with various PPP models?**

##### **(A) Indian experience:**

Almost all **Indian companies** and **commercial lending institutions** are concerned of investing in greenfield PPP projects. In fact, foreign investors also prefer to invest in the brownfield assets.

In recent years, the government has received **poor responses** from private players in PPP bids.

– For example: (1) the **Indian Railway** could not attract many private players for passenger-train operations, and (2) The **Bharat Broadband Nigam Ltd (BBNL)** cancelled a tender for connecting villages due to the lack of participation of eligible bidders.

Various PPP models including the **Build-operate-transfer (BOT)** and the **Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC)** have been examples of classic failure of PPP model in India.

– For example, the share of the BOT model in road investments in India declined from 85% in 2013 to almost zero in 2020.

PPP Models have performed well in sectors like telecom, ports, airports, electricity transmission and renewable energy.

##### **(B) International experience:**

Recently, Britain renationalised the British Rail, after being operated on a PPP model after a period of 25 years.

#### **What are the suggestions for PPP reforms?**

Kelkar Committee submitted a report titled as “**Revisiting and Revitalizing PPP Model of Infrastructure Development**” (2015). It recommended some of the following measures in this regard

(1) The report recommended setting up “**3P India**”. It would function as a centre of excellence in PPPs.

(2) The report proposed to address complex issues like renegotiation, independent regulation, equitable risk-allocation, amendments to Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and expeditious redressal of disputes.



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**Regulatory bodies** can be established for administration of PPPs. Such bodies have also been established in other countries.

– For example, there is the **Infrastructure Concessions Regulatory Commission** in Nigeria, the **PPP Advisory Unit** in Ghana, the **PPP Centre** in the Philippines and the PPP Unit in South Africa, and the **National Infrastructure Commission** of the United Kingdom

A **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** which is **100% owned by the government** can be established for the PPP project. It can perform the **sovereign function** like land acquisition and securing all permissions. Subsequently, the SPV's share will be sold to the **highest private bidder**. It will reduce the development risk.

The **Least Present Value Method (LPVM)** can be adopted. In this, the **time-period of a concession** is kept open-ended and flexible. It helps the concessionaire who bid with the lowest amount of revenue share. It will remove the **revenue risk** in the long term PPP projects to a substantial level.

In addition, a **bespoke credit-rating system** can be adopted. It requires embracing the **“expected loss” (EL) approach** instead of the **“probability of default” approach**.

### Way Forward

In response to the latest Budget speech, the Department of Economic Affairs is required to take a fresh approach for “capacity building” for PPPs.

## DIGITALIZATION AND RELATED ISSUES

### 3. What's Powering A Trillion Dollar Revolution

**Source:** The post is based on an article **“What's powering a trillion-dollar revolution”** published in **The Times of India** on **04<sup>th</sup> April 2022**.

**News:** In recent years, the Indian government has been adopting path-breaking digital initiatives across various sectors. These initiatives hold tremendous potential to spur entrepreneurship, increase India's global competitiveness and meet the nation's goal of “growth for all”.

#### What are the thrust areas of the government's digital strategy?

**First, boosting the optic fibre network:** It is the digital backbone of a digital economy. It is being executed under the **BharatNet project**. In addition, 5G services are likely to be rolled out by the end of 2022. It will enable access to high-speed internet in a few years.

**Second,** the government has been building up Open, scalable digital public platforms like **Aadhaar, DigiLocker** and **UPI**.

In addition, the government has also planned (1) a **healthcare registry and platform** known as **Ayushman Bharat Mission** to allow accessing and sharing of health records digitally, and (2) **open network protocols** such as ONDC to make digital commerce more accessible for MSMEs,

**Third,** the government is **digitising public service delivery**. For example, filing of income tax returns, single-window clearance for projects, the GeM portal for digital public procurement, the e-bill system etc. Also, the proposed **Gatishakti initiative** is a step in this direction.

#### What is truly transformative about the government's digital strategy?

The digital platforms have the potential for **scalability** and **inclusivity**. For example, **75% of the Public Distribution System (PDS) distribution** at a national level has been done through **Aadhaar-authentication**; The disbursement of MGNREGA wage payment is done through a central platform that is authenticated by using Aadhaar.

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**The Direct Benefits Transfer** has helped to address the leakages and ensure the government's savings to the exchequer. It has been done by leveraging Aadhaar.

### What should be done?

There is a need for **strong policy** and **regulatory reforms** for boosting digital infrastructure in India. For this, the government can initiate **Public-private dialogue** to promote trust.

The government can start using **Web 3.0 technologies** to plug loopholes and improve service delivery.

A robust privacy and data protection law also need to be expedited.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – ELECTRIC VEHICLES

### **ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **4. How the Delhi model for EV chargers is worthy of emulation**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**How the Delhi model for EV Chargers is worthy of emulation?**” published in the **Live Mint** on **04<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**News:** The Delhi government has adopted a new model for the development of public charging infrastructure. This model might amplify India's EV Charging Infrastructure.

#### **What have been the issues in the EV segment?**

**First, slow pace in setting up large-scale public charging infrastructure** or stations.

**Second,** Central and state governments have **failed to leverage the private sector** to invest in charging networks. They focus on public sector units (PSUs) to set up the EV infrastructure

#### **What are the different EV Charging Infrastructure Models across the world?**

**Typically, there are four models:** (1) utility-led, (2) automakers-led (with ‘walled gardens’ of chargers), (3) PSU-led and (4) business-led (independent entities offering customers a charging service).

In contrast, the Delhi government has developed a **private-public partnership (PPP) model** for setting up 500 charging points at 100 locations in Delhi.

#### **About the ‘Delhi Model’ of EV-charging infrastructure model**

**(1) The Delhi government will aggregate land parcels (a scarce resource in Delhi)** from different agencies. Thereafter, the land will be given for rent to private players on a concessional basis.

**(2) The Delhi government will provide assistance with the cost of upstream electrical infrastructure** on the charging site. In addition, the **lease rentals** will be linked to revenue because the station's profit is meagre in the initial years.

In order to increase the business at charging stations, the stakeholders whose business is aided by operating charging stations, such as fleet operators, vehicle and battery manufacturers, battery-swapping operators, etc. will be encouraged to participate at stations.

**(3) The private sector will be provided with the flexibility in determining the charger combinations** on **70%** of the space in the station. The charging technology evolves with time.

**(4) The Delhi government has fixed Service charges for the end consumer as a bidding criterion.** Thus, the private bidders will be encouraged to quote a low service charge. Thus, the

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cost of charging for the users will be just ₹2 per unit, perhaps cheaper than anywhere else in the world.

(5) **Delhi's EV charging strategy has been based on a participatory approach.** All the heads of Delhi government departments, municipal corporations, etc were members of a high-level working group. The group was set up for the accelerated rollout of charging infrastructure. It will lead to coordinated decision-making and implementation of the decision.

### How can the Delhi Model transform the national thinking on EV charging?

On the lines of the Delhi Model, all states have been advised by the NITI Aayog that they should form a working group or committee for the development of state charging infrastructures.

On the lines of the Delhi Model, the Government of India has also recommended: (1) the **lease rentals** for charging stations should be linked to **revenue**, and (2) the public funds should be used for the augmentation of EV charging stations in the states.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – RENEWABLE ENERGY

## RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR IN INDIA

### 5. Renewable energy has a tariff problem. Here's how to fix it

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Renewable energy has a tariff problem. Here's how to fix it**” published in the **Indian Express** on **04<sup>th</sup> April 2022**.

**News:** India has stated its target of having a renewable generating capacity of 450-500 GW by 2030. Therefore, there is a need to create a proper environment and ensure adequate returns to invite fresh investments into renewable generation. In this regard, it is important to look at the tariff structure for renewables.

### What are the two parts of Power generation tariffs?

In power generation, the **two-part tariff system** comprises the first part and the second part.

(1) The **first part:** It is the **fixed cost** that is incurred by a generator. It is not linked to the amount of power generated. It is determined by regulatory commissions. It has a graded payment system depending on the position of the plant to generate.

(2) The **second part:** It is a **variable cost**. It varies with the quantum of power generation. It is calculated on the cost of fuel, i.e., coal or gas or lignite. It is determined by the regulatory commissions.

### What are the tariff structures in the power sector in India?

The **Two-part tariff system** is found in hydropower generation. The hydro generators do not have any **variable cost of generation**. Therefore, the entire cost of a hydro station is fixed cost. Notionally, half of this cost is treated as a variable cost.

The one-part tariff system is applicable to **solar, wind** and **nuclear** energy generation.

### What are the issues with a single-part tariff in the case of renewable energy?

The contribution of solar and wind generation accounts for about 10% of the overall power generation in India. It is expected to be ramped up to 50% by 2030 (Commitment in COP26 in Glasgow).

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The sector has been given a “**must-run**” status. This means that the **state load dispatch centres (SLDCs)** have to dispatch the **renewable power** first, even if another cheap source is available or not. But, there is a high **variable cost** in the renewable energy sector. In contrast, the variable cost of the NTPC coal-fired is far lower due to the two-part tariff structure.

Therefore, the SLDCs flout the principle of “must-run”. The discoms would ask the renewable generator to back down. They would buy from a coal-based generation. It would save money for the discoms.

### What should be done?

Adoption of a two-part tariff would ensure **certain minimum return** to the developers. This will make the renewable sector at par with the coal and hydro plants.

A principle should be developed for the **share of variable costs** in renewable generators. For example, 50% of the total cost is attributed as a variable cost in hydro energy.

A **fine balance** should be maintained between the proportion of the fixed and variable costs. For example, the variable cost should be ensured at the lowest so that the “must-run” principle is not violated. In addition, the fixed cost component should not be kept so high as it may hurt the consumers.

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

## WITHDRAWAL OF AFSPA AND RELATED ISSUES

### 6. Time to bid goodbye to AFSPA

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

“**Time to bid goodbye to AFSPA**” published in **The Indian Express** on **4th April 22**.

“**For a full repeal: On AFSPA**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th April 22**.

**News:** Recently, the Home Ministry has decided to considerably reduce the number of “disturbed areas” under the AFSPA in three States. To fulfil that, the April 1st order significantly reduced disturbed areas in Nagaland, Assam and Manipur. Though it is a welcome step, the government does not consider repealing the AFSPA.

### What is the reason for the reduction in disturbed areas?

The Government’s decision to relax the application of the Act in specific areas is due to a **reduction in violence and administrative reasons**. However, the relaxation is not due to a response to the question of whether the Act is essential to security operations in these States or not?

### Why does the government have to repeal the AFSPA?

1) The counterinsurgency campaigns against the Nagas were counterproductive, 2) In the court’s view, AFSPA clearly provided the context for some Extra-Judicial killings. While upholding the constitutionality of AFSPA in 1997, the court recommended some changes. Such as reviewing the “disturbed area” designation every six months. 3) **Justice BP Jeevan Reddy committee** recommended repealing AFSPA and suggested inserting the appropriate provisions in the [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act \(UAPA\), 1967](#).

In 2016, the Supreme Court had also ruled that the armed forces could not be immune from investigation for excesses committed during the discharge of their duties, even in “disturbed

areas". Hence, the demand for full repeal should be considered, and the government has to ensure the accountability of the Armed forces.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

### **MIGRANT WORKERS AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **7. Push the policy needle forward on migrant support**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “Push the policy needle forward on migrant support” published on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in The Hindu.

**Context:** After the migrant crisis of 2020, migrants became a focus of large scale relief efforts by governments and civil society. The Government ramped up the **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) project**, announced the **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) scheme**, set up the **e-Shram portal** and began to draft a migration policy.

#### **Present status of migrants**

Surveys have found that the incomes of migrant households continue to be lower than pre-pandemic levels. Migrants are finding less work and are eating less. A **cohesive migrant policy guidance remains elusive**. Efforts are **fragmented**.

This is not sustainable as a third of the nation’s workforce is mobile. Migrants fuel critical sectors such as **manufacturing, construction, hospitality, logistics and commercial agriculture**.

#### **What are the reasons behind policy ignorance faced by migrant issue?**

First, **migration is a highly politicised phenomenon**: The “**Destination States**” experience a tension between economic needs, which require migrant labour, and political needs, which promote nativist policies. The “**Sending States**” are motivated to serve their ‘own people’ because they vote in their source villages. This causes fragmented policy based on State-specific political calculations.

Second, **migrants as a category get overlooked by two larger categories**: the unorganized worker and the urban poor. This pushes the timeline for addressing the migrant issue far out. It is no longer an urgent priority.

Third, migration policy absence of reliable data results in **failure to capture the actual scale and the frequency of internal migration in India**.

Many states have initiated data projects that can track migrants. For example, **Maharashtra’s Migration Tracking System (MTS)**, focusing on women and children. **Chhattisgarh’s State Migrant Workers Policy** is premised on registering migrant workers at source and tracking them through phone-based outreach systems.

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

In this scenario of fragmentation, Centre needs to play a proactive role by offering policy guidance and a platform for inter-State coordination. **The NITI Aayog’s Draft Policy on Migrant Workers** is a positive step forward in articulating policy priorities and indicating suitable institutional frameworks.

### **Green Hydrogen and related issues**

#### **8. Unlocking the potential of green hydrogen**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Unlocking the potential of green hydrogen**” published in the **Indian Express** on **5th April 2022**.

**News:** The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has increased the prices of crude oil, natural gas and fertilizers, highlighting India’s vulnerability to geopolitical sanctions.

Therefore, the Union Transport Minister’s statement on hydrogen-powered cars in Parliament has brought the green hydrogen economy into focus.

Moreover, hydrogen is an important industrial gas. It is used on a large scale in petroleum refining, steel, and fertiliser production. And India already has a large and growing capacity base in all these industries.

#### **What are the pros with renewable energy (RE) tech?**

**RE generation is done intermittently.** It is because electricity cannot be stored using battery technology at a grid scale. For example, Europe’s renewable generation fell in the last months of 2021.

**The financial viability of green power is questionable in India.** For example, it is proposed to replace coal-based power which is the cheapest form of energy. In addition, the DISCOMs, the buyer of RE, are not financially sound.

**EV (electric vehicle) technologies have limitations.** Much of India’s oil is burnt in heavy trucks (not cars and two-wheelers) which are difficult to run on lithium batteries.

**Electric vehicles require large quantities of critical minerals** (like lithium and cobalt). India does not have their domestic reserves. Therefore, India will have to import them, which is prone to supply chains disruptions.

#### **What are the challenges of creating and distributing hydrogen at a national level?**

It requires creation of large-scale refuelling network infrastructure if green hydrogen is used as the transportation fuel.

#### **What are the ways to catalyse a hydrogen economy in India?**

**Hydrogen-fuelled vehicles (in form of forklifts, cranes, trucks, tractors etc.) can be promoted in some specified gated areas** like Airports, ports and warehouses. It will create demand that will allow manufacturers to bring vehicles that can use hydrogen fuel cells into the market.

**Promoting hydrogen blended with natural gas:** Many gas-fired power generation plants are operating at a very low-capacity due to the high price of natural gas. Therefore, the hydrogen blended with natural gas can be promoted in these plants.

– It can be blended with compressed natural gas (CNG). It can then be used as a fuel for vehicles in Delhi, Mumbai and some other cities. This will partly counter the need for imported natural gas

**The government needs to boost private sector participation.** For example, start-ups can be promoted in this sector. They should be linked with angel investors, venture capital and private equity backers.

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Also, **India needs some specialist players to execute projects as well as finance them.** The CNG networks in Mumbai and Delhi were created by MGL and IGL, and Petronet LNG was set up for creating India's first LNG terminal.

– Establishing specialised companies with a clear focus has helped projects get off the ground. This approach can be repeated for green hydrogen. However, government participation in such a company must be capped at 50%.

### **CLOUD INDUSTRY AND ENVIRONMENT**

#### **9. The carbon cost of data**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The carbon cost of data**” published in **The Business Standard** on **5th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Information Technology, Environment and conservation

**Relevance:** Environmental concerns related to cloud industry

**News:** Environmental scientists are beginning to worry about the harmful effects of data on climate. The impact is not exactly due to the data, but the servers, data farms and other hardware required for creating, storing and processing data for the increasingly digital life.

#### **How the pace of generation of data has picked up?**

**Impact of the internet:** The world has been steadily getting interconnected and digitalised since the world-wide-web came into being.

**Evolution of digital tech:** The rapid evolution of the Cloud, high speed Wi-Fi, and internet of things, and the development of digital goods, have increased the quantity of data being generated, stored and analysed exponentially.

**Impact of the pandemic:** The trajectory of digitalisation moved up even more sharply when the pandemic struck. Companies were forced to increase their digital footprint. They also moved a lot of their operations to the cloud — which meant moving applications and data to huge server farms.

#### **How cloud industry poses a threat to the environment?**

##### **Server farms consume a lot of electricity.**

- Power required to run the servers themselves
- Air conditioning systems needed to run them also consume a lot of energy.

Data farms generate **enormous heat**, and need very **powerful air conditioning systems** to maintain optimum temperature.

**Water consumption:** Studies have shown that data centres tend to use up water resources and heat the cities where they are located, despite all the air conditioning.

As Cloud servers need to offer zero downtime, they work with built-in redundancies, which **increase their energy requirements.**

Then, the buildings themselves are considered **large emitters** — especially older buildings. Older data farms are often in older generation buildings and that contributes to energy requirements too.

It is estimated that the cloud industry consumes more power than many nation states. And it is a bigger emitter than the global aviation industry.

#### **What are the factors on which the carbon footprint of the cloud industry depends?**

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**Power source:** The carbon footprint depends on the power source being used, and also the amount of air conditioning needed.

– Many data firms still primarily depend on **thermal or gas-fired power stations**, though many new ones are being built to utilise mostly renewable power.

**Type of silicon chips:** The kind of silicon chips used has a role too in the power consumption. Older, more power-guzzling chips have a worse carbon footprint than those that are new and more energy efficient.

**Temperature, age and efficiency of the building:** Variables like how cold is the geographical area where the server farm is placed as well as the **age** and **energy efficiency** of the building all matter in the actual energy being consumed.

### Why the environmental concerns are likely to increase in the future?

**Increased pace of digitalisation:** This means more data is being generated and captured than ever before.

**Web 3.0:** When Web 3.0 replaces the current Web 2.0, the consumption of data will increase further. This is simply because the blockchain technology on which Web 3.0 is being built consumes huge quantities of energy.

**Need for data localisation to increase:** Much of the data today is stored in cross-border servers, but as privacy concerns grow, the need for data to be stored locally is also likely to increase. This will lead to a huge spike in server farms being built around the world.

### What are the efforts being made to reduce the footprint?

Companies have built data centres in cold regions but, in general, it has not proved very practical.

Tried building submerged data centres in the sea to ensure they remain cool without the need for air conditioners. But the ecology of the sea changes when the data centres are placed underwater. It adversely affects marine life.

### What is the way forward?

Building more energy efficient chips

Use green software

Making data centre operations more energy efficient while also using renewable sources, rather than thermal-fuelled electricity.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

## DE-DOLLARIZATION BY CENTRAL BANKS

### 10. Back the greenback: Grumblings about dollar dominance aren't new

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “Back the greenback: Grumblings about dollar dominance aren't new” published in 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in Times of India.

**Context:** Western powers have slapped sanctions on Russia. These sanctions sting because of the US dollar's dominance across the global economy and finance.

#### How important is dollar in present global trade?

**More than half the global trade is invoiced in dollars** and nearly two-thirds of the foreign exchange reserves and global debt are held in dollars.



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**Exchange rates** between pairs of currencies are set via their parity with the dollar. The sentiment on Wall Street and the decisions of the US Federal Reserve affect markets and economies around the world.

### What are the other factors against the dollar dominated economy?

The Global Financial Crisis in 2008 reinforced the bitterness against the dominance of the dollar in global finance and galvanized the search for an alternate reserve currency. The campaign lost its momentum later.

### Chinese renminbi as an alternative

This has been a prospect after China started dominating global trade. It became more noticeable after the IMF included the renminbi in the SDR basket of currencies in 2016.

Many experts doubt the capabilities of renminbi in challenging the dollar. The renminbi's **exchange rate is not market determined**, China imposes **controls on capital flows in and out of its economy**. Its **financial regulation standards are not transparent** and predictable. China is also an **authoritarian regime** with a dubious reputation for transparency and rule of law.

### What does the future hold?

The sanctions could encourage the emergence of small currency blocs based on trade between separate groups of countries. It is also possible that cryptocurrencies will start displacing dollar as a medium of exchange.

But as a safe haven asset, the dollar remains unrivaled no matter the geopolitics.

GS3 – AGRICULTURE – ISSUES RELATED TO FARMERS  
GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

## **SUSTAINABLE FARMING IN INDIA**

### 11. Why India needs to bring back nature-positive farming

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Why India needs to bring back nature-positive farming**” published in **Down to Earth** (DTE) on **5th Apr 22**.

**Context:** The pandemic showed that human interventions in natural processes can have disastrous consequences. It's time to scale up natural-positive food systems that would simultaneously promote crop, soil and human health.

There is growing consensus among agri-scientists, policymakers and farmers that the Green Revolution has reached its limits and raised several issues of environmental sustainability.

### What have been the ill-effects of the Green Revolution?

Due to the Green Revolution (GR), India's food production grew at an unprecedented scale and farm incomes also improved substantially. High yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilisers, assured irrigation and pesticides were key components of this .

However, the rise in food production has also led to some unintended consequences:

- Groundwater depletion
- Land degradation
- Yield stagnation

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– Loss of agri-biodiversity and the long-term impact on farmers’ and consumers’ health.

Hence, it’s now time to move from resource-intensive to a sustainable agriculture.

### What are the key components of sustainable farming?

Moving away from extractive and input-intensive practices towards a **low external input and sustainable system**. For instance: organic farming, natural farming, Pesticide-free farming etc.

A more holistic approach to farming, and **reducing the use of chemicals** in farming without affecting the yields. For instance:

– **Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) agriculture**: Under this, a farmer is encouraged to engage in synthetic pesticide-free agriculture and create a unique identity for this produce in the consumer market. It involves choosing **pest-resistant varieties** of crops and practicing crop rotation, intercropping and mixed cropping that are well adapted to the local agroecological systems. If there is need, farmers use sprays made of **locally prepared bio-inputs** and **herbal extracts** that keep pests at bay. Most of these bio-inputs are made by the farmers themselves with locally available materials that **reduce their costs and debts** considerably.

Instead of a standardisation, sustainable farming brings back diversity to farming by **promoting crops and crop-varieties suited to different agroecological zones of India**.

### What is the way forward?

Immense state support, in the case of the Green Revolution, was a major reason behind its success. Hence, there is a need to provide **end-to-end support to farmers** to create an enabling environment for this transition.

**Identify and establish cultivation practices** that are crop, soil and region-specific. More agricultural research has to go into developing seed varieties and cultivation practices using locally available materials.

**More support is needed for post-harvest management** in areas such as transportation, storage and value addition. Since chemical contamination can also occur after the produce leaves the farm, there’s a need to follow the value / supply chain approach and cover all aspects.

The **incentive system available to crops has to change**. The present system of minimum support price-based public procurement is concentrated in a few areas and crops. Diversification of the procurement basket is important to ensure a fair price for the produce.

**Provision of financial services like credit and insurance at affordable price** is vital for a vibrant and efficient farming system. Crop insurance, as a risk mitigation mechanism, can protect the small and marginal farmers from climate variations.

**Farmer collectives and farmer producer organisations (FPO)** need to play a big role in the transition to a sustainable and pesticide-free farming system. Organisations can partner with FPOs to procure directly from farmers at the farmgate and give their produce the recognition it deserves.

**Support the entry of MSMEs in the pesticide-free food chains** and to raise awareness among the consumers on a large scale, to raise demand and develop territorial markets.

## **NUCLEAR ENERGY IN INDIA**

### **12. Atom-Nirbhar India: Nuclear energy is critical for the future. The civil liability clause deters foreign participation**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Atom-Nirbhar India: Nuclear energy is critical for the future. The civil liability clause deters foreign participation**” published in **Times of India** on **5th Apr 22**.

**News:** Meeting the net-zero carbon emissions pledge by 2070 requires an overhaul of both the logistics and electricity sectors to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

So far the solar energy sector has received much attention when it comes to India's transition to renewables, but without nuclear energy, India won't be able to fulfil its pledge.

#### **What are some recent developments that highlight India's reliance on fossil fuels?**

Two recent developments have brought India's reliance on fossil fuel into sharp focus.

- The **Russia-Ukraine conflict** and the consequent surge in crude oil prices.
- The most recent **IPCC report** on climate, which highlights the energy sector's large contribution to global warming.

#### **What is the situation wrt nuclear energy in India?**

It's an area where India was off to an early start, developed relatively high indigenous capabilities in relation to other sectors, but subsequently didn't put enough efforts into it.

Today, nuclear power contributes a **mere 3% of the total electricity generated**, and has a capacity of, 6780 MW.

**Dependence on Russia:** India's main partner today is Russia. The Kudankulam nuclear plant, which supplies about 26% of the electricity from this source, operates in partnership with Russia. Going forward, the geopolitical situation makes it challenging to depend on just Russians.

*Nuclear energy is cost-effective, avoids emission problems and has an acceptable level of risk. Unlike solar energy, it doesn't create challenges of grid stability.*

#### **Why India didn't progress on the nuclear energy front?**

**Civil liability for nuclear damage:** After the 2008 India-US civil nuclear deal, progress has been disappointing. The deal did open the pathway to a stable supply of uranium ore from Kazakhstan and Canada. However, the design of the subsequent bill on civil liability for nuclear damage killed the prospect of participation of Western firms.

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

Recent progress on creating **small modular reactors** (up to 300 MW) is making the possibility of rapid scale-up of nuclear energy quite feasible.

- SMRs will offer enhanced safety and simpler designs at lower capital costs.

These improvements will be harder to achieve with India's pressurised heavy water reactors. Hence, India should begin by **amending its nuclear liability legislation** in a way that encourages investment by companies that are at the forefront of SMRs, which promise to lower the chance of unsafe release of radioactivity.

## **IPCC REPORTS**

### **13. What latest climate report says: No time to waste, but world is not out of options yet**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**What latest climate report says: No time to waste, but world is not out of options yet**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th Apr 22**.

**News:** Working group III of the IPCC has released the third and **final instalment** of the AR6.

The report cautions that to have any chance of restricting global temperature rise to 1.5-2°C from pre-industrial levels, the world must act now.

It emphasises that strengthening of climate action to keep alive the 1.5 degree target was not just possible, but, to a large extent, also feasible and affordable.

#### **What are some key findings of the report?**

As per the report,

- Unless the global **greenhouse gas emissions peaks by 2025**, just three years from now, and is cut by at least 43% from current levels by 2030, the 1.5°C target cannot be achieved. *(This is going to be tough as the global emissions are still showing an increasing trend. Greenhouse gas emissions in 2019 are about 12% higher than in 2010)*
- Global average temperatures have already risen about 1.1°C from pre-industrial times. The **1.5°C threshold would most likely be breached, even in the best case scenario**.
- The climate actions that are currently promised would result in a world that would be about **3.2°C warmer** than pre-industrial times, and that is not a comfortable scenario at all.
- The situation already is so bad that, even after substantial reductions in emissions, human beings would have to rely on futuristic **carbon dioxide removal (CDR) technologies** to bring down the temperatures.

#### **What feasible options are still available?**

As per the report,

- **A lot of reductions in the current level of emissions can be achieved** through existing technologies that are not just feasible, but also affordable, though both, the feasibility and affordability, vary across regions and sectors.
- Nearly **half the world’s current emissions can be cut by 2030** using only technologies that cost **less than US\$100** to reduce one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent.

**For example:** Large-scale deployment of renewables like **solar or wind energy**, carbon sequestration in soil, reduction in deforestation and improvement of energy efficiency etc.

*The cost of solar energy or lithium-ion batteries has come down by nearly 85%, while the cost of wind power has reduced by 55% since 2010*

- **25% of the current emissions can be reduced** using technologies that cost **less than US\$ 20** per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>. Such technologies include the shift to electric vehicles, lifestyle changes like adoption of cycles instead of motorized vehicles, and large-scale use of public transport.

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

As per the report,

– **Traditional sources of energy like oil, gas and coal would have to be almost completely abandoned** over the next few decades if the climate goals have to be achieved. For instance: **Coal** would need to be given up entirely by the year 2050, while the use of **oil and gas** need to be reduced by at least 60 and 70% respectively.

### 14. How individuals can save a warming planet

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**How individuals can save a warming planet**” published in the **Indian Express** on **6th April 22**.

**News:** Recently, the **IPCC report** for the first time included a chapter on “**demand, services and social aspects of mitigation**”. It implies a paradigm shift in the way we think about climate action.

The chapter puts **people** and their **well-being** at the centre of climate change mitigation.

#### What is this new understanding, as mentioned in the IPCC report?

So far, climate action has been focused on the **supply side**, i.e., what needs to be supplied to people. It ignored the **demand side**, i.e., what people need, demand, and aspire for.

The people aspire for a healthy life, food for daily nutrition, a comfortable home, and transportation system, thermal comfort, communication, and participation in decision-making processes. Therefore, the **burden of mitigation** should be reduced on the **supply side**. And, focus should shift to the **demand side**.

#### What has been proposed by the report regarding lifestyle changes for climate change mitigation?

**Comprehensive demand-side mitigation strategies** must be adopted.

– For example, individuals can go for reduction in **food waste, sustainable healthy dietary choices, adaptive heating and cooling choices for thermal comfort** etc.

Individuals having high **socio-economic status** contribute disproportionately to emissions. Therefore, they have the **highest potential** for **emissions reductions**.

Efforts can be made to **reduce inequality** and forms of **status-related consumption**. The consumption of goods and services should be focused on the **well-being** instead of for **social prestige**.

Immediate action can be undertaken in our **lifestyle**. It will enable people to lead low-carbon lifestyles.

– For example, shift in the mode of transport (walking, cycling etc.), industry, buildings, and food. Amongst all, **walking, cycling** and using **electricity-powered transport** can be the biggest contributor in climate change mitigation.

#### What is the way forward?

**Individual choice** alone can make only a modest contribution to reducing GHG emissions. It requires **investment** in and **transformation** across every sector. In addition, policy support is also needed which **encourages people** to make **low-carbon choices** in all aspects of their lives.

**Structural and cultural changes** are important for people to lead **low-carbon lifestyles**. This enables people to make the **right choices**.

– For example, individual’s shift to walking and cycling require urban planning for land use, more green spaces, reallocation of street spaces for walking and physical exercise, etc.

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In addition, the **demand for fossil fuels** has to reduce. The use of **coal** fuel must fall by 90% by 2050. The **use of gas and oil** need to decline by 25-50%. Further reductions would be required in gas and oil by 2100.

The **IPCC** should continue to provide the evidence for **policymakers, investors**, and all other decision-makers to decide what needs to be done ahead.

### 15. IPCC report on Mitigation of Climate Change scientifically establishes India's position on the historical responsibility of developed countries for consuming the carbon budget

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

“**Explained: What is the IPCC, and why are its Assessment Reports important?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **5th Apr 22**.

“**We must keep hope alive as climate aims slip away**” published in **Livemint** on **6th Apr 22**.

“**IPCC report on Mitigation of Climate Change scientifically establishes India's position on the historical responsibility of developed countries for consuming the carbon budget**” published in **PIB** on **5th Apr 22**

**News:** IPCC has come out with the third instalment of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). The IPCC reports are created by its three working groups.

This report, which deals with actions that can be taken to combat climate change, has been prepared by the Working Group III.

Assessment reports by **Working group I** and **II** have already been released earlier.

#### What are the findings of the report?

Limiting global warming will require **major transitions** in the energy sector and this will mean drastically reducing fossil fuel use, widespread electrification, improved energy efficiency, and the use of alternative fuel

**On financial support:** It falls short of the levels needed to achieve mitigation goals across all sectors and regions. The challenge of closing gaps is largest in developing countries as a whole. It also states that public finance falls short of the Copenhagen (*reiterated in the Paris Agreement*) goal of USD 100 billion per year by 2020.

– To accelerate the low-carbon transition, developed countries should ensure higher flows of finance and technology transfer in critical areas such as renewables, electric vehicles, green hydrogen, and others.

With a **shrinking remaining carbon budget**, the access to a fair share of this budget for developing countries has become an important question.

Changes in lifestyle and behaviours have a significant role to play in mitigating climate change. The Report **endorses India's view on the need for curbing unsustainable consumption** and is in line with its call of L.I.F.E. – Lifestyles for Environment which it gave at COP26 at Glasgow. Having the right policies, infrastructure and technology in place to enable changes to our lifestyles and behaviour can result in a 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

**Emissions reduction:** There is a need for deep and urgent global emissions reduction. Four-fifths of the total carbon budget for 1.5 deg C temperature increase and two-thirds of the total carbon budget for 2 deg C warming has been already consumed.

Limiting warming to around 1.5°C requires global greenhouse gas emissions to **peak before 2025** at the latest and be reduced by 43% by 2030; at the same time, methane would also need to be reduced by about a third.

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**Net-zero:** The global temperature will stabilise when carbon dioxide emissions reach net-zero. For 1.5°C, this meant achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions globally in the early 2050s; for 2°C, it is in the early 2070s.

For a 1.5°C goal of net-zero, the world's dependence on coal must drop 95% by mid-century, on oil 60% and on gas 45%

### India

– Both historical cumulative emissions and per capita annual emissions show that India's role (as part of South Asia) is minimal.

– The report justifies **India's emphasis on equity**, stating that it is fundamental to international co-operation on climate change. Equity remains a central element in the UN climate regime, notwithstanding shifts in differentiation between states over time and challenges in assessing fair shares”

– **Coal plants:** There is no place for new coal plants in the world. The report finds that all coal-fired power plants, without the technology to capture and store carbon (CCS), need to be shut down by 2050 if the world aspired to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. None of the existing under construction coal-fired power plants in India have CCS facilities.

As per some experts, if all else fails, India can look at **geo-engineering solutions** like placing reflectors in orbit, say, to adjust how much solar heat reaches us. But, any such solution would require a global consensus.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

### INDIA'S EXPORT POLICY

#### 16. Export Opportunity

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Export Opportunity**” published on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in **Business Standard**.

**News:** Union Commerce and Food Minister Piyush Goyal's stated optimism about India's wheat exports scaling a new high in FY23, though his projection of the volume of likely shipments being around 10 million tonnes seems rather modest.

#### **What are the new opportunities for Indian exports?**

**Russia-Ukraine war:** Russia and Ukraine together normally **account for 25-30% of the wheat supplies in the global market**. The void caused by their absence can be filled to a sizable extent by India.

Most wheat-importing countries, particularly those in **Africa, West Asia, and Southeast Asia** are now looking towards India to meet their requirements.

States such as **Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat**, are already making special efforts to boost exports. The Railways has assured them of full support to move the cargo to Kandla and other ports on priority.

#### **What is India set to gain from these exports?**

Food exports are now a **dire necessity rather than merely an opportunity-driven initiative**. This is because the country's food grain output has consistently outpaced consumption.

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Wheat **prices in the international market are now ruling substantially higher than the domestic prices.** It allows exporters to buy stocks from farmers at rates far above the minimum support price (MSP) and yet have a sufficient profit margin.

This would also help **trim official grain stockholding** to a manageable size to rein in the ever-burgeoning food subsidy.

**Way Forward:** India should grab this export opportunity to create the much-needed export outlet for the surplus grains.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – RENEWABLE ENERGY

### **BIOGAS AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **17. Biogas: A sustainable solution for curbing pollution, improving livelihoods & enhancing quality of life**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Biogas: A sustainable solution for curbing pollution, improving livelihoods & enhancing quality of life**” published in **Down to Earth (DTE)** on **7th Apr 22**.

**News:** Pollutants emitted due to the burning of fossil fuels and biomass not only affect the health of people, but are also responsible for climate change.

The organic portion of the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) produces Methane, when dumped improperly, like in landfills.

Disposing of organic wastes in landfills or burning trash is an environmental as well as health hazard. Apart from causing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, such unscientific waste disposal leads to diseases like dengue fever and malaria.

Installing large-scale municipal biogas systems can help cities handle organic waste efficiently to overcome the environmental and socio-economic challenges posed by overburdened landfills.

#### **How can Biogas prove immensely beneficial for India?**

As per WHO, over **four million people die every year** all over the world due to high levels of indoor air pollution caused by the burning of fossil fuels and biomass.

The **female members of a household are affected by indoor pollution** as they spend more time inside the house. In this case, switching to biogas could be good for these women because they won't be exposed to harmful smoke and pollution.

Only 26.53% of the total power generated in India is from renewable sources, according to estimates. The high dependence on non-renewable sources is the leading cause of the long-standing **energy problems in the country**.

Installing biogas plants at the micro- and macro-level can **address the critical issues of handling livestock manure and agricultural wastes, deteriorating soil quality, water pollution and deforestation**.

**Reduction of carbon emissions:** A fully functional biogas digester, for every tonne of feedstock processed, can reduce approximately 2.83 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions in a year.

**Improving soil quality:** Biogas also plays a crucial role in improving soil quality. The digestate, a by-product generated in the biogas plants, can be used as a biofertilizer as it is rich in organic content and revitalises the soil. The use of biofertilisers not only increases crop yield but also



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**improves the nutrient content** of the produce, thereby improving the health and well-being of consumers as well as that of soil.

**Biogas can also help in reducing gender inequalities and empowering women.** As rural households gain access to biogas as cooking fuel, women and girls do not need to spend time collecting firewood and other fuel and can utilise this spare time for education, acquiring new skills, and community work.

– As more and more women are educated and skilled, they have **access to new employment and business opportunities**. This can help them to be **financially independent and have more decision-making power** in the household. This will further help to **improve the psychological and emotional health** of women.

Biogas can significantly contribute to **achieving several UN-mandated sustainable development goals (SDG)** such as zero hunger; good health and wellbeing; gender equality etc.

As the country aims to provide energy security to every citizen, biogas can play a **critical role in transforming the energy dependence of rural and agricultural communities**, which majorly depends on burning wood, dung, charcoal, etc.

Thus, Biogas can be one of the best available and feasible options for addressing India's socio-environmental issues.

Organic wastes can be turned into green fuel that would **reduce the dependence on the use of biomass and fossil fuels**. This can also save millions of lives. It can also **lower the dependency on natural gas imports**, as India currently imports a little over half of its total consumption of natural gas.

### GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – ELECTRIC VEHICLES

#### **EVs and RELATED ISSUES**

#### **18. On fire hazard from e-vehicles: Read the smoke signals**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Read the smoke signals**” published in the **Business Standard** on **8th Apr 22**.

**News:** Safety concerns have emerged after several recent incidents in which e-scooters have caught fire, causing panic and loss of life. While the government has ordered an enquiry, the authorities must review and reorder the road-safety ecosystem.

**What are the reasons behind fire incidents?**

**Harsh summer driving conditions:** The scooter fires could have been caused by the unsuitability of imported lithium-ion battery packs for summer driving conditions.

– India is hotter in summer than most places where e-vehicles are popular, and the standard battery pack designed for North America or China is not tropicalised to withstand Indian summers.

**Stressful driving environment:** India is also a stressful driving environment, necessitating sudden acceleration/braking, which means a greater load on the battery pack, which therefore gets hotter.

**What are some issues with battery packs used in e-vehicles (EVs)?**

**Spontaneous combustion:** A battery pack heated beyond a certain point can spontaneously combust.

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- This can happen if a hot pack is recharged without a cooling-off period.
- It can happen long after a crash because of internal short-circuits, which are invisible to inspection.
- Also, a battery pack can reignite —due to invisible internal reactions — spontaneously 24 hours after the fire has been apparently extinguished.

**Battery fires burn hotter than petrol fires**, and emit a combination of highly toxic smoke and flammable fumes, which can inflame nearby vehicles and structures.

**How are fire hazards caused by EVs and Internal Combustion Engines different from each other?**

An ICE faces the danger of an **electrical short circuit** setting off an explosion of the fuel tank, as well as the danger of the fuel line, or the tank being ruptured in a crash, leading to flammable liquid or fumes leakages.

In an e-vehicle crash, the delayed action factor means that the vehicle and/or its battery pack must then be isolated and observed.

- If there is a fire, it cannot be tackled easily. The foam used to smother petrol fires is ineffective.
- The advice is to detach the battery pack if possible, and to direct jets of cool water at it, until it cools, and then it must be kept under observation.

**What are the steps that need to be taken?**

Packs designed to operate in cooler, less stressful driving conditions must be tested more stringently and, maybe, modified for India. If other technical factors are involved, those must be identified and addressed.

### **By the Govt**

- The government may have to set new standards for battery packs, and warn users to wait for a cool-down before recharging.
- As the number of e-vehicles in service rises, the **fire brigade and the police will need to be retrained**, and, maybe, issued new equipment. This is because a fire caused by ICE and EV is different in nature and need to be tackled accordingly.
- In addition, the **government must launch an outreach campaign** to reassure citizens about the safety of this new class of green vehicles.

**What is the way forward?**

As green vehicles, including cars and buses, are adopted in larger volumes, the fire safety factor will acquire greater importance. Fire departments and police safety protocols must be updated to deal with them.

#### **UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA**

##### **19. India needs an economic reboot for rapid employment-heavy growth**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India needs an economic reboot for rapid employment-heavy growth**” published in the **Livemint** on **15th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Indian Economy, Issues in planning, mobilization of resource and employment

**Relevance:** India’s Economic Growth and Employment Generation

**News:** Recently, the **62nd annual conference** of the **Indian Society of Labour Economics** was concluded at the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee.

In this conference, various useful papers were presented related to the Indian Economy.

##### **Why a major structural transformation is necessary for high long-term growth?**

India is facing severe unemployment. There were 28 million unemployed persons in 2019-20, out of which 24 million were in the 15-29 age group. It can lead to closure of the ‘**demographic dividend**’ window of India.

India’s **growth elasticity of employment** is low as compared to some other Asian comparators. In fact, has also been declining.

India’s GDP has not been registering robust growth. The repeated covid shocks, has eroded the **growth potential** of the economy. The small businesses, especially MSMEs, have been impacted. There have been **supply-chain disruptions**. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has further exacerbated these disruptions.

Around 90% of the **employed workforce** is involved in **unskilled or low-skill jobs**. Further, around 35-40% of graduates and technical graduates are unemployed and not employable.,

##### **What is the work profile of India’s workforce?**

Among those who are employed, 90% are employed in **unskilled or low-skill jobs**.

Unemployment rate is as high as 35-40% among graduates and technical graduates. Evidently, despite a relatively high level of education, many unemployed graduates are not employable

The workforce share of industry in India is 6% higher than the norm. Workers have mostly moved to the **low-skill or unskilled jobs** in the industry **like construction industry** as well as trade, hotels and transportation industry.

The workforce share of services is very low. It is because **high-value-added services** like financial and professional services, infotech and communication services, etc, are not employment-intensive.

##### **Ways Forward**

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The challenge of **high unemployment** cannot be tackled without adequate GDP growth

– Annual GDP of India must grow at **13%** to spur an annual employment growth rate of **1.5%** so that 90 million jobs can be created between 2023 and 2030 to clear the backlog of youth unemployment.

There has to be a **radical structural transformation**. The structural transformation requires **different policy approaches** at different levels.

- The **strategic sectors** should be promoted where labour absorption can be very high in India.
- The focus should be on **construction** and **low-skill services** where the bulk of the Indian labour force is equipped to handle at present. For example, Major infrastructure programmes can be undertaken.
- The high value jobs should be scaled up. For this, **good quality education** and **skilling** should be undertaken as a long-term strategy

### **HUNGER AND FORTIFICATION OF FOOD IN INDIA**

#### **20. Fortifying nutrition**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Fortifying nutrition**” published in the **Business Standard** on **14th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues related to Poverty & Hunger

**Relevance:** Tackling malnutrition via fortification

**News:** The government’s **decision to supply fortified rice across the country in phases by 2024 is a welcome move to address malnutrition.**

At present, fortified rice is being supplied through the Targeted public Distribution System (TPDS) in one district each of 11 states under a pilot project running since 2019.

**Must Read:** [Food Fortification in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **Why fortification is essential?**

Hunger and starvation deaths have come down, but **undernourishment and imbalanced nutrition** are still rampant and in fact growing.

As per the National Family Health Survey -5,

- the proportion of **anaemic women** in the 15-49 age group has gone up from 53% in 2015-16 to 57% in 2019-20.
- Under-five children suffering from the **deficiency of iron and other essential nutrients** has soared to 67.1% (an annual rise of almost 8 per cent during this period).

Such **nutritional disorders** affect the physical and mental growth of children, resulting in a high incidence of “stunting” (short height) and “wasting” (low weight).

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**Global Hunger Index 2021 ranked India 101st** among 116 countries, placing it below its smaller neighbours like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

### What are the potential benefits of the supply of the iron-fortified rice?

The scheme, to supply iron-fortified rice, is expected to **reduce stunting and wasting** among kids by 2 per cent and anaemia in teenage girls and pregnant women by 9 per cent a year.

Officials claim the scheme would help **save** about Rs 50,000 crore in **health care expenses**.

### What are the concerns regarding the fortification scheme?

Nutrition experts are doubtful about the effectiveness of fortified rice in meeting the desired goal of eradicating anaemia and undernourishment.

- Their scepticism relates to **absorption of iron** in the human body.
- This vital nutrient, needed for growth and development, requires various other minerals and vitamins for its absorption in the blood to produce haemoglobin. The problem with most of the ongoing nutrition-oriented government programmes is that they are **focused primarily on filling the bellies rather than providing wholesome and nourishing food**.

### What is the way forward?

Nutritionists of the Indian Council of Medical Research, as also of the Hyderabad-based National Institute of Nutrition, believe that **diversity in food intake holds the key to meet the requirement of micronutrients**.

- This can be ensured by including in the diets **readily available and more nutritious foods** like coarse cereals and millets, such as bajra (pearl millet), jowar (sorghum), and ragi (finger millet), besides pulses, eggs, milk, vegetables, and fruits.

Further, India's agricultural research network is developing **inherently nutrient-rich bio-fortified varieties of various food crops** by tweaking their genetic structure through conventional and modern plant-breeding techniques.

- The inclusion of these **nutrition-enhanced grains** in the food programmes would be the most practical and cost-effective means to alleviate malnutrition.

## POVERTY AND RELATED ISSUES

### 21. Poverty estimates are a shot in the dark

**Source:** This post is created based on the article **"Poverty estimates are a shot in the dark"** published on **12th Apr 22** in **The Indian Express**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Inclusive growth and associated issues/challenges

**Relevance:** Estimation of poverty level

**Context:** The government, which earlier used to conduct **Consumption Expenditure Surveys (CES)** and update poverty lines, has not released any data on this lately.

The last consumption survey of 2017-18 was junked.

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Based on the leaked estimates of consumption expenditure from that survey, it was reported that **poverty increased** from 31% in 2011-12 to 35% in 2017-18 with the number of poor increasing by 52 million.

However, recent **estimates from the IMF and WB have reported a significant decline in poverty after 2011-12**, although they differ from each other on the level of poverty as well as the magnitude of poverty reduction since 2011-12.

### What is the difference between both these estimates?

It is argued that Consumption Expenditure Surveys (CES) do not capture the estimates of consumption expenditure correctly and are unfit for poverty measurement.

The **IMF uses Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE)** estimates from the national accounts. But the PFCE estimates do not give the distribution of consumption across households which is a prerequisite for estimating poverty. These are derived aggregates and are available for the country as a whole with no separate estimate for rural/urban or states.

– All committees have unanimously rejected the practice of adjusting survey estimates based on PFCE. This is not the practice in India, or anywhere in the world.

**The World Bank** arrived at their figures by using estimates from the **Consumer Pyramid Survey of Households (CPSH)**, a privately conducted survey by the **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)**. While their methodology is also questionable, they try to adjust for the anomalies of the CPSH surveys to arrive at estimates as close as possible to the NSS surveys.

But the real issue is not just what happened to poverty and inequality, but also what factors contributed to poverty reduction.

### What may have led to poverty reduction?

Many of the initiatives, including the **rural employment guarantee programme** and the **Food Security Act** have contributed to improvement in the lives of the poor, pulling them out of poverty.

There is also a role of the **in-kind transfers** through the **subsidized food scheme under the Public Distribution System**.

– The expansion of the PDS during the pandemic has certainly contributed to reducing the misery of the poor.

### Way forward

There is a need for **strengthening the social safety nets** and **expenditure on food and livelihood schemes** given the challenge of economic recovery with rising inflation.

An important message is also to **strengthen the statistical system** and make it **independent of state interference**.

Given the controversy over poverty estimates, it is all the more important that the government conducts the CES at the earliest and decides the yardstick of measuring poverty which is the poverty line.

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

#### **22. The importance of addressing duty anomalies in trade deals**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**The importance of addressing duty anomalies in trade deals**” published in **Livemint** on **12th Apr 22**.

**Context:** India has long suffered the anomaly of imported raw material being taxed more than the finished product. Economists call it the inverted duty structure. A range of free trade agreements (FTAs) in the past have not helped. Are the new ones any better?

#### **What is the main issue with the inverted duty structure?**

**Makes Indian-made products more expensive:** When manufacturers cannot set off the taxes paid on raw materials against the tax on the final product, the excess tax paid on inputs gets built into the price of the product. This makes an Indian-made product more expensive than the imported finished product, affecting the competitiveness of Indian makers.

The issue is acute in sectors like **textiles and apparels**.

Correcting duty anomalies is key to attracting investments in manufacturing.

#### **Will new FTAs worsen the problem? How are they different from previous FTAs?**

Looks unlikely. The FTAs under negotiations are **structurally very different** from those signed a decade ago.

#### **Older FTAs (signed in early 2000s)**

Signed with **manufacturing hubs**, like ASEAN. Most of these countries directly competed with India and largely produced the **same goods** as India.

India agreed to lower or eliminate duties on finished goods. But import duty on raw materials remained high. That made it **cheaper to import the final product** than make them in India, hurting domestic manufacturers.

**For instance:** Share of ASEAN in India's total imports has grown from 8.2% in FY11 to 12% in FY21, while exports have stagnated at 10%.

#### **New FTAs**

These are being signed by India are with countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that **share complementarities with India** with respect to trade interests.

The UAE, for example, is a **services, oil, and gold-led economy** rather than a manufacturer. India benefits from duty-free access for mobile phones, which the UAE does not make.

**Australia**, which signed a pact with India recently, is again not a major manufacturing economy, but a services one with key interests in wines and minerals, pears, oranges, etc.

#### **How is India addressing problems with the duty structure?**

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**India has been increasing import duties since 2014-15** to correct the inverted duty structure for non-FTA countries and the average tariff rose from 13.5% in 2014 to 15% in 2020, according to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In fact, the last two budgets sought to correct it by **removing duty exemptions and lowering the duty on raw materials**.

Moreover, this time around, the government is holding consultations with the industry during the FTA talks, doing a SWOT analysis to ensure FTAs benefit India's exports.

### GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND ITS ASPECTS

#### **AIR POLLUTION IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES**

##### **23. Cleaning India's air: What is the report card so far?**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Cleaning India's air: What is the report card so far?**” published in **Down to Earth (DTE)** on **11th Apr 22**.

**Context:** An analysis of various steps taken by the government in this regard shows that much more needs to be done.

##### **What is the present situation wrt the problem of air pollution in India?**

Some **22 of the 30 most polluted cities in the world are in India** according to the *World Air Quality Report, 2020*.

The India State Level Disease Burden Initiative published in *Lancet Planetary Health* in December 2020, indicated **1.7 million deaths in India** were attributable to air pollution in 2019.

Incidentally, India is the **third-largest emitter of carbon dioxide** in the world — 2,597.36 million tonnes.

##### **What are the various steps taken by the govt to address the issue?**

The Union government launched a **five-year National Clean Air Action Plan (NCAP) January 10, 2019, to tackle the increasing air pollution problem**.

India has **committed to reduce the emission intensity** of its gross domestic product (GDP) by 33-35 per cent over 2005 levels under the **2015 Paris Agreement**.

– It has also pledged to generate 40% of its power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources and create an additional '**carbon sink**' of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

To lower India's carbon footprint, **coal-fired power plants not meeting prescribed standards would be shut down**.

The Centre has launched the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid) and Electric Vehicles (FAME) I India scheme** in 2015 to reduce pollution caused by diesel and petrol-operated vehicles and to promote electric and hybrid vehicles in India.



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– The **FAME phase II scheme** has been extended for two years to drive greater adoption of the scheme.

The **Vehicle Scrappage Policy**, launched August 13, 2021, is a government-funded programme to replace old vehicles with modern and new vehicles on Indian roads.

India's PM, in August 2021, announced the enhancement of target to **20% for ethanol blending in petrol by 2025** in order to further lower carbon emissions and improve air quality.

In August 2021, the **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021** were notified, which are aimed at phasing out single-use plastic by 2022.

– The **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** for plastic and e-waste management has been introduced.

The implementation of the **Green India Mission (GIM)** has been undertaken to increase green cover in India to the extent of five million hectares (mha) and improve the quality of existing green cover on another five mha.

### What has been the outcome of these measures?

As a result of these initiatives,

– 96 cities showed a **decreasing trend of PM<sub>10</sub> concentration** in 2020-21 as compared to 2019-20. However, 36 cities showed an **increasing trend in PM<sub>10</sub> concentration in 2020-21**, as compared to 2019-20, according to the Economic Survey 2020-21.

– **Marginal decrease in pollution levels in targeted cities** three years into the launch of the NCAP, according to media reports. An analysis also showed that states spent insufficient funds to ensure air pollution reduction.

– Not much progress on the closing down of thermal power plants not meeting permissible standards.

– But, India's third Biennial Update Reports submitted to the UNFCCC in 2021 reported that during 2005-16, the country had **reduced emission intensity of its GDP by 24%**.

– India's forests have increased by more than 1,500 sq km between 2019 and 2021.

### What is the way forward?

It has been observed that the institutions engaged in regulatory functioning both at the Centre and state level lack capability in maintaining environmental regulation standards in large cities / urban centres. There is an **urgent need to strengthen these agencies**.

Research and development, recruitment of professionals having domain knowledge and provisioning of infrastructure are necessary where **budget provisions need to be stepped up**.

A **roadmap on the closing down of inefficient coal-fired power plants** needs to be developed in consultation with stakeholders.

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The **GIM has to be aggressively and effectively implemented** throughout the states with quality planting materials.

The research activities into restoring biodiversity, conserving landscapes and **preserving the natural balance** of biodiversity across India will have to be encouraged.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – COVID PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT

### **IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY**

#### **24. In pandemic shock, critical lessons for MSMEs**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “In pandemic shock, critical lessons for MSMEs” published in **The Hindu** on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

**Context:** MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) are critical for achieving the overall objectives of economic development. During the pandemic, MSME was the worst hit sector. The sector is still struggling.

MSMEs are a significant contributor in terms of industrial output, employment generation, and exports. This sector is trying to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

#### **Findings of the survey**

A primary survey of 225 small firms in the National Capital Region (NCR) and Uttarakhand made the following observations:

- 90% of small firms faced a decline in their turnover in FY2020-21
- 53% of firms faced more than a 50% decline in their turnover.
- Around 29% of firms reported a collapse of their businesses

#### **Following are the reasons behind the decline in growth:**

##### **Covid Induced reasons:**

1) Restriction/s on economic activities and mobilities; 2) decrease in demand; 3) shortage of raw materials; 4) slow recovery of markets; 5) payment delays, lack of financial resources and labour shortage 6) increased cost of production; 7) lack of skilled workers 8) ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ package was not helpful due to lack of demand and business uncertainties. Thus, firms did not use financial assistance available under the program.

##### **Other reasons:**

1) Sudden change in government policies, 2) natural catastrophes such as floods and drought, 3) bulk of MSMEs are in the informal sector which lack registration and the necessary financial documents to avail finance opportunities.

#### **However, some firms have reported growth as well:**

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Around 10% of firms under the study had either a rise in their turnover or reported no change. The sectors include human health activities; manufacture of pharmaceuticals; food and beverage service activities; and manufacture of apparels, etc.

The resilience of these firms was the result of; 1.) availability of financial resources, and 2.) ability to invest in new technologies or new business opportunities.

### What should be done?

Following measures can help MSMEs in becoming resilient and sustaining their growth during business uncertainties caused by economic shocks.

**1.) Setting up Uncertainty Corpus Fund for Small Businesses:** On the line of public provident fund, government must make the emergency fund mandatory for the small firms.

A lucrative return on the investment to encourage the firms can be set up.

**2.) Small Business Insurance Scheme:** The term insurance can be offered to MSMEs on the lines of crop insurance scheme.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EVs)

### ISSUES RELATED TO ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN INDIA

#### 25. A milestone's been spied for a switchover to EVs

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “A milestone's been spied for a switchover to EVs” published on 14/April/2022 in Mint.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy

**Context:** The government has expressed confidence that electric vehicles (EVs) will achieve parity with conventional petrol burners in India within two years.

#### What is the cost trend estimate of EVs?

By Crisil Research report estimates, all vehicles get increasingly economical with greater use. But EVs are seen to do this better, the gap would close sooner for covering long distances.

This is good news from a climate perspective. However, electricity generation also needs to be clean.

#### What are the challenges faced in promotion of EV?

Crude is also getting dearer over the years. But recent war-driven disruptions to the assembly of fossil cars could impact EVs too. For example – the price of Nickel, a key battery input, has soared.

China's dominance of battery-making is another source of anxiety for the global EV industry.

In India, while talk of battery swapping for energy refill has been in the air, it is still a long way to go.

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Also, charging networks would have to prove their reliability on ease of access and the speed of recharge. The pace of spreading of EV stations matters too.

Safety concern – as currently been probed by the Centre after a sting of fire mishaps.

### Way forward:

There is a need for state incentives to plug cost-of-ownership gaps in India. Need for fixing quality bugs to enable EV market takeoff.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – RERNEWABLE ENERGY

### **SOLAR ENERGY IN INDIA**

#### **26. Hits and misses: India's solar power energy targets**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Hits and misses: India's solar power energy targets**” published on **14/April/2022** in The Hindu.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy

**News:** A report prepared by JMK Research and Analytics and the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis states that India is likely to miss the 2022 target of installing 100 GW of solar power capacity. This is because rooftop solar lagging behind.

#### **What is India's solar policy?**

The National Solar Mission, 2010 started promotion and development of solar power in India. Since 2011, the solar sector has grown at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 59% from 0.5 GW in 2011 to 55 GW in 2021.

India currently ranks 5th after China, U.S, Japan and Germany in terms of installed solar power capacity. As of December 2021, solar installed capacity is 55GW, which is 14% of all power generation capacity of India. In this, 77% are grid connected utility-scale projects.

#### **What does the report say?**

As of April, only 50% of the 100 GW target has been met. A 25GW shortfall in the 40GW rooftop solar target is expected. Thus, it is in rooftop solar that the challenges of India's solar-adoption policy stick out.

#### **What are the reasons for rooftop solar adoption not meeting targets?**

In early years, it was held back by the **lack of consumer awareness, inconsistent policy frameworks of the Centre/State governments and financing.**

Recently, there has been a sharp rise in rooftop solar installations **due to falling technology costs, increasing grid tariffs, rising consumer awareness and the growing need** for cutting energy costs.

**Factors impeding include** 1.) pandemic-induced supply chain disruption to policy restrictions, 2.) regulatory roadblocks; 3.)limits to net metering; 4.) taxes on imported cells and modules, 5.)

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unsigned power supply agreements (PSAs) and banking restrictions; 6.) financing issues plus delays or rejection of open access approval grants.

### How critical is solar power to India's commitment to mitigate climate change?

Solar power is a major prong to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. India also has a target to reach a non-fossil fuel energy capacity of 500 GW by 2030.

**Way forward:** Given the challenge of variable renewable energy, most of the RE capacity to be installed in this decade is likely to be based on wind solar hybrid, RE-plus-storage and round-the-clock RE projects rather than traditional solar/wind projects.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

### **INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### 27. Is the Reserve Bank doing enough to rein in inflation?

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Is the Reserve Bank doing enough to rein in inflation” published in **The Hindu** on 15th April 2022.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy – Monetary policy

**Relevance:** Macroeconomic condition

**News:** Recently, the central bank's monetary policy committee had decided to hold benchmark interest rates (*remain accommodative*).

However, it has declared to withdraw the **accommodative monetary policy measure** to ensure that inflation remains within the RBI's target limit.

In the last two years, there has been high inflation and real growth has also been zero. Both of these can be a disaster.

Inflation in India is measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI Index has stayed above 6% for three months running. It is above the Reserve Bank of India's upper tolerance limit.

#### **What are the causes of high inflation?**

High commodity prices like oil prices, edible oil prices, fertilizers, chemicals, feedstock etc

All-round supply chain disruptions – The present **geopolitical uncertainty** in Ukraine has led to **supply-chain disruptions**.

In India, inflation is also caused by **supply-side shocks**. And, monetary phenomena like credit infusion often mounts NPAs pressure.

#### **Are the RBI actions enough to arrest inflation?**

It may be difficult to contain inflation through **repo rate** and **reverse repo rate adjustments**.

The RBI's **monetary policy framework** is extremely complex. It targets only **one macro variables** i.e., inflation, and neglects other variables like growth, jobs, external balance, financial stability which are interrelated

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The RBI has, therefore, failed to control the **inflation curve**. It has revised the **inflation estimate** a number of times.

A high **output gap** is being projected in a number of reports. In fact, the **rules-based monetary macro framework** is going to be inadequate to deal with this.

The growth projections are based on the assumption that the Indian economy is experiencing **cyclicality** and the monetary policy can correct it. However, there may be chances that the Indian economy may be facing other challenges (like GST, Demonetization etc.). In this scenario, the monetary policy acting as a **counter-cyclical policy tool** will not work.

The **repo rates hike** and **liquidity tightening** works when there's a lot of credit growth (around 25-30% credit growth). It works to contain aggregate demand and money supply. However, India's **credit growth** has been 7.5% for the last two years. Thus, credit growth is not causing inflation in India.

### What are the good signs?

There have been **robust tax collections** due to **formalisation**. In addition, there have been **record currency reserves** which can act as a buffer for now.

**Market sentiment** is a key factor. Globally, most of the central banks are tightening monetary policy. Therefore, RBI has done good to maintain **positive sentiment**. The move to contain inflation will increase the RBI's **credibility**.

### What can be done to control inflation?

A high fiscal deficit should be substantiated through enhanced investment. There has to be focus on **'crowding in'** private corporate investment.

The RBI has introduced a new tool known as **the standing deposit facility rate** (3.75%) to absorb excess liquidity.

The RBI should work upon improving the **government bond yields**. It will improve the return for **long-term bonds**, reduce inequality, control inflation, and manage financial stability.

Efforts should be made to create jobs and increase the output of the Indian Economy. The boost to real economy can improve all our macro variables.

**On the fiscal policy side**, the government should provide **'participation income'** (not 'basic income') in the hands of people. It should be done by providing guaranteed jobs. It can tackle inflation.

## **GENOMIC SEQUENCING**

### **28. Humans Decoded**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Humans Decoded**” published in **Business Standard** on **16th April 2022**.

**Context:** Scientists have completed the first full and seamless catalog of genetic instructions of humans. It's expected that research will help to explain how every cell in a human body is created. It will help develop highly effective diagnostic tools and treatments for diseases.

#### **What is the background?**

Nobel Prize-winning Italian-American virologist Renato Dulbecco first pitched the idea to determine the DNA sequence of the entire human genome, way back in 1984.

An international research effort continued under the Human Genome Project.

**Thirty-eight years and billions of dollars later**, scientists completed the first full and seamless catalog of genetic instructions of humans. According to the Telomere-to-Telomere (T2T) consortium's collection of papers (recently published in Science), the sequence — comprising more than three billion base pairs across 23 chromosomes — is gapless.

#### **What is DNA sequencing?**

Sequencing simply means determining the order of the base pairs in a segment of DNA. Human chromosomes range in size from about 50,000,000 to 300,000,000 base pairs (National Human Genome Research Institute, or NHGRI).

#### **What led to the recent breakthrough?**

Over the past decade, two new DNA sequencing technologies emerged that can read longer sequences without compromising accuracy.

- 1.) The PacBio HiFi DNA sequencing method** can read about 20,000 letters with nearly perfect accuracy.
- 2.) The Oxford Nanopore DNA sequencing method** can read even more — up to 1 million DNA letters at a time — with modest accuracy. Both were used to generate the complete human genome sequence.

#### **What is the significance of complete genomic sequencing?**

It shall help explain **how every cell in a human body is created, which** may shed light on the treatment, prevention, and cure required for a disease. For instance, The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA), a cancer genomics program in the US, has already mapped genomic changes in 33 cancer types in order to improve cancer treatment.

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It shall open the door for relatively **effective personalized or precision medicine** and genome editing in the future.

It should lead to powerful **preventive medication** and allow us to learn about risks of future illness, besides helping better plan dietary and lifestyle changes.

As DNA sequencing becomes the norm, it's likely that medical prescriptions will be based on our genes — minimizing side effects and making treatments relatively effective. Currently, there are already over 250 US FDA-approved drugs labeled with pharmacogenomic information that can be prescribed based on a patient's genetics.

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

The sequencing is done, but the work is far from over. Researchers now want to decode full sets of DNA from a larger pool of individuals **to capture all the variations that exist in human DNA**. Already researchers, in a separate project, are building a “human pangenome” representing all the human genetic variations.

A **strong set of ethical guidelines encompassing genetic research and editing** needs to be formulated. As gapless, human genome sequencing will enable society to select specific embryos to avoid health problems and may lead to the rise of “superhumans”.

## GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

### **OIL BONDS**

#### **29. What are oil bonds, and to what extent do they tie the govt's hands?**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**What are oil bonds, and to what extent do they tie the govt's hands?**” published in **Indian Express** on **16th April 2022**.

**Context:** The government has attracted criticism post a surge in retail prices of petrol, diesel, and other petroleum product. However, the Finance Minister has blamed the oil bonds issued by the predecessor government for the current price countered.

#### **How much fuel price is taxed?**

There are two components to the domestic retail price — the price of crude oil itself, and the taxes levied on this basic price. Together, they make up the retail price.

The taxes vary from one product to another. For instance, as of now, taxes account for 50% of the total retail price for a litre of petrol, and 44% for a litre of diesel.

#### **What is an Oil Bond?**

An oil bond is an IOU (I owe you instrument), or a promissory note issued by the government to the Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs). It is given in lieu of cash that the government would have paid to OMCs.



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An oil bond says the government will pay the oil marketing company the sum of, say, Rs 1,000 crore in 10 years. To compensate the OMC for not having this money straight away, the government will pay it, say, 8% (or Rs 80 crore) each year until the bond matures.

### Why were they issued?

When fuel prices were too high for domestic consumers, governments in the past often asked oil marketing companies (OMCs) to avoid charging consumers the full price. But if oil companies don't get paid, they would become unprofitable.

To address this, the government said it would pay the difference. But again, if the government paid that amount in cash, it would have been pointless, because then the government would have had to tax the same people to collect the money to pay the OMCs.

This is where oil bonds come in. By issuing such oil bonds, the government of the day is able to protect/ subsidise the consumers without either ruining the profitability of the OMC or running a huge budget deficit itself.

### What is the magnitude of Oil Bonds that needs to be repaid by the current government?

In 2014, there were bonds worth Rs 1.34 lakh crore that had to be paid between 2015 and 2026.

Between 2015 and 2021, the government has fully paid off four sets of oil bonds — a total of Rs 13,500 crore. Further, between 2014 and 2022, the government had to spend a total of Rs 93,686 crore on interest as well as the principal of oil bonds.

**Source:** Indian Express

### Is this amount large enough to restrict the Finance Ministry from bringing down the taxes?

There are **three ways** to answer whether the amount is large enough to restrict a reduction in taxes.

The first is to observe that the total payout was just 7% of the total revenues earned through taxes on petroleum products in 2014-15. As the years progressed, this percentage has come down because taxes generated from this sector have soared.

The second is to look at the total revenue earned by the government (both Centre and states) between 2014 and 2022 from taxing petroleum products. This amount is more than Rs 43 lakh crore. That means the total payout by the current government to date on account of oil bonds is just 2.2% of the total revenues earned during this period.

The third way is to note that the total amount of revenue earned by the Centre from just one kind of tax— excise tax — in just — 2014-15 — was more than Rs 99, 000 crore.

In other words, while the government has to pay for oil bonds, the payout is not big compared to revenues earned in this sector.

#### **PRICING DISTORTIONS IN INDIAN ECONOMY**

##### **30. Time to set price distortions right**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Time to set price distortions right**” published in **The Hindu on 20th April 2022.**

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy, Direct and Indirect Subsidies

**Relevance:** **Pricing** Distortions in India

**Context:** Since 1991, India has undergone **economic liberalisation**, openness to **international trade** and **investment**, resulting into an open free market economy in India. The government’s major priority since then has always been to improve the **ease of doing business**.

However, it has failed to improve the **cost of doing business**, which been very high due to the **government policy-induced pricing distortions**.

##### **Some Cases of Pricing distortion in India**

**Petrol and diesel pricing distortion:** Earlier, the diesel was subsidized. Therefore, diesel car’s demand surged. Later, the government removed diesel subsidy. Now, it is levying high taxes on fuels to raise revenues to moderate the fiscal impact from COVID. This has given an inflationary impetus.

**Electricity pricing distortion:** A cess of **₹400 per tonne** is levied on coal. Earlier, it was levied to generate resources for promotion of renewable energy and decarbonisation of the economy. Now it is used to meet shortfalls in tax receipts.

In Indian railways, there’s a **cross subsidisation** of passenger and freight fare. The high freight fare increases transportation cost of commodities. For example, transportation cost of coal becomes high. It also distorts the pricing of electricity for the distribution companies. It leads to **loss of competitiveness**, lower manufacturing growth and the creation of fewer jobs in India.

In India, it is difficult to get land for business enterprises. The land prices are distorted due to a **real estate asset price bubble**.

##### **What factors have led to government policy induced pricing distortions?**

One factor is the **political need** to find a way out for a **cash-strapped government** to raise resources, OR

To provide affordable **goods** and **services** to those in need. It is provided through a **cross subsidy** within the sector.

##### **Why are the pricing distortions dangerous for the Indian economy?**

These pricing distortions lead to **competitive disadvantage** to domestic value addition and job creation in an **open economy**.

– For example, energy is the basic requirement of the **modern industrial economy**. But energy prices distortion reduces competitiveness in the market.

It has led to India’s **relative lack of success** in manufacturing and employment generation.

##### **Ways Forward**

There is a need for **political leadership** and investment of **political capital** in generating a consensus and steering change in addressing pricing distortions.

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Petrol and diesel should be brought into the ambit of GST. For instance, If the highest rate of 28% is levied on petrol. The pricing of petrol would be around ₹60 per litre.

**Land use conversion** and **redevelopment processes** need to be made user-friendly.

There is a need to improve **public provision** and **upgradation** of quality infrastructure. It would reduce **supply side constraints** and **lower prices** in real terms.

There is a requirement of reducing the cost of doing business. In addition, **private investment** needs to be promoted. It will create better jobs.

### **RIGHT TO REPAIR**

#### **31. Upholding the right to repair**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Upholding the right to repair**” published in the **Indian Express** on **19th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy

**Relevance:** Consumer Welfare, Fair Competition

**News:** Recently, the **US Federal Trade Commission** directed manufacturers to remedy **unfair anti-competitive practice**. The manufacturers have to ensure that consumers can make repairs, either themselves or by a third-party agency.

As a result, Apple announced that consumers will have the right to purchase spare components of their products. However, this momentum is not so strong in India.

#### **What is the rationale behind the “right to repair”?**

The individual who purchases a product must own it completely. They must be able to repair and modify the product the way they want to.

The absence of repair manuals means that manufacturers hold **near-monopoly** over repair workshops.

#### **What are the challenges in repairing electronic goods?**

The companies avoid the **publication of repair manuals** that can help users make repairs easily.

The repair is becoming **unreasonably expensive**. For example, the workshops charge consumers exorbitant prices. Further, repairing is also becoming impossible because technologies are becoming obsolete.

The manufacturers have **proprietary control** over spare parts. In fact, most firms refuse to make their products compatible with those of other firms.

The companies plan **obsolescence** of the product.

Moreover, the products break down too soon. It's often cheaper and easier to buy replacements rather than repair them.

Tech giants contended that if their **patented technology-based products** are opened up by third parties, it can lead to emergence of **security** and **privacy concerns**.

Big companies practically **forbid** other enterprises to repair their products. For instance, warranty cards mention that warranty lapses if a product is repaired from a **“non-recognised” outfit**.

#### **What is the status of repair laws in India?**

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In accordance with the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, monopoly on repair processes infringes the customer's "**right to choose**".

The right to repair has been partially acknowledged in India in the **Consumer disputes jurisprudence**.

– For example, In **Shamsher Kataria v Honda Siel Cars India Ltd (2017)**, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) ruled that it is anti-competitive if a company restricts the access of independent automobile repair units to spare parts.

### What are the international practices related to the right to repair?

Many countries have enacted legislation that recognise the "**right to repair**" to reduce electronic waste.

**Australia Consumer Law** offers limited scope for exercising the right to repair. It gives the consumers a **right to request** that certain goods be repaired. Then manufacturers provide **spare parts** and **repair facilities** for a "reasonable" time. The repair facilities and spare parts are not available after the specified time. The manufacturer has no obligation to provide information or diagnostic tools to customers to repair independently.

The **Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act, 2012** requires automobile manufacturers to provide spare parts and diagnostics to buyers and even independent third-party mechanics.

The **UK** also introduced the path-breaking "**right to repair**" in 2021. It makes it legally binding on manufacturers to provide spare parts.

### Ways Forward

A **well-drafted legislation** is needed in India. It will uphold the right to repair, and may aid in striking a much-needed **balance** between **intellectual property** and **competitive laws** in the country.

## TELECOM SECTOR IN INDIA

### 32. The right price: on TRAI's latest recommendations

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**The right price: on TRAI's latest recommendations**" published in **The Hindu** on **19th Apr 22**.

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

**Relevance:** TRAI's latest recommendations on auction of airwaves

**News:** The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's latest recommendations on the auction of airwaves identified for 5G services, particularly the pricing of spectrum, have triggered disappointment within the industry.

#### What are the concerns expressed by the telcos?

Telecom services providers contend that the recommendations run counter to the spirit behind the **relief-cum-reforms package** unveiled by the Government in September 2021.

TRAI has proposed cuts of about 35-40% on the reserve prices at which the relevant frequency bands of spectrums could be auctioned. However, it has proposed **charging 1.5 times the reduced reserve price** for a 30-year tenure on spectrum thereby virtually negating the proposed cut. It further undermines the Government's aim of making spectrum affordable enough to encourage greater participation in the auctions.

#### What are the major challenges faced by telcos in India?

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India's telcos point to two major problems:

- High cost of spectrum relative to the global average, and
- India having one of the lowest realisations in terms of average revenue per user

Telcos state that their ability to invest in the infrastructure required to cover the length and breadth of the country and simultaneously ensure optimum reach and availability of signals in dense urban areas is constrained by these issues.

**What is TRAI's rationale for the recommendations?**

TRAI's recommendations cite a November letter from the DoT which had underscored the fact that only 37% of the spectrum on offer at the last auction had been sold.

TRAI's reasoning for the reserve prices, seems oblivious to the challenges the industry is currently facing as well as the significant capital investments needed to modernise the country's telecom networks.

**How have other countries approached the spectrum allotment for 5G?**

Japan and South Korea avoided auctions and instead adopted the **discretionary approach** to spectrum allotment.

- It should be noted that this approach was abandoned by India after the Supreme Court in 2012 struck down the grant of 2G licences and mandated auctions as the best method to prevent wrongdoing in the exercise of discretionary powers.

**What is the way forward?**

Govt needs to balance its requirement of netting optimum revenue from the auction of spectrum while ensuring that India does not end up lagging behind in the rollout of 5G telecom services.

Hence, policymakers need to insist TRAI revisit its recommendations.

The economy can ill afford any further disruptions in the linchpin sector.

### **PLI SCHEME AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **33. PLI scheme with a return for the government**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**PLI scheme with a return for the government**" published in **The Indian Express** on **18th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy

**Relevance:** About the **Production**-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme

**News:** The government's ambitious PLI scheme aims to overcome the disadvantage of high costs in the country and to encourage production on a very large scale in some selected industries. The scheme aims to reduce costs per unit of output, and help not just the economy but the country more generally.

However, there are concerns. More so, when there can be alternative policies to achieve the desired objectives without adversely impacting the budget of the government

**What benefits have already been given to the corporate sector?**

The corporate sector has been given several benefits already.

- The corporate tax rates have been cut substantially

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- the real interest costs have been kept at very low levels,
- the customs duties have been raised significantly, and
- the price of dollar has been kept high through the excessive build-up of foreign exchange reserves over the years

All this is reflected in the high level of the BSE Sensex as well.

### What are the concerns with the PLI Scheme?

As the **corporate sector has already been provided with many benefits**, so it's not clear if the government should provide yet another financial incentive like the PLI.

**Huge public spending:** It is estimated that public spending on the scheme will be between Rs 1.93 trillion and Rs 3.47 trillion. Considering that, the govt is already fiscally constrained and is having to resort to a huge tax on oil, such a huge expense on PLI scheme is worrying.

Although the entire country can benefit in a general way, the **main benefit is for the companies that receive the incentive**; it is not for the Government of India (GoI), the taxpayers, and the public more generally.

### What can be done to address the concerns?

The article lists two methods to ensure that the govt receives a return in exchange for the financial incentive that it is offering under the PLI Scheme.

**Method I:** The scheme can be modified to include a possible return for the government that is based on the performance of the company that receives the incentive.

The following indicators can be used to judge the performance of a company:

- One indicator can be that the time path of **inflation-adjusted pay-outs** (*dividends plus share buybacks*) by the company goes up above a pre-specified path.
- Another indicator can be that the **real salaries and bonuses of the employees** of the recipient company go above a given path.
- Yet another indicator can be that the **real market value of the recipient company in the equity market**, averaged over, say, three years, goes up above a predetermined path.

**Method II:** The government could be just given some shares of the recipient company "for free" at the time of providing the financial incentive.

### How does the two methods differ?

In the second method, all, and not some, of the recipient companies will need to provide a return to the government, regardless of how successful they are. Furthermore, the recipient companies need to provide a return to the government in all, and not some, of the years in which they have a pay-out for the shareholders, regardless of whether the pay-out is big or small.

All this is not the case under the method I.

### What is the way forward?

It is not clear if the Govt should run the very costly PLI scheme. But if a financial incentive is provided now, then there should be some possible return in future for the government.

## **MEDICINAL PLANTS IN INDIA**

### **34. Medicinal plants await good marketing**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Medicinal plants awaits good marketing**” published in the **Business Standard** on **17th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 Indian Economy; Agriculture & Allied Sector, Cropping Pattern, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

**Relevance:** Medicinal Plant Sector, AYUSH, Traditional Knowledge

**Context:** Recently, the **Ministry of AYUSH** launched **e-CHARAK**, an electronic platform for interaction between various stakeholders in the medicinal plants sector. It will allow sale, purchase and sharing of material as well as know-how between different stakeholders. In this relation, medicinal plants sector has come under focus.

*The curative plants of significant commercial value are Tulsi, Aloe Vera, Brahmi, Ashwagandha, Isabgol, Shankhapushpi, Atees, Karanj, Guggal, Bael, Satavari, Kalmegh, Ashok, Giloe, Safed Musli, and Amla.*

#### **Why medicinal plant cultivation has become a lucrative agribusiness in India?**

Increasing use of relatively safe and **affordable plant-based remedies** for common ailments.

There has been burgeoning demand from the **pharmaceutical, cosmetics**, and other industries. About 40% of pharmaceutical products are derived from plants and other natural substances.

The cultivation of these plants doesn't require much **investment**, or **large landholdings**.

The cultivation of medicinal plants yields high returns.

In addition, knowledge of the **medicinal plant-specific agronomic practices** is now readily available from various sources.

Many **public-** and **private-sector institutions** are providing training in growing medicinal plants.

The advent of contract farming in the medicinal plant sector has made it more lucrative. The growers have guaranteed buy-agreement of their entire produce at mutually agreed prices.

Several **farmers' producer organisations (FPOs)** and **start-ups** are now pioneer in this field. They have developed their own brands, exports curative herbs, their extracts, and other products.

The **international demand** is growing. For example, India shipped Ayurvedic drugs, skincare products, and other herbal items to Europe and other developed countries.

Worldwide, 80% people rely on **plant-based home remedies** for minor health issues and primary health care.

The traditional health management systems like Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Siddha and Unani have become a regular part of the Indian health care regime.

#### **Where can India's plant species having curative traits be found?**

The plant species can be found in the country across **15** well-defined **agro-climatic zones**.

They are found in the **Himalayas, Western Ghats**, and regions unaffected by anthropogenic interventions, like parts of the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.

In addition, a large number of them are found in **botanical gardens** located in different phytogeographical regions.

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The natural reserves are being depleted. Therefore, the plants are being **cultivated** on agricultural fields. For example, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, and Bihar are important producers of the medicinal plants in India.

### What are the weaknesses in the medicinal plant market?

The marketing is the weakest link in the value chain of herbal farming. There is dominance of middlemen and lack of transparency in **price discovery**.

More reform-oriented interventions are required to allow the medicinal plants sector to grow to its potential.

### Ways Forward

The BSI, the **National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB)** and the **National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** are engaged in conserving and preserving medicinal plants.

Many states possess ample potential for herbal farming. Their potential remains untapped.

## ISSUES RELATED TO ANTITRUST

### 35. Confidentiality ring amendment could make antitrust disputes more opaque

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Confidentiality ring amendment could make antitrust disputes more opaque**” published in the **Indian Express** on **18th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the Director General of Competition Commission of India (CCI) has issued orders on the Amazon dispute. In this dispute, Amazon (the defendant) has decided to take the confidentiality route towards its submissions.

The CCI has realised that disputes arising out of antitrust matters, also known as competition or cartelisation, require confidentiality.

The problems that arise in the CCI’s investigation under Sections 3, 4 or 5 of the Competition Act are relevant to the suo motu powers given to the director-general of the commission, which have now extended toward establishing an **opaque confidentiality ring**.

*A confidentiality ring allows the parties in litigation to exchange confidential information relating to each other, and third parties, in a safe space whereby the information can be protected by limiting who sees it and how it is handled.*

### What are the international practices on Confidentiality in Anti-trust matters?

In Europe, the confidentiality rings are provided under Articles 101 and 102 of the **Treaty of the European Union**. The DG Competition (EU) can safeguard the rights of defence while respecting the legitimate interests in the confidentiality of the information providers.

In addition, confidentiality rings remove or reduce the burden of preparing non-confidential versions of documents.”

In 2015, the EU mandated the creation of a data room to respect the confidentiality of certain documents.

### What are the laws about confidentiality ring in anti-trust matters in India?



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India has imported the “Confidentiality Ring” from the EU. The Section 35 of the Act empowers the CCI to establish a **confidentiality ring**. It includes dissemination of the confidential information among the party to the disputes for which the confidentiality clause is invoked.

The Competition Commission of India provides the confidentiality ring. However before doing so it provides a reasonable opportunity to the informant to represent its case before the Commission.

The onus is on the informant to **submit reasons** to become a provider of **confidential information**, and seek confidentiality. The defendant has to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the information is confidential.

### What are some associated issues?

It can lead to **prejudice against one agency**. It happens if the informant seeks additional documents.

In confidentiality related issues, the CCI is bound to be questioned when redacted information is provided to the party.

The usual ground for seeking confidential information protection is the defendant’s reputation. It can be indiscriminately used to subdue any counter that may arise from the informant.

### How has the CCI’s approach been different from the EU’s approach and why is it important?

The **Regulation 8 of the “Confidentiality Ring” Amendment** has furthered the confidentiality ring law in India.

The new amendment has declared informants not to be part of the ring. It will reject the informant’s right to know the information. This information is necessary to establish their claim.

Now, the CCI has decided to establish a confidentiality ring to protect the documents of the defendant instead of **informants**.

It will empower the CCI to further its **suo motu investigation**. It will add secrecy to cases of high-value disputes.

The CCI has taken such a move so that none of the decisions can be challenged. It is because the protection provided to the informants, unfortunately, turns out to be to the advantage of the defendants.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – AWARENESS IN FIELD OF SPACE, BIOTECH AND NANOTECH

## **JAMES WEBB SPACE TELESCOPE (JWST)**

### 36. When the stars came out

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**When the stars came out**” published in **The Hindu** on **21st April 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Science and technology

**Relevance:** James Webb Space Telescope, Individualism and Collectivism

**News:** Recently, the **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)** was launched on **25 Dec 21**. It was a joint project of NASA, the European Space Agency, the Canadian Space Agency and involved many universities, organisations, and companies across 14 countries.

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It is to be administered by **the Space Telescope Science Institute (STSI)**.

The project proved that the **'heroic collective'** and **'heroic individual'** are complementary to each other. The world need story of both **'individualism'** and **'collectivism'** as both are very important for mankind.

### About JWST

Unlike the **Hubble Telescope** which worked in the UV and visible light range, it is an **Infra-red spectrum telescope**.

The telescope is lighter than Hubble. But it has a mirror **six times larger** than the Hubble telescope. The JWST is located **1.5 million km away** from where the Hubble Telescope was located (i.e., 550 km from the Earth).

### Importance of JWST Project

It has been planned to enable humanity to see deeper into **space**. It will help to look further back in time, a period **250 million years** after the **big bang**. Therefore, it'll help to understand about the origins of the universe.

In comparison to Hubble, It will take us back about **150 million** years further than Hubble.

It seeks to understand how **galaxies form** and **evolve**. It will look for evidence of **dark matter**, **study exoplanets**, **capture images of planets in our solar system**, and other such **cosmic curiosities**.

It will augment the understanding of the **physical sciences** by helping us understand about other life in the universe, **Jacques Monod's thesis** etc.

### Lessons to be learnt from JWST Project

**Individualism is important and so is collectivism:** A number of heroic individuals like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Stephen Schwarzman, N.R. Narayana Murthy, Mukesh Ambani have made significant differences through their will power, strategic vision, perseverance and unique personal qualities.

In fact, a lot of **individual scientists** have worked day and night for the success of the JWST Project.

But, simultaneously, the JWST is a stellar product of collective endeavour marked with **twenty plus years** of continuous collaboration. It is a **collective production** of a **common good**. The teams have worked together to design and manufacture the JWST system, launching, and placing, at the chosen **Lagrange point**.

The idea of working together as groups and collaborating for sharing and cooperation, produce outcomes that are also beneficial for society.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIANS

### DR Y NAYUDAMMA

#### 37. A north pole for science and technology

**Source:** The post is based on an article **"A north pole for science and technology"** published in **The Hindu** on **18th April 2022**.

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**News:** This is the birth centenary year of Dr. Y. Nayudamma, Padma Shri recipient, noted scientist, former Director of the Central Leather Research Institute, Chennai and former Director-General of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

*Humans have been propelled in the fields of science and technology since ancient civilisations. This has been due to a relentless quest for better living. That's why human beings have now to be called a 'technological animal'.*

**What are the serious issues in blindfolded pursuit and application of science and technology?**

At present, the developmental strategies are based on **modern scientific** and **technological advances**.

Consequential application of S&T have been resulting in rapid resource depletion, and ecological imbalances and inequities.

**How has Dr. Nayudamma's work been an effective agent of change?**

**Dr. Nayudamma reshaping of leather industry:** He was a renowned leather scientist. Due to his efforts and contributions, the leather products and leather industry have gained better public acceptance. Indian leather products are in great demand in international markets now. He improved the skills of various communities associated to the leather industry. He was clearly an agent of social change.

The choice of technology should not be guided by '**materialism and consumerism**'. It should be based on **spiritual pursuit** for **internal peace** to live in harmony with society and nature. It can enable development that is in harmony with nature. This is rooted in Indian philosophy.

He advocated for the **empowerment of all sections of society**. For this, he advocated a **bank account** for women. This is aimed to enable financial inclusion and empowerment of women. The **Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** is guided by this philosophy.

He strongly advocated **self-reliance** in science and technology. This is also the essence of the **Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative**.

He advocated for all to live in dignity, have worth, equality of rights, better standards of life, security, etc. with the participation of all in national endeavours. This is the underlying principle of the philosophy of '**Sab Ka Sath-Sab Ka Vikas-Sab Ka Prayas**'.

We are living in times when "**knowledge is the real power**". It is the best resource for every individual. Therefore, we need to empower all with knowledge. It will enable a resolution of the problems of our nation collectively.

He advocated education as a means to release the **inner potential** of all to make everyone self-reliant and self-confident.

He believed individual flourishes only with a **sense of community participation** and in an environment of **collective endeavour**. It can be achieved with the **spirit of nationalism**

He believed the environment was not a piece of real estate. It is a heritage which is a serious responsibility of all and to be held for **future generations**.

### Ways Forward

India has been making concerted efforts to restore the pride of being a '**Vishwaguru**'. It requires streamlining our systems of education, modes of science and research.

What is needed are **alternative development models** to ensure **sustainable** and **harmonious development**.

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**Science and technology** should be **adapted** to the people, instead of **people** having to adapt to science and technology.

Science should emerge from the felt needs and concerns of the people. It should not be driven from the top.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

### **FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **38. On Digital Banking Units (DBUs): Digital delivery**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Digital delivery**” published in the **Business Standard** on **21st Apr 22**.

**Context:** The Union finance minister recently made a declaration at the Atlantic Council think tank that the government is planning to set up as many as 75 digital-only banks or non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

Digital Banking Units (DBUs) could transform access to financial services in remote areas where the physical delivery of such services is difficult

Is the Govt move justified?

35-odd commercial banks and well over a hundred NBFCs are already looking at this space.

If instead, the govt wants to establish 75 new digital entities, this appears unnecessary — as the RBI reports indicate, the DBU space is already crowded and likely to become more so.

What are the Digital Banking Units (DBUs)?

As per the RBI,

*A DBU is defined as a business unit, or hub, with the infrastructure for delivering digital banking products and services. At a DBU, everything from customer acquisition, to product delivery, to service provision will be done facelessly and in a paperless manner through digital interfaces.*

What are the pros and cons of DBUs?

#### **Pros**

- DBUs **reduce the locational hassles** of accessing financial services, since the entire process is online.
- They also increase the **convenience of product comparison**.

#### **Cons**

**Choice overload:** As customers can easily compare the terms and conditions offered, they may run into what behavioural scientists like Sheena Iyengar call “choice overload”, given the high levels of competition.

What is the current and the future scope of digital lending in India?

The RBI data indicates that “faceless” digital lending has grown exponentially, contributing well over half of all NBFC loans and around 6% of bank loans.

Given the sector regulator’s liberal stance, there will be a **natural expansion of DBUs**. All scheduled commercial banks and NBFCs will enter the DBU space because they must, to remain

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competitive. Given the convenience of going digital, **more retail customers will also shop online** for the best terms available across an array of financial products.

What are the RBI's suggestions on opening of DBUs?

The RBI has suggested scheduled commercial banks can open such DBUs without seeking specific permission.

It has specifically excluded regional rural banks, payments banks, and local area banks from opening DBUs.

But, it is silent on the subject of NBFCs, which can presumably open such outlets in the absence of prohibition.

What is the way forward?

The regulator has already taken cognisance of the digital space and issued clear instructions, though **more tweaks and fine-tuning may prove necessary**.

The RBI will have to **oversee DBUs** to enforce acceptable levels of interoperability, compatible standards, data protection, and cyber-security.

The government's responsibility should be to **ensure the minimisation of red tape** in establishing and running DBUs.

Furthermore, it needs to ensure that the **telecom infrastructure is up to the task of handling higher data flows**, especially in rural and remote areas.

### FOOD INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES

#### 39. Why wheat prices have shot up despite India's huge reserves

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Why wheat prices have shot up despite India's huge reserves**" published in **Livemint** on **20th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy – Agriculture

**Relevance:** Food inflation

**Context:** One side effect of Russia attacking Ukraine has been a rise in global wheat prices. Wheat importers are struggling.

Significance of wheat

The consumer price index (CPI), which measures retail inflation, has two entries for wheat, **wheat/atta-PDS** (public distribution system) and **wheat/atta-other sources**.

This takes into account the wheat sold both through the PDS and in the open market.

The wheat entry for 'other sources' has a weightage of 2.56% in the index, implying that wheat is a significant part of the overall consumption basket of an average Indian.

Is there a shortage of wheat in India?

No.

As of 1 April, total wheat stocks in FCI's central pool stood at **19 million tonnes**. This is far more than the required operational and strategic stocks of around **7.5 million tonnes**.

Also, in May-June, as Food Corporation of India (FCI) buys rabi harvests that will start reaching wholesale mandis, its wheat stocks will grow.

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Hence, there doesn't seem to be any shortage of wheat, as per FCI data.

So, why have the wheat prices gone up?

**Free foodgrains scheme:** Union government in the aftermath of the covid pandemic has been running a 5kg per month free foodgrains scheme. This explains why FCI wheat stocks are down, even though they are more than what is officially required.

**No selling of FCI stocks in open market:** Further, typically when wheat (or rice) prices start going up, the government sells FCI stocks in the open market to cool down prices. That hasn't happened this year, primarily because of the free foodgrains scheme. Nonetheless, FCI has enough stocks to do both, and this is something that the government should be looking to do soon.

**Export of wheat:** The total amount of wheat exported from April 2021 to February 2022 during fiscal year 2021-22, stood at around 6.7 million tonnes. This is more or less similar to the total amount of wheat exported from 2014-15 to 2020-21, a 7-year span.

**– Impact of the Russia-Ukraine war:** The majority of the wheat export was done during October 2021 – Feb 2022 period. This means that countries which do not produce enough wheat began to stock up once the chances of Russia attacking Ukraine went up.

- Moreover, Russia and Ukraine are the **world's largest and fifth-largest exporters of wheat** and this supply has been negatively impacted due to their conflict.
- Also, Russia is the **world's largest exporter of fertilizer**. And fertilizer prices have risen by more than 40% since January-end. This will further feed into foodgrain inflation in particular and food inflation in general.

**– Import of wheat by Egypt:** Recently, Egypt, the world's largest importer of wheat, announced that it had decided to import wheat from India. This has led to private wheat traders stocking up on wheat from the open market, pushing up prices.

**Fall in production in India:** India's wheat production from the rabi crop is likely to be around 10% lower. Multiple reasons are being offered for this fall in output, including unseasonal rains, recent high temperatures, a shift in cropping pattern away from wheat, among others.

What is the way forward?

International wheat prices are unlikely to fall so long as the war in Ukraine continues.

Hence, to cool prices down of this dietary staple, the **Indian government needs to release some wheat from FCI stocks** into the open market.

Also, **any export commitments must be carefully worked out** to ensure that it doesn't end up creating a wheat shortage in the country.

### INDIA'S TRADE POLICY

#### 40. A six-point agenda for India to raise its trade competitiveness

**Source:** This post is based on the article “A six-point agenda for India to raise its trade competitiveness” published in **The Indian Express** on **18th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Issues related to growth and development

**Relevance:** Increasing India's trade competitiveness

**Context:** India recently signed trade deals with Australia and UAE. Many more are in pipeline. Such deals are important as exports lead to higher growth.

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In a white paper on 'Building Competitiveness for Inclusive Growth', CUTS International, Institute for Competitiveness and Institute for Studies in Industrial Development have outlined an action agenda for improving Indian competitiveness.

The article outlines six action points for raising India's trade competitiveness.

What are the action points that can help raise India's trade competitiveness?

**1]. India needs better and higher investment in intangible assets** such as health and education, accompanied by 'future friendly' skills building.

– States must be let to devise their own strategies. They must promote **peoples-first public-private partnerships** to raise funding to cover health, jobs and skills, and ensure efficient implementation in consultation with all stakeholders. It would also be good if **states come together and establish their own association to exchange information on good practices and lessons learnt**. This would give them a better sense of ownership. Similar bodies exist in other federal countries like the US, Nigeria and Australia.

– India must also focus on our third tier of governance, by empowering district administrations to realize the potential of its districts.

**2]. Free trade agreements (FTAs) will help India's industry to participate in supply chains.** Hence, there is also a **need for intra- and inter-sectoral firm-level cooperation and participation** without violating the Competition Act.

– Our FTAs should complement production-linked incentive schemes so that the products whose manufacturing is incentivized domestically can compete at a global level.

– India also need to rethink our decision to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

**3]. Promotion of a more fair competition by implementing the draft National Competition Policy.**

– Among other things, the policy advocates a level-playing field for all actors, thus promoting **economic democracy**.

– It also encompasses **Ease of Doing Business (EODB)**; i.e. removing entry barriers, for which the DPIIT has prepared a comparative index across states. Those that have done well on EODB are found to be creating more jobs.

– The only problem is that it doesn't talk about running a business smoothly. The inspector raj continues in most areas. To counter this, India needs a **strong anti-corruption law** with provisions of disgorgement so that perpetrators can't get away with ill-gotten wealth.

**4]. Modernize and enhance the capacity of public institutions in India.** Reports of past administrative reform commissions need to be looked into. The present government is already carrying out some administrative reforms, such as the lateral entry of experts. This needs to be expanded to cover lateral exits through rigorous periodic evaluations.

**5]. A 'whole of government' approach,** that is monitored by policy-coherence units in the offices of the Prime Minister and state chief ministers, is needed.

– Also, **policies need to work together instead of against each other**. For example, a lack of cohesion between our trade and industrial policies has often resulted in inverted duty structures. This is despite both being under one ministry.

– Simultaneously, the **civil services' tendency to draft new laws and rules and retain old ones needs to be checked** through institutionalized regulatory impact assessments involving

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three tests: **a)** legality **b)** necessity, and **c)** proportionality. Only if they pass all these tests should they should be retained or introduced, else scrapped.

**6].** India needs to move ahead with a **shared vision, mutual learning and a single market**. It must implement cooperative federalism in letter and spirit.

We need to work diligently so that our demographic dividend is not wasted.

### GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – CRYPTOCURRENCY AND RELATED ISSUES

#### **CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCY**

##### **41. Cryptos and a CBDC are not the same thing**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Cryptos and a CBDC are not the same thing**” published in The **Hindu** on **19th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy – Money and Banking, Information Tech

**Relevance:** Regarding Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) and Cryptocurrencies

**Context:** Despite arguing against legitimising cryptos and calling them as Ponzi schemes, the RBI has announced that it will float a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC).

RBI is clearly worried over the increasing popularity of Cryptos among Indian masses.

But, a CBDC will not solve the RBI’s concerns regarding Crypto since it can function as a fiat currency and not a crypto. However, cryptos can function as money. This difference needs to be understood.

What are the RBI’s worries with the proliferation of Cryptocurrencies?

Cryptos threaten the RBI’s place in the economy’s financial system.

This threat emerges from the **decentralised character of cryptos** based on blockchain technology which central banks cannot regulate and which enables enterprising private entities to float cryptos which can function as assets and money.

What is currency and what enables Cryptos to act as money?

A currency is a **token used in market transactions**.

– Historically, commodities (such as copper coins) have been used as tokens since they themselves are valuable.

– But paper currency is useless till the government declares it to be a fiat currency. It is only then that everyone accepts it at the value printed on it. So, paper currency derives its value from state backing.

Cryptos are just a string of numbers in a computer programme and have no inherent value. Furthermore, there is no state backing.

Their **acceptability to the well-off enables them to act as money**. Paintings with little use value have high valuations because the rich agree to it. It is similar for cryptos.

Moreover, a limited supply of the most popular Cryptocurrency i.e. Bitcoin has caused its price to rise over the years, giving massive returns to those who bought in early. This has fuelled the speculation around Cryptos, thereby lending them value too.

*RBI has likened the popularity of Cryptos to the **Tulip mania**.*



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Why a CBDC cannot act like a Cryptocurrency?

**Centralised control of a CBDC:** Blockchain enables decentralisation. That is, everyone on the crypto platform has a say. But, central banks would not want that.

Further, they would want a fiat currency to be exclusively issued and controlled by them. But, theoretically, everyone can 'mine' and create crypto. So, for the CBDC to be in central control, solving the 'double spending' problem and being a crypto (not just a digital version of currency) seems impossible.

*The double spending problem is a phenomenon in which a single unit of currency is spent simultaneously more than once. Blockchain and encryption have solved this problem by devising protocols such as 'proof of work' and 'proof of stake'.*

A centralised CBDC will require the RBI to **validate each transaction** — something it does not do presently. Once a currency note is issued, the RBI does not keep track of its use in transactions. Keeping track will be horrendously complex which could make a crypto such as the CBDC unusable unless new secure protocols are designed.

What is the way forward?

Due to the reasons listed above, CBDCs at present cannot be a substitute for cryptos that will soon begin to be used as money. This will impact the functioning of central banks and commercial banks.

Further, a ban on cryptos requires global coordination, which seems unlikely. Ms. Georgieva has said, "The history of money is entering a new chapter".

The RBI needs to heed this caution and not be defensive.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – RENEWABLE ENERGY

### **SOLAR ENERGY IN INDIA**

#### **42. The rooftop eclipse on India's solar ambitions**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**The rooftop eclipse on India's solar ambitions**" published in **Livemint** on **20th Apr 22**.

**Context:** In 2015, the Govt set a target of 100 GW (gigawatt) of solar energy capacity by 2022.

Of the 100 GW, 60 GW was to come from **utility-scale solar plants**, which stood at 41.7 GW, or **70% of the target**, by 2021.

The rest was to come from **solar rooftop**, which has managed only 8.9 GW, or **22% of its target**. This sub-segment added just 1.4 GW in 2020 and 2.2 GW in 2021.

It is clear that at current speed India will miss out on its targets.

*Solar rooftop refers to panels mounted on top of commercial, industrial and residential buildings.*

Why the deficit holds significance?

The deficits matter in the context of India's solar vision.

Solar is the **key driver in India's move towards green energy**, and to cut its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions intensity to 33-35% of its 2005 levels, as per the Paris Agreement.

More solar would also **help address the air pollution problem:** India has 63 of the world's 100 most polluted cities, according to IQAir.

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### Why India has struggled to achieve its solar targets?

One reason why India has struggled to achieve its solar targets is what Crisil Research terms an “**unstable policy environment**”. There is a growing incoherence between the policy thrust on renewable energy on the one hand and the actual action by implementation agencies like the Solar Corporation of India (SECI) and state distribution companies on the other.

**Regional differences:** About 35% of the installed capacity in solar rooftop is from just the top three states, and around 50% comes from the top five. Geographical advantages only partly explain the differences. **For example:**

- **J&K and Andhra Pradesh** are among the top five states in solar potential, according to the National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE). But none of them features in the top five by installed capacity in the commercial and industrial segments.
- Similarly, **Tamil Nadu** is among the top five by installed capacity, but has lower solar potential, as per the NISE ranking.

### How has residential segment contributed to solar capacity?

In the last two years, the residential segment, and not the commercial and industrial segments, has driven new capacity in solar rooftop.

According to Bridge to India, the share of residential in new capacity increased from 11% in 2017 to 34% in 2021. There exists some barriers:

**Net metering issue:** It lets consumers use the solar power they generate and be billed only for the additional power they draw from the grid. In 2021, the Centre introduced guidelines to lower the rooftop threshold for net metering to 500 kW in 2021, and several states followed suit. This made solar rooftop **less attractive**, especially to large and medium industrial consumers.

A **basic customs duty on imported solar cells and modules**, which came into effect this month, also impacted the economics of solar projects whose implementation got delayed by the pandemic.

### What is the global situation wrt solar power?

Demand for solar cells and modules is picking up globally.

Bloomberg New Energy Finance expects global solar capacity to increase from 183 GW in 2021 to 334 GW in 2030.

**China** has been leading the race in solar: from just 4 GW of solar rooftop capacity in 2016, it expanded to 27.3 GW in 2021, according to Rystad Energy, a research firm.

### What is the way forward?

The key to India’s success in this domain will be in aligning its policies to intent, while building its manufacturing base.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

## **INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **43. Persistent inflation likely to threaten Indian Food Security**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Persistent inflation likely to threaten Indian Food Security**” published in the **Live Mint** on **22nd April 2022**.

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**News:** Recently, **food Inflation** has become a **global phenomenon**, with several countries going through spells of high inflation. Those afflicted include major developed countries such as US, UK and parts of Europe, and the developing countries such as India, Brazil, and Mexico.

### What is the situation wrt inflation?

The **Wholesale price index (WPI)** has been in double digits for a year. It shows a trend of rising inflation in food items. For example, oilseeds, cereals, wheat, maize and barley have been witnessing **double-digit inflation**.

The **Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index** is at the highest level since the series began in 1990.

### What is the likely impact of high food prices?

A sustained spell of inflation is likely to dampen **growth** efforts. It is likely to cause hardship for most of the population already suffering from a sharp slowdown.

It may lead to **more job losses, decline in incomes and wages**.

In addition, the inflation **may threaten food security** in the country.

### Why is India's retail food inflation much lower than farm-gate inflation or food inflation at wholesale level?

Fortunately, high wholesale food inflation (WPI) has not been translated to the **consumer price index (CPI)** showing retail inflation. Recently, the retail inflation was around 7%. The reason is:

(1) Since the covid pandemic struck India. The government's intervention has been timely undertaken. For example, the government has launched the **Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** which provides staple cereals, pulses and edible oil to protect the poor and vulnerable. It has also helped keep food prices low.

### What are the factors that are likely to worsen the present spell of rising prices in the coming future?

**Geopolitical crisis** like the Ukraine war – Presently, this has led to **supply shocks** across the world

**Rising oil prices**. This has led to a surge in **global demand for biofuels**, which can be derived from cereals like maize. The biofuels will act as **substitutes** for **petroleum products**.

There have been **supply shocks** caused by **adverse weather conditions** in some cereal producing countries.

Another factor that is likely to put **upward pressure** on food prices is the rising cost of inputs, particularly of **energy** and **fertilizers**. Both of these are linked to hydrocarbon costs.

In India, matters are going to get **complicated** due to the **domestic supply situation**. The production is likely to be **lower-than-expected** in the rabi season. There have been extreme weather events.

The stocks in our central pool have depleted. There is likely to be **less state procurement**. The private traders and food processing companies have increased their purchases.

### Way Forward

The country needs to maintain sufficient stocks to be able to contain consumer prices through open market sales.

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There is a requirement to **expand** the **PDS system**. The government should keep it longer than planned. At the same time, **expand the basic basket** of PDS by offering pulses and edible oil again.

The best way to stop our economy from slipping into **stagflation** would be to revive **all-India demand**. This can be done by shielding the **real purchasing power** of people at large.

### FOREX RESERVE AND RELATED ISSUES

#### 44. Too Many Dollars In Reserve?

**Source:** The **post** is based on an article “**Too Many Dollars In Reserve**” Published in the **Times of India** on **20th April 2022**. **Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy, External Sector

**Relevance:** **Forex Reserve** and Foreign Currency Reserve

**News:** Recently, the sanctions imposed by the west following the Russia-Ukraine conflict have triggered discussions on how other countries would manage their **foreign currency (FX) reserves**, which are used as an **insurance** against **economic shocks**.

#### How countries accumulate Forex?

A country running current account surpluses accumulate foreign assets over time. For example, China and Saudi Arabia have grown their foreign asset holdings

#### History of forex reserves

Reserves have been part of **economic discourse** for more than a century. They were helpful during the **interregnum** between the two world wars, and in 1935 when economic sanctions were imposed on **Italy** for attacking **Ethiopia**.

The **Asian Financial Crisis** 1998 reinforced the need to have sufficient reserves.

The global FX reserves rose from 2 trillion USD in 1999 to nearly 12 trillion USD by 2014. It was based on the premise that the forex is important to cover all **short-term external debt**.

However, the share of the USD in global FX reserves has fallen from 71% in 1999 to 59% in 2021. This has shifted to the **Euro**, the **Yen**, the **Chinese yuan (CNY)**, the **British pound**, and the **Canadian** and **Australian dollars**.

CNY share of global financial transactions (both trade-related and financing-related) is bound to rise.

#### What are the issues with Foreign Currency Reserves?

Liquidity comes at a cost, which can be financial or geopolitical cost. On the contrary, the **geopolitical returns** on the liquid assets are lower than on less liquid and less safe assets.

Therefore, reserves as a share of **total foreign assets** have fallen for China, Saudi Arabia and any other country (**except Switzerland and India**).

The US inflation could continue to push down the share of global reserves held in USD assets.

**Triffin Paradox:** A country whose currency becomes a **global reserve currency** would have to run a continuous **trade deficit**. It has to keep borrowing to provide a **sufficient supply of assets** to the whole world.

Further, “**New Triffin dilemma**” says that the US would not be able to supply the safe assets the world needs, as the US share of global GDP declines

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### What are other options for investment?

(1) **Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWF)**: SWFs globally now manage 10 trillion USD of assets. For example, Norway, Saudi Arabia and Singapore have grown their SWF at large scale

(2) Other countries like **Japan** and **China** have allowed their firms to buy **foreign assets**. These assets are hard to use in times of crisis. But they are better for the overall economy.

(3) The countries can accrue returns from bond markets. For example, recent 8% decline in the value (or increase in yields) of **10-year US government bonds** provides another investment alternative to currency adjusted returns. In fact, The US government bonds supply has grown significantly more than the demand for them from global central banks.

### GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – SECURITY CHALLENGES IN BORDER AREAS

#### **SECURING NORTH-EAST BORDER AREAS**

##### **45. Towards a peaceful, stable Northeast**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Towards a peaceful, stable Northeast**” published in the **India Express** on **20th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the Chief Ministers of Assam and Meghalaya signed an agreement to resolve the **five-decade-old border dispute**.

Simultaneously, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) decided to reduce the disturbed areas in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur after decades declared under the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)**.

##### **What is the strategic plan for the North-East?**

It includes **(a)** ending all **disputes**; **(b)** ushering in **economic progress** and taking the region's contribution to GDP back to its **pre-Independence levels**; and **(c)** maintaining and **preserving** the region's languages, dialects, dance, music, food, and culture and make it attractive for the whole country.

The Union government wants to make the northeastern region the main pillar of the **Act East policy**.

##### **What are the recent developments in the N-E Region?**

An **agreement** has been signed between **Assam** and **Meghalaya**. However, progress is being made in the other disputes. The state's border disputes dialogues are continuing at a steady pace with **Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland** and **Mizoram**. For example, Assam and Nagaland agreed to settle their dispute out of court.

The **regular engagements** are being undertaken to maintain **peace** and work out a **permanent solution**.

The MHA has been undertaking informal talks with various stakeholders for the removal of AFSPA.

The government has reached **peace agreements** with a number of insurgent groups.

– For example, the **NLFT Tripura Agreement 2019**, the **Bru Agreement 2020**, the **Bodo Peace Accord 2020** and the **Karbi Anglong Agreement 2021**. The militants have surrendered and declared cessation of violence. In 2021, militancy incidents had reduced by 74% compared to

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2014 and deaths of security personnel and civilians have also come down by 60% and 84% respectively, during this period.

The AFSPA was **completely removed** from **Tripura** in 2015 and **Meghalaya** in 2018. In 2022, The disturbed areas tag was removed from various parts of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. This has led to removal of AFSPA.

### What is the importance of these measures?

The developments are significant for **restoring normalcy** in the north-eastern region. It will also enable perception changes towards the rest of India.

**Political stability** is very crucial for optimal **economic development** and **capacity enhancement in the region**.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND GROWTH

## INSOLVENCY LAW AND RELATED ISSUES

### 46. Effective and Efficient: The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Effective and Efficient: The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code**” published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** has come under intense scrutiny. Its performance is being analysed across a number of parameters.

### What are the three criticisms against the IBC?

**First**, there are inordinate delays in the resolution procedure.

**Second**, there have been more liquidations than resolutions.

**Third**, the recovery amounts under IBC have not been substantial,

### Argument against the criticism of the code

The performance of a bankruptcy resolution of IBC regime with the earlier **Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) regime** should ideally be evaluated along at least **three dimensions** given below:

– **(a)** The **average time taken to resolve** successful cases should be one of the metric. On this performance metric, the IBC has effectively reduced the average time to settle a bankruptcy case from 5.8 years to 1.6 years.

– **(b)** The **fraction of cases resolved within a given timeframe**. On this performance metric, the IBC has performed considerably well than BIFR. **Firstly**, most of those cases that were **resolved** under the BIFR it individually took more than 34 months, and **Secondly**, The BIFR has resolved less than 3,500 cases since its inception in 1987. However, the IBC has resolved about 1,178 cases since it was launched in 2016 until it was suspended at the onset of the COVID pandemic.

– **(c)** The recovery rate conditional on resolution. Focusing on any single parameter may result in a gross under (over) estimation of the IBC's (BIFR's) performance.

### 2] Other points

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If we start with a **broad definition** of resolutions that includes both liquidation and resolution, the IBC outperforms the earlier BIFR regime. However, If the definition of resolution is narrowed by excluding liquidation cases, the IBC still continues to outperform the BIFR.

In addition, since many of the **unresolved cases stuck** in the BIFR were **transferred** to IBC. Therefore, the delays in resolution in the IBC should be viewed in comparison with the historical case pendency. In this case, the IBC is at least 23 times more efficient than the BIFR regime.

The IBC represents a structural shift and a **substantive improvement** over the BIFR. The IBC have seen more cases being admitted than under the BIFR.

The IBC has significantly outperformed the earlier BIFR regime in terms of the speed of resolution.

Many of the BIFR's legacy cases subsumed by IBC were often related to **zombie firms**. These firms were kept alive due to massive evergreening of loans between 2008-2015.

The most powerful impact of the IBC is likely to be its **ex-ante impact** on firm and **promoter behaviour**.

The IBC is potentially as effective as a **disciplining device** as much as it is a **resolution mechanism**.

### GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

#### **METAVEVERSE AND RELATED ISSUES**

##### **47. Behind the curve on Metaverse**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Behind the curve on Metaverse**” published in the **Business Standard** on **22nd Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Information and Technology, Science and tech

**Relevance:** Metaverse and how India is placed wrt this new age tech revolution

**Context:** Concept of Metaverse is promising immersive environments where we can do pretty much anything. Users will utilise avatars and gear like virtual/augmented reality helmets or glasses (more options will surely develop) to dive in.

But whatever the global pace of development may be, India may well be behind the curve

**Must Read:** [What is Metaverse? – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the future projections wrt Metaverse?

Citibank guesstimates the metaverse may generate between \$8 trillion and \$13 trillion worth of global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030, with 5 billion users.

In 2020, global GDP was \$85 trillion and the global economy is expected to grow at near 3 per cent annually.

So, if Citi's projections range close to reality, the metaverse could be worth between **7 and 12% of global GDP by 2030**, and roughly 51% of the population would be residents (*or at least regular visitors*).

What needs to happen for these projections to approach reality?

**Hyper fast communication infra:** The metaverse won't work unless it's a seamless environment available on the move. This means hyper-fast mobile networks carrying huge data and of course,

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devices to ride the networks. There's an enormous technological gap and the infrastructure doesn't exist.

**Requirement of 6G:** Even the best 5G networks can't deliver what metaverse promises. 6G is needed. It's being taken for granted that the required telecom infrastructure will be rolled out quickly. There are many nations, including India, which don't possess commercial 5G. India is yet to hold 5G spectrum auctions, so it'll be a while before 5G rollout.

**Meta-virtual passports:** The metaverse will not be a single environment. There will be different metaverses developed by different service providers. Users will need "meta-virtual" passports to move from one to another and interoperability and compatibility between metaverses will be required. Money, or tokens will be needed to do commercial stuff.

How is India positioned to take advantage of the concept of Metaverse?

**Large user base:** India has a potentially large user-base. On a per capita basis, Indians consume the most data in the world. The willingness to move to the metaverse would be high.

– The average Indian is also very value-conscious, since he or she doesn't have a great deal of money. If there were fast 5G (and 6G) rollouts and data charges were reasonable, India would have a big metaverse population.

**Skilled workforce:** There's also a pool of skilled developers, with imaginations. There's potential for desi themed metaverses — whether it's temples, cricket stadiums, concerts with avatars, or CGI games based on desi themes.

What are the challenges that India needs to address?

Presently, India has a **regulatory system** that's terrified of cryptocurrencies, and a ridiculously **complex system of goods and services tax (GST) compliance**.

– If metaverse service providers have to provide GST certification on every transaction, their software development skills will be focussed on payment solutions rather than immersive environments.

– Also, if the government takes an 18% cut upfront from start-ups, most such businesses will not get off the ground. Finally, data leaks could be catastrophic and India doesn't have data protection legislation

**Interoperability issues:** Desi metaverses will not have interoperability with overseas metaverses. Desis will also find it hard to use global metaverses with crypto-based payment systems.

**Other issues:** India is two years behind in terms of telecom infrastructure, the cryptocurrency policy is wrong-headed, and the tax compliance is painfully cumbersome.

### GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

#### **DIGITAL TAXATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

##### **48. Addressing the digital tax challenge**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Addressing the digital tax challenge**” published in the **Indian Express** on **23<sup>rd</sup> April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** **GS3** – Indian Economy, Issues in Planning and Mobilization of Resources

**Relevance:** Taxation Regime, Digital Service Tax



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**Context:** Over the past four years, 137 countries have been engaged with the OECD. It is related to the ongoing discussion and proposal to find a solution to the **tax challenges** arising from digitalisation.

### What are the tax challenges in the age of digitization?

In a digital economy, the firms operate seamlessly across borders. Therefore, the manner of taxing profits in the digital economy becomes difficult in any economy.

It has also become a political issue. The **largest technology firms** are tax residents of developed countries

There is **divergence** in expectations among developed vs developing countries about the ideal solution. Developing countries want the profits from digital operations to be fractionally apportioned to markets while developed countries believe that a fraction of **residual profit**, mainly arising from **marketing functions**, should be taxed in markets.

The divergence has compelled countries to implement unilateral measures. For example, India implemented a gross equalisation levy on turnover. Similarly, several other countries have announced a digital services tax (DST).

In 2021, India expanded the scope of the equalisation levy. Thereafter, the **US** declared India's DST discriminatory. The US also announced **retaliatory tariffs**.

### What are the steps that can be taken?

The solution requires a **consensus approach** and excessive **global coordination**. For this, a process of **dispute resolution panels** should be created.

Redefining the digital presence of the **large technology firms** for the purpose of taxation would give India more **right to tax**.

The OECD has been considering the issue of **allocation of taxing rights**. It has adopted a **two-pillar approach**.

The **first pillar** involves defining the **rules for taxing** digital companies. It is supposed to go beyond digital companies. It will apply to **large companies** with annual revenue over € 20 billion.

India's stance on **OECD's approach** must be calibrated. Current tax collections indicate that the EL can level the playing field between digital and brick and mortar firms through behavioural change or higher taxes.

Corporations that argue in favour of simplicity must also consider the potential benefits from an EL like tax that sets aside the complications of attributing profits to complex functions.

As per an estimate of the US Treasury, 72% of the companies covered by EL in India are US companies. Therefore, India needs to negotiate with the US.

The OECD has proposed a **global minimum tax** as a package deal. It allows the profits reallocated through Pillar One to be compensated for. It allows taxing back global profits taxed below 15%.

As per **Pillar One proposal**, once the OECD approach is ratified in 2023, it will lead to removal of DSTs.

### Issue of increasing fuel prices

#### **49. Calibrated, coordinated action is needed by Centre & states to address the issue of high fuel prices**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Calibrated, coordinated action is needed by Centre & states to address the issue of high fuel prices**” published in **The Indian Express** on **30th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Polity – Centre-State relations

**Relevance:** Issues of rising fuel prices in the backdrop of Centre-State relations

**Context:** A few days ago, Prime Minister said that several Opposition-ruled states did not heed the Centre’s call to lower taxes on petrol and diesel.

While several chief ministers contradicted the PM, the situation is particularly challenging for both the Centre and states as revenue from fuel taxes accounts for a sizeable share of general government revenues.

**What is the revenue contribution of fuel taxes to the Centre and the States?**

As per the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell,

– **For Centre:** The sector’s contribution to the Union government exchequer stood at **Rs 4.55 lakh crore** in 2020-21, up from Rs 1.72 lakh crore in 2014-15.

– **For states:** In the case of states, it rose from Rs 1.6 lakh crore to Rs **2.17 lakh crore** over the same period.

States are likely to face a revenue shortfall this year as the collections through the GST compensation cess will possibly cease at the end of June. Thereby, lowering of sales tax/VAT on POL (petroleum oil lubricants) products will be fiscally challenging.

**What is the way forward?**

Since the revisions began in March, Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have raised prices of petrol and diesel by Rs 12 and Rs 10 per litre respectively.

The cumulative price of fuel includes an **excise duty levy** of Rs 27.9 and a **VAT** of Rs 17.13 which works out to around 43% of the retail selling price.

As these taxes are levied at both the central and state level, **calibrated action will be required at both levels** — even the monetary policy committee has in the past called for cuts at both levels.

Also, governments at both the central and state level could perhaps **consider building in some counter-cyclicality in the taxes** levied i.e. cut taxes when prices are high, maintain stability when prices fall. This would factor in concerns over both revenue and inflation.

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### UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

#### 50. Denied & discouraged: Why youths not looking for jobs can be a crisis for India

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Denied & discouraged: Why youths not looking for jobs can be a crisis for India**” published in **DTE** on **28th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Issues related with growth and development

**Relevance:** Unemployment in India

**Context:** In March 2022, India’s labour participation rate (LPR) fell to 39.5% from 39.9% in February, according to a report by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

This is lower than the rate during the country’s second COVID-19 wave in June 2021, when it was 39.6%.

**Labour participation rate is a measure of the country’s working-age population, which is either working or actively seeking work.**

And an LPR of 39.5% means that over 60% of the employable workforce are not even looking for work.

An increasing number of people no longer looking for work is the biggest economic crisis in a country, which has been wanting to reap its demographic dividend.

**What is the stance of Min of Labour on this situation?**

Union Ministry of Labour and Employment on April 26 **denied reports of the decrease in LPR** and called the “inference” that half of the working age population has lost hope for work “**factually incorrect**”.

– The ministry added: The authentic data source of employment / unemployment indicators in India are released by the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) through Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). According to PLFS, **LPR has increased steadily** from 49.8% in 2017-18 to 53.5% in 2019-20.

But, the data is from the most recent PLFS which was done in the period of July 2019 to June 2020. It **does not capture the increase in unemployment in the aftermath of the pandemic**.

The overall labour participation rate **dropped from 46% to 40%** between 2017 and 2022, according to CMIE’s data.

**What are the characteristics of this category of population not getting jobs?**

A large part of this dejected population have **some degree of education**, as per economists and labour experts. The CMIE surveys cover the population within the age group of 15-64.

The number of those who are completing education is growing and this **demographic of youth over 15-29**, who are joining the labour force in larger numbers are not finding work.

**What are the reasons for a low LPR?**

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**Lack of jobs:** When people do not get a job of desirable status, or they understand that the job market is so bad that even after struggling they are not able to get anything, they **tend to withdraw** from the labour market. This is called **Discouraged Drop out**.

They are tired, and gradually it has an impact on the psychology of people.

**Closure of micro and small enterprises** like tailoring, beauty parlours, stationary shops, among others during the COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in people quitting the labour force.

**Decline in female labour force:** There has been a steady decline in India's female labour force, which is one of the major reasons cited for low LPR.

– Female LPR was just 9.2% in 2021-22, compared to 15% in 2016-17, according to CMIE data.

– Reasons like safety, workplace being far from home, transportation, discrimination against women become more apparent in a market where job opportunities are already shrinking.

**Disguised unemployment:** Employment opportunities have decreased, and poor quality employment is replacing better quality employment. A lot of people have also moved from regular and even casual employment to some form of self-employment, like agriculture. For instance:

– **Non-agricultural jobs fell by a 16.7 million** in March 2022, while this was offset by a 15.3 million increase in employment in agriculture.

– Such a large increase is usually seen during the harvest season when demand for agricultural labourers rise, but is unusual for the month of March when harvest was still a month away.

– Economists have termed this increase as “disguised unemployment”, in which people, mostly members of a family who were earlier employed elsewhere, now do unpaid family labour in their farms.

**COVID:** The trend in decrease in LPR existed before the pandemic as well but the crisis has made the situation worse

### 51. Unemployed Indians: For a country in the midst of a demographic transition, this is the biggest challenge

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Unemployed Indians: For a country in the midst of a demographic transition, this is the biggest challenge**” published in **The Indian Express** on **28th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Issues related to growth and dev

**Relevance:** Tackling the problem of Unemployment in India

**Context:** India has an employment problem which has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

For a country of the young, in the midst of a demographic transition, this problem is perhaps the most formidable challenge before the government.

What are some indicators of rising problem of unemployment in India?

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**Increase in work demanded under MGNREGA:** One indication is the continuing increase, over the years, in work demanded by households under the MGNREGA.

Year	Households which got work under MGNREGA
2014-15	4.13 Crore
2019-20 (just prior to COVID)	5.48 Crore
2020-21	7.55 Crore
2021-22	7.26 Crore (still higher than pre-pandemic level)

**Sharp fall in LFPR:** Over the years, there has been a sharp fall in the labour force participation rate in India.

- Data from CMIE suggests that the labour force participation rate has fallen to around **40%**. For comparable countries, it is significantly higher.
- This decline suggests that despite India's young population, many have simply opted out of the labour force, perhaps feeling let down by the absence of remunerative, productive jobs.
- The situation is even more dire for women, who had a considerably lower participation rate to begin with. India's **female labour force participation is lower than the global average**, and also lower than countries like Bangladesh.

**High unemployment rate:** Even as the unemployment rate has declined from the highs observed during the initial phase of the pandemic, it remains elevated, suggesting that among those looking for jobs, those unable to find jobs remains high.

**The unemployment rate is higher among the younger and more educated.** As per the periodic labour force surveys, the unemployment rate is higher among those in the 15-29 age group (22.5 per cent in September 2019), and those educated up to at least the secondary level (11 per cent).

While there are signs of increasing formalisation as indicated by the EPFO data, a **substantial share of the labour force continues to remain employed in the informal sector**, lacking a safety net.

*What are some negative consequences of lack of jobs?*

This demand supply gap b/w the number of job-seekers and the amount of jobs available in an economy is ultimately manifested in the following ways:

- Demands for reservation in the public sector by various caste groups, and for including the private sector in its ambit
- State governments exploring ways to ensure job quotas for locals.

All this is indicative of a wide and deepening anxiety over employment prospects.

### **Atmanirbharta and self-reliance**

#### **52. Atmanirbhar internet is about self-sufficiency, not protectionism**

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Atmanirbhar internet is about self-sufficiency, not protectionism**” published in **Indian Express** on **28<sup>th</sup> April, 2022**.

**Syllabus** – GS Paper 2 – Government policies for different sectors

**Context:** The criticisms levelled against the IT Rules and the idea of an atmanirbhar internet are baseless.

#### **What are the arguments in favor of IT Rules?**

##### **Read – Draft IT Rules for Social Media**

**Firstly**, it will strike a balance between the commercial interests of social media platforms and the rights of its citizens in the digital sphere.

**Secondly**, Nodal officers will facilitate coordination with law enforcement agencies. It will provide a platform for a victim to seek urgent recourse. For ex; a swift action can be taken in cases like Sulli Deals and the Bulli Bai controversies.

**Third**, Courts also have regularly pulled up social media platforms for failing in ensuring a safe and dependable platform for their users. For example, Recently, the Delhi High Court questioned Twitter for its lax response in blocking an account that was insulting Hindu deities.

**Fourth**, Critics of IT rules are mistaking IT minister’s call for an atmanirbhar internet for protectionism. However, they have been proved wrong by the success of RuPay Cards and Unified Payments Interface as an alternative to Visa and MasterCard. Thus, new initiatives encourage the development of alternative organic ecosystems and ensure that we are not left at the mercy of tech giants.

**Fifth**, the argument that compliance officers of social media intermediaries would be criminally liable for content on their platforms, is also misplaced. In reality, social media intermediaries enjoy the privilege of legal immunity under Indian law. Criminal liability is only imposed upon failure to observe measures of due diligence.

**Lastly**, Policy makers across the US have raised concerns about the hegemony of Big Tech and have introduced legislation to curb the same

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **53. Changing the skill development model**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Changing the skill development model**” published in **the Indian Express** on **25th April 2022**.

**Context:** In a rapidly changing world, there is a need to talk about **skill development** and predicting where jobs will be in 2032.

#### **What are the challenges wrt job creation?**

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It is difficult to predict what jobs will be created in the long run.

Also, **India's mental models** for skill related policies were not only inefficient but dangerous. For example, **P C Mahalanobis Model** in India failed to integrate labour with capital and capital with the labour in the Indian economy.

### What are measures that can be taken?

(A) The government can enable the **degree apprentices**, a **tripartite contract** between an employer, university, and the youth. It will build a robust skill system and the **world's largest apprenticeship system** for 10 million young people. **The five design principles of the degree apprentice model**

– **Learning while earning:** The **Degree apprentices programme** involves **stipends** and scholarships payments. The employers will be willing to pay because of the high return. The graduates have better productivity, lower attrition, and lower time needed to fill open jobs. Therefore,

– **Learning by doing:** The skill system should be based on **demand** rather than driven by **supply**. Now more focus should be given on **soft skills** rather than hard skills. The degree apprenticeships programme and the employers should integrate a **practical** and **theoretical curriculum** with actual doing.

– **Learning with flexible delivery:** Skills can be learnt in **four classrooms: On-the-job** (apprenticeships), **online**, **on-campus**, and **onsite** (faculty coming to workplaces). All Institutions offering degree apprenticeships should **combine** the **four classrooms** in varying proportions depending on the needs, abilities, and means of different employers and young job seekers.

– **Learning with qualification modularity:** There should be no policy distinction between **vocational** and **degree education**. These distinctions were strengthened with the Radhakrishnan Report (1948), Kothari Commission (1968), and New National Policy on Education (1986).

– **Learning with signalling value:** In India, there are strict entry and exit rules in the higher education system like **tight entry gates** (IIMs/IITs) or **tight exit gates** (chartered accountants). Therefore, these regulations should be eased for **massifying higher education**.

(B) The NEP 2020 proposes to remove partitions between schools, skills, and college. Degree apprenticeships offer **academic credit** for **prior skills** and for **on-the-job learning**, and **full qualification modularity** via multiple on and off-ramps between certificates, diplomas, and degrees.

(C) The policy and regulatory issues related to the **tripartite apprenticeship contracts** should be simplified.

**COAL SHORTAGE IN INDIA**

**54. That coal feeling: Shortage of rail wagons is one reason for dipping power plant inventory. But problem goes further**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**That coal feeling: Shortage of rail wagons is one reason for dipping power plant inventory. But problem goes further**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Mobilization of Resources

**Relevance:** Shortage of coal in India

**Context:** Thermal power plants in India are once again struggling with coal inventory dipping to critical levels. A similar **coal crisis had surfaced in India in October last year**.

Given that both coal mining and logistics through railways are dominated by GoI-owned enterprises, it reflects poorly on official management of an essential economic input.

**What is the situation wrt shortage of coal in India?**

On April 21, 62% of the plants had coal stock that was classified by the Central Electricity Authority as critical, inventory of less than 25% of the normative stock.

A month earlier, about 49% of plants were classified as critical.

**What is the reason behind the present coal crisis?**

CEA’s reports show that many plants have indicated **inadequacy of railway rakes** as the reason for low stock.

– It’s inexplicable. Coal provides about 49% of railway freight earnings and is the key to a healthy financial performance. It’s puzzling how railways finds itself unable to anticipate the infrastructure needs of the most important item it moves.

**Why the current shortage is worrisome?**

What makes the current situation worrisome is that planning deficiencies at the central level have come in the backdrop of a **weak financial position of state government distribution companies**.

This makes it unlikely they will use imports to fill the gap as the benchmark coal Australia price has more than doubled in a year to an average of \$197 per tonne in the January-March quarter.

**What is the way forward?**

India’s struggle with coal supply to its power plants has come about at a time when manufacturing still has spare capacity. It’s a timely **wake-up call for the full chain in the power sector**.

Ad hoc reforms will not work any longer.

The distribution link has to move to a **more efficient pricing system** while the upstream segments of the power sector are choked by mounting overdues.

And as the primary logistics provider in the sector, the **railways needs to step up**.



### **AMWAY'S PYRAMID FRAUD IN INDIA**

#### **55. Amway a Ponzi scheme? 'Buyer beware' won't do**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Amway a Ponzi scheme? 'Buyer beware' won't do**" published in the **Livemint** on **25th Apr 22**.

**News:** Recently, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) froze assets of Amway India worth ₹758 crore. The federal agency issued a statement, alleging that the company was perpetrating a "scam" by running a pyramid "fraud" in the guise of direct-selling MLM network.

The new members, it said, are not buying the products to use those, but to become rich by becoming members as showcased by the upline members.

In December 2021, the Central govt had banned direct-selling companies from promoting pyramid and money-circulation schemes as it notified new rules for the direct-selling industry.

**Must Read:** [Multi-level Marketing and Pyramid scheme – Explained](#)

[How Amway's scheme was similar to a Ponzi-scheme for direct sellers in India?](#)

In a Ponzi investment scam, money from new 'investors' is not put to productive ends, but used instead to **pay higher-ups** large and loud 'returns' as the pyramid's base expands with gullible incomers.

Amway's new joiners had to **put in some money** for a bagful of stock items (for on-sale or self-use), while they were advised to go sign up others on the logic that enrolling more and more recruits they would also get a share of sales.

Amidst all this, the fate of the new recruits down the order was left unclear, as the market for Amway's stuff got saturated.

Eventually, **many sellers left using up more volumes at home than they could sell.**

By its pyramid design, upper layers were to earn more than the bulk of its agents. To the extent this inequity caught most of its direct sellers unaware, the company can be accused of misleading people if not a financial scam.

[Do such schemes actually give profit to its direct sellers?](#)

At least one study of such schemes has shown that **only 1% of the sales force** can expect to profit.

By ED numbers, its local unit made a profit of ₹27,562 crore over a span of 2002-03 to 2021-22 and paid all its distributors about 27.5% of that as their cut.

– If it's a "₹2,000 crore business" (*as its chief said late last year*) with over half a million sellers just within the country to share an annual ₹550 crore or so, most awaiting payback lower down the order would've likely got less than ₹1,000 per month.

Even if this raw deal had their legal consent, the gap between Amway's claims and their real prospects ought to have forced an ethical rethink at the very least.

### **POVERTY AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **56. Why reforming the system of free food is necessary?**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Why reforming the system of free food is necessary?**” published in **the Indian Express** on **25th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the **World Bank** and the **IMF** released the working papers which has led to a renewed debate on poverty in India. The former used the **Consumer Pyramid Household Surveys (CPHS)** and the latter used the **NSO Consumer Expenditure Survey** for the poverty related assessment.

#### **What are the findings related to India’s poverty level in the last few years?**

Both the WB and IMF papers claim that **extreme poverty** based on the **international definition** of **\$1.90 per capita per day** (in **purchasing power parity (PPP)**) has declined in India. As per the WB it was 10.2% of the country’s population in 2019. As per the IMF it was 0.77% in 2019 and 0.86% in 2020.

In case of the poverty line scaled up to **\$3.2 PPP:** (1) the IMF claimed that the poverty would be at 14.2% of the country’s population in 2019 in India, and (2). As per the WB, it would be 44.9%. In addition, as per the **multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI)**, Indian poverty was at 25% in 2015. It was calculated using **twelve key components** from areas such as health and nutrition, education and standard of living.

By 2019-20, it is expected that MPI would have further declined as the access to health, education and other basic facilities has significantly improved amongst the poor, especially after 2015.

#### **What were the factors behind decline in India’s poverty levels?**

The government has been providing massive food grain subsidy under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA, 2013)** and **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)**. These measures had direct effect including during the pandemic period.

#### **What are the issues with distribution of free food to millions of people in the name of food security?**

This is a **vote bank** politics game.

It involves **freebies** rather than a **prudent policy**.

– For example, the pandemic has ebbed and the economy has bounced back. But the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) launched as a **special relief scheme** during Covid-Pandemic has still been extended without a proper rational.

The freebies strain reduces **public investments**, strain the **fiscal situation** and will also hamper **potential job creation**.

India’s **public grain management system** is crying out for reforms. The FCI’s wheat and rice stocks extend way beyond the **buffer stock norm**.

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### Is free food a sustainable path towards poverty alleviation?

It is better to **teach** a person how to **catch** a fish than to give him/her a **free fish** every day. It cannot inspire a society to grow.

There are issues of massive leakages in the PDS. For example, The **High-Level Committee on restructuring FCI** pointed out that it amounts to more than 40% leakage.

#### Way Forward

There is a need for reforming this system of free food. The former **PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's** approach can be adopted. The **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** for poorest of poor should be focused (more rations at a higher subsidy). For the remaining **below poverty line (BPL)** families, the 50% of the procurement price can be charged. The **above poverty line** families (APL) can be charged 90% of the procurement price.

**Technology** can help identify the poor. This will make PDS more targeted and lead to **cost savings**.

The **targeted beneficiaries** should be given the option of receiving cash instead of providing grains.

The reform can lead to generation of **savings**. The government can use that saving for investments in Agri-R&D, rural infrastructure (irrigation, roads, markets) and innovations. It will create more jobs and reduce poverty on a sustainable basis

### GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

#### HEATWAVES IN INDIA

#### **57. Living in hothouse India: We have entered a new age of heat extremes. Concrete and glass-heavy urban buildings are a major hazard**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Living in hothouse India: We have entered a new age of heat extremes. Concrete and glass-heavy urban buildings are a major hazard**” published in **The Times of India** on **24th Apr 22**.

**Context:** India is searing. Large parts of the country are in the grips of unbearable heat and heatwaves. It's not supposed to be like this in March and April. Such heat is usually expected in May and June – the year's hottest months.

But this temperature anomaly is not unexpected.

In fact, various IPCC reports point to heatwaves becoming a major calamity in the coming years.

#### What is the situation wrt heatwaves in India?

March 2022 was the hottest March on record, and March-April has witnessed a record number of heatwaves.

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– Delhi has recorded eight heatwave days in April so far, and the maximum temperature in parts of the city has already hit 43-45°C, which is 5-7°C above normal.

Both **temperatures and heatwaves have been increasing perceptibly since the 1980s**. Each of the last four decades has been progressively warmer than the decade that preceded it.

– The past decade (2011-20) was the **hottest since records began in 1901**, and 11 out of 15 warmest years were between 2007 and 2021.

– Likewise, the **heatwave days have also increased** every decade since 1980.

In addition, the **hotspots of intense heatwaves have expanded**. They now engulf a large part of the country, hitting areas that were not prone to extreme heat events in the past, like Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

– In fact, there has been an **alarming increase in severe heatwaves in southern India**. The problem is that south India also experiences high humidity. This means that in the pre-monsoon period, when the humidity is usually high, a heatwave could push the “wetbulb” temperature (*that measures the combined effect of temperature and humidity*) beyond 35°C.

Few humans can tolerate it for a long time because their bodies can’t cool themselves.

According to the latest IPCC report, the **intensity and frequency of heatwaves will increase with every increment of warming**.

– The report also points out that the **Indian subcontinent will be hardest hit by deadly heatwaves**.

What are the possible steps that need to be taken?

**Mitigation is the best adaptation.** Global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 °C. Several mitigation options – solar and wind energy, energy efficiency, the greening of urban infrastructure, demand-side management etc.

**Building cities that cool themselves:** The urban heat island effect increases the severity of heatwaves. City centres are now a few degrees warmer than the hinterlands because of the large amounts of heat emitted from our buildings, roads, factories and cars. To combat outside heat, more and more ACs are being installed, thereby unleashing a vicious cycle of spiralling heat island effect.

This cycle can be broken only by building cities that cool themselves. This means **more open spaces, green areas and water bodies, and more energy-efficient green buildings**.

**Changing our laws:** Most modern buildings are built with too much concrete, glass and poor shading and ventilation, making them prone to overheating. Therefore, our building bye-laws, urban planning guidelines and construction technologies must be radically changed to adapt to the rising heat.

**A new heat code:** India needs a new heat code. Many regions of the country now experience wet-bulb temperatures exceeding 31°C during certain parts of the year, which is dangerous for

manual labour. However, we are not declaring such days as heatwaves because our guidelines are based on dry-bulb temperature. Therefore, we need a heat code that outlines the criteria for declaring heatwaves based on wet-bulb temperature. It should also prescribe SOPs for heatwave emergencies, such as work-hour limits and relief measures in public places and hospitals.

### Way forward

Heatwave is theoretical discomfort for some of us who move from an airconditioned home to an air-conditioned car to an air-conditioned office.

But it is a matter of life and death for a poor person dependent on manual labour and living in a hothouse in an urban slum or a village.

India, therefore, needs a **heat action plan** that saves the majority from hot extremes.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – ELECTRIC VEHICLES

### **ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **58. Electric vehicles have a dark side too: Blood batteries and child labour**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Electric vehicles have a dark side too: Blood batteries and child labour**” published in **DTE** on **26th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Energy and Infrastructure

**Relevance:** Environmental cost of Electric Vehicles (EVs)

**Context:** EVs are being pitched as cleaner, greener and sustainable. But are they?

Underlying the shiny exteriors of an electric vehicle lies a shocking story of blood batteries, extreme poverty and child labour.

#### What is the usage of Cobalt in production of EVs?

Electric cars use batteries. **Lithium and cobalt** which make up these batteries are rare metals. The cobalt in the battery keeps it **stable and allows it to operate safely**. It is a bluish-gray metal. It is found in the earth’s crust or what we call crustal rocks.

In addition to its use in jet turbine generators, tool materials, pigments and smartphone batteries, cobalt is also used in lithium-ion batteries. Cobalt is used in about half of electric cars, which is about four to 30 kilograms per battery.

It is found all over the world in countries such as in Australia, Canada, China, Cuba, South Africa, the United States and the Philippines.

#### What are the humanitarian problems associated with production of EVs?

**Child Labour:** 70% of the total supply of Cobalt comes from one country, **the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**. Cobalt is mined in two ways in the DRC: Industrial (large-scale mining) and artisanal (small-scale mining). There are **no labour laws or safety protocols** governing artisanal mines in the DRC, where 20-30% of the country’s cobalt is mined.

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These mines employ some 200,000 miners, and at least 40,000 of them are children, some as young as six years old. The children in the mine dig for cobalt under **inhumane conditions** in a furnace-like environment. Upon digging the rock, they crush it, wash it and then take their finds to the market in order to sell them. They sometimes make as little as a dollar.

Many miners suffer permanent lung damage, skin infections and other life-changing injuries.

[Is the demand for Cobalt increasing?](#)

Yes.

According to reports by the International Energy Agency (IEA), EVs sold more than 6.5 million units worldwide in 2021. The number is expected to reach **66 million units by 2040**. Therefore, 66 million multiplied by 30 kilograms of cobalt.

According to the WB, the **demand for cobalt will increase by 585%** by 2050.

[What is the role of China in this entire issue?](#)

The vast majority of companies dealing in blood batteries are Chinese.

By far, the **largest producer of refined cobalt is China**, with 66%, followed by Finland (10%), according to [Mining.com](#).

In the last 15 years, **Chinese companies have bought out North American and European companies mining in the DRC**, according to the *New York Times*.

China has promised the DRC billions of dollars in investment in the form of infrastructure, schools, and roads in exchange for Congolese cobalt.

In today's world, China is leaking blood cobalt into the supply chain for electric vehicles. Chinese companies are purchasing cobalt from children in an effort to encourage them to engage in the trade in blood batteries.

[Are the global automakers aware of these issues?](#)

The world's largest automakers including Tesla, Volvo, Renault, Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen, all source cobalt from Chinese mines in the DRC.

While they may claim to have a zero-tolerance policy on child labour, they are also aware that there is no way to map their entire supply chains.

[Way forward](#)

EVs thus run on dirty energy, on blood batteries and are not a climate solution.

This is human rights abuse and the two cannot co-exist. A climate solution should not be at the expense of human life.

Long story short, electric vehicles have a long way to go before they can claim to be clean.

### 59. Niti Aayog's battery swapping policy provides direction, but lacks a constructive roadmap

**Source:** This post is based on the article “Niti Aayog's battery swapping policy provides direction, but lacks a constructive roadmap” published in DTE on 25th Apr 22.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Energy and Infrastructure

**Relevance:** Electric Vehicles and associated policies in India

**Context:** The Niti Aayog released the first draft of the [Battery Swapping Policy 2022 on April 21, 2022, to improve interoperability and push for faster adoption of electric vehicles \(EV\) in the two-wheeler and three-wheeler segment.](#)

Why the battery swapping segment is significant?

This segment has competitive prices compared to others. Further, it also constitutes about two-thirds of vehicles registered and can thus play a critical role in faster adoption of EVs.

What are the advantages offered by battery swapping?

Battery swapping standards aim to de-link charging and battery usage to **reduce charging downtime immensely** and increase vehicle operations.

The scope relies on smaller vehicles with smaller battery packs that can be easy to swap. Other advantages include time, space and cost efficiency.

What are the different aspects under the policy?

#### **Institutional framework**

The government will be setting up a nodal agency to ensure a roll-out of services. This will integrate the role of different state-level agencies in delegating, coordination and network distribution.

Adoption is envisaged in two phases: Phase I will focus around metropolitan cities with a population greater than four million and Phase II will focus on other major cities.

#### **Technical aspects**

**Interoperability** definitely has been the key word in battery operations. The policy rightly targets to bring technical uniformity to make this practical.

– It prescribes batteries using **Advanced Chemistry Cells** with performance equivalent or higher than Faster Adoption and Manufacture of (Hybrid and) Electric Vehicles or FAME II specifications. Batteries will have a **unique identification number** for effective battery cycle monitoring.

The policy also mandates state authorities to **facilitate documentation within five days of application through a single window clearance portal**. This will bring huge momentum to otherwise slow processes of setting up capital infrastructure and land allotment.

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The **tariff regime** for Battery Charging Stations (BCS) and Battery Swapping Stations (BSS) will be applicable under existing or future time-of-day tariff regimes as stipulated by the appropriate commission.

The policy also **allows an individual or entity to set up a BSS** at any given location for at least two EV original equipment manufacturers (OEM). This is to enhance the network of energy providers.

It also prescribes only **certified agnostic swapping stations** to be set up according to Section 3 of the Union Ministry of Petroleum standards on charging infrastructure.

**Data sharing** aims for transparent communication and non-restrictive data sharing guidelines.

### **Financial aspects**

The policy encourages industry collaboration and has not mandated strict technical operation requirements for interoperability.

It proposes **utilisation of prevailing demand side incentives** under eligibility criteria based on performance as prescribed under Fame II to ensure superior EVs on road.

Technical and operational requirements will be key for providing subsidy to battery providers in the swapping ecosystem. It suggests an **appropriate subsidy multiplier** to battery providers to account for overall battery requirements.

**Bringing cost parity** has been a popular demand. Hence, the policy asks for a decision on the **reduction of differential tax rates** on Lithium-ion batteries and Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE). According to the current Goods and Services Tax regime, taxes on batteries and EVSE are 18% and 5% respectively.

### **Safety aspects**

Additionally, it prescribes **rigorous testing protocols to avoid breakdown or unwanted risk from temperature increase**.

The policy, by and large, shows direction. But due to nascent market dynamics, it lacks a constructive fixed roadmap for setting up of Battery as a Service or BaaS infrastructure.

## 60. On Electric Vehicle adoption in India: The right push

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The right push** published in the **Business Standard** on **24th April 2022**.

**Context:** Recently, the NITI Aayog released a draft **battery-swapping policy** pertaining to two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and e-rickshaws. The draft policy aims to address some key concerns within the **electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem**.

### **What is the objective of the draft policy?**

It will promote adoption of EV. It would lower dependencies on fossil fuels and reduce the carbon footprint. It can help India reduce its coal-based thermal generation.



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### What are the issues with EV technology?

There are **safety concerns**.

– These vehicles catch fire due to **short-circuits**, battery overheating due to the weather, high-stress driving, or even the charging of an already heated unit.

There are **issues of cost**.

– If batteries are made smaller to enable an easier **swapping ecosystem**. This would mean changes in vehicle design. It may increase cost.

There are issues of availability of **space** and **power**.

– The charging and swapping stations need places to be set up in cities.

### What have been suggested in the draft policy?

It suggests adoption of **advanced chemistry cell (ACC) batteries** of uniform types for smaller vehicles.

The **battery-swapping system** based on a **battery-as-a-service (BAAS) model** can be adopted, which will reduce the upfront cost of EV (Without installed battery). It would involve charging a **subscription**. The user can swap an exhausted battery for a freshly charged unit at the EV charging stations.

– Further, a battery swap for a small vehicle would take a few minutes as opposed to a recharge. It will reduce **“range anxiety”** — the fear of running out of power on the road.

The **regulatory standards for batteries must improve** to eliminate chances of such fires

The **police** and **fire brigade personnel** have to be retrained and equipped to deal with the safety concerns.

The **production-linked incentive scheme** favouring ACC manufacturing, and several firms, should continue.

The **public must be reassured** that such incidents will not keep occurring, to ensure a widespread EV uptake.

There has to be a **rapid roll-out** of a **widespread network** of charging and swapping stations.

The authorities **may offer land in convenient spots for stations**, and also lower tariffs for power used uniquely for EVs. Vast amounts of space are not required for swapping stations

There should be **standardisation of the size and specifications** of the battery to ensure **interoperability**.

#### **ELECTRIFICATION OF SOUTH ASIA**

##### **61. The goal of an energy-secure South Asia**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**The goal of an energy-secure South Asia**” published in **The Hindu** on **26th April 2022**.

**Context:** The electricity generation in South Asia has risen exponentially. Recently, Bhutan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have achieved 100% electrification in the last two years. However, the status of electrification in India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan is 94.4%, 97.7% and 73.91% respectively.

##### **What are the divergences in the electricity policies of South Asian countries?**

There are geographical differences between these countries. They call for a different approach depending on resources.

India relies heavily on coal (55% of its electricity production), Nepal relies on hydropower (99.9%), Bangladesh relies on natural gas (75%), and Sri Lanka relies on oil.

##### **What is the importance of electrification, especially with reference to the SDGs?**

It leads to economic growth.

– For example, a 0.46% increase in energy consumption leads to a 1% increase in GDP per capita. Electrification based on **renewable energy** can lead to the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)** by all the countries. For example, Bangladesh electrification story justifies various SDGs

It promotes **SDG 7** (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all). It also promotes **SDG 5** (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”). For example, Bangladesh is achieving it by engaging more than 1,00,000 female as **solar entrepreneurs**.

It can help secure **SDG 9** (build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation). For example, India’s INDCs pledge.

It fulfils **SDG 4**, or “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This is done by increasing access to online education through energy.

It fulfils **SDG 1 (no poverty)** as more people will be employed.

Also, fulfilling **SDG 3** (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”) by increasing access to **tech-based health solutions**.

##### **What are the challenges in fulfilment of the objectives?**

The electricity generation, transmission, distribution, rural electrification, research and development, environmental issues, energy conservation and human resource training are the areas of concern.

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**South Asia's regional geopolitics** is determined by the conflation of identity, politics, and international borders. These problems may thwart transnational energy projects.

Pakistan is still struggling to reduce power shortage negatively impacting its economy.

The **electricity pricing** varies from country to country in South Asia. For example, Bhutan has the cheapest electricity price while India has the highest.

### What measures need to be taken?

Regional cooperation is required. For example, the **first-ever Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** benefits such as poverty reduction, energy efficiency and improved quality of life were realised when there was India-Bhutan hydro trade in 2010.

The SAARC regional energy cooperation framework in 2014 should be revived. In fact, India hosts the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**. The region is moving towards green growth and energy.

Other bilateral and multilateral energy trade agreements such as the **India-Nepal petroleum pipeline deal**, the **India-Bhutan hydroelectric joint venture**, the **Myanmar-Bangladesh-India gas pipeline**, the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) framework for energy cooperation, and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline should be promoted

Instead of a regional security approach, the energy trade should be perceived through the lens of **conflict resolution** and **peace building**.

The current participation in **cross-border power projects** should be extended to all the South Asian countries, from present Bhutan and India or Nepal and India.

The transmission and distribution frameworks, new green energy corridors etc. in the South Asia should be reinforced.

The **resilient energy frameworks** such as better building-design practices, climate-proof infrastructure, a flexible monitoring framework, and an integrated resource plan should be promoted.

Apart from the government, the **Public-private partnership** should be promoted. It can be a harbinger in meeting the **energy transition challenges** for the world's most populous region.

### Way forward

India should take a lead in South Asia, especially in adapting to renewable power.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – INFORMATION TECH

## **DEFENCE TECH IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **62. Rethinking innovation in defence**

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Rethinking innovation in defence**" published in the **Business Standard** on **26th April 2022**.

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**News:** Recently, a report was released by the **Parliamentary Standing Committee** which draws a comparison of India's defence sector spending on research and development with the US and other countries.

### What are the findings of the report?

According to the report, India spends too little on research and development (R&D) in the defence sector.

The US spends 40% of world spending on defence, China spends 13%, followed by India at 4%. Russia, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Germany, France and Japan come next at 2.5-3% of world spending each.

### What are the real issues in India's defence R&D sector?

**Lack of spending: India spending does not match with the US and China's** spending in either defence or defence R&D.

– For example, the US is a \$23-trillion economy and India is a \$3 trillion economy. But the US spends 30 times more than Indian spending,

India spends a reasonable amount on defence R&D (except for the US and China). India's R&D problem is not about the amount, the problem is **where do we spend on R&D in defence**.

In India, there is **little difference** between who funds and who does R&D. The public funds are used for R&D in public institutes only. And the Private funds are used for R&D in private industry only.

– For example, In India, 63% of India's national R&D is funded by the Union government. 7% happens in the **public higher education system** and 56% is done in the government's own **autonomous laboratories** like DRDR, Department of Space and the Department of Atomic Energy.

**Delays in project completion:** Consequentially, India's **two largest projects**, the main battle tank (**Arjun**) and the light combat aircraft (Tejas) have not been completed even after 40 years.

– In fact, the local productions aren't India's main defence choice. In fact, India imports the majority of the defence requirements. This adversely impacts **India's strategic autonomy**, which forms the bedrock of our foreign policy.

### Way Forward

India should adopt the US model. It should stop distinguishing between funding and doing R&D. The government should provide funds for defence R&D across **private industry, public and private universities, and public research institutes**.

In the **UB 2022-23**, 25% of DRDO funding has been **"set aside"** for **higher education and private industry**. It would lead to more innovation in the defence industry. The firms and universities should be allowed to bid for funding in a **competitive process**. They can compete

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for bid to develop particular defence items or research particular topics, with the R&D funding coming from this budget.

A scheme, called **iDEX**, funds defence innovation in start-ups. This measure must be effectively implemented.

### **EU'S DIGITAL SERVICES ACT**

#### **63. On EU's Digital Services Act: Responsible content**

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Responsible Content**" published in the **Business Standard** on **25th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, the European Union (EU) has approved landmark legislation known as the **EU's Digital Services Act (DSA)**.

#### **What are the issues with social media platforms?**

They are being used for **spreading disinformation** and **hate speech** to influence elections, racist violence etc.

The major problem lies in **revenue models** of the social media platforms. They depend on engagement.

#### **What are the features of the act?**

The Act makes social media businesses more responsible for content disseminated and amplified on their platforms. In fact, it gives **social media users** protection against hate speech, disinformation, and other harmful content.

It specifies fines of up to 6% of **annual global revenues**, or outright bans, for non-compliance. This sort of **substantial penalties** could force platforms to review their business models.

The government can ask platforms to **take down** content that may be deemed illegal. For example, stuff promoting terrorism, child sexual abuse, hate speech, and commercial scams.

The social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter would have to create **tools** that would allow the users to **flag** such content in "easy, effective ways". Marketplaces like Amazon would have to create tools to allow users to flag products.

Platforms can **review content** before deciding upon deletion, and must carry out annual reviews and risk assessments of content.

It bans **advertisements** targeted at minors, as well as advertisements specifically based on gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

It bans the **deceptive techniques** used to nudge people into online commitments. For example, signing up by default for online services.

The companies should do **content-moderation** while focussing to **maximise user-engagement**. They should not use algorithms designed to flood the individual's timeline with a content of poor quality.

### Way Forward

The new act can help the EU and its nations to safeguard free speech. They rank very high on the Democracy Index

The DSA can be used as a model legislation in the US, Canada, and other democracies.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND GROWTH

### **OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

#### **64. Social dialogue for safe workplaces**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Social dialogue for safe workplaces**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy; Issues related to employment in India

**Relevance:** Labour reform: Occupational Safety and Health at the workplaces

**News:** Recently, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) celebrated April 28 as **World Day for Safety and Health at Work** to stress on the prevention of accidents and diseases at work. The ILO also published “**Enhancing social dialogue towards a culture of safety and health**” with theme, “Act together to build a positive safety and health culture”.

#### **Situation wrt occupational safety and health (OSH) since Covid-19**

The **occupational safety and health (OSH)** issues are prevalent in many industries which directly and indirectly affect workers’ and their families’ well-being

Globally, an estimated 2.9 million deaths and 402 million non-fatal injuries are attributed to occupational accidents and diseases.

The occupational safety and health (OSH) mechanisms need to be strengthened to establish workplaces that are not hazardous for workers.

#### **What are the problems associated with OSH?**

Occupational accidents and diseases entail **economic losses** for enterprises and economies.

They lead to **presenteeism** (working with less effectiveness), productivity losses associated with permanent impairment, and staff-turnover costs (i.e., loss of skilled staff). At national level, they can cost 5.4% of the global GDP annually.

Occupational injuries and illnesses cause **immeasurable suffering** and **loss to victims** and their families.

The lack of awareness of health hazards at workplaces leads to misdiagnosis by doctors.

#### **What measures have been taken in India so far?**

The Government of India declared the **National Policy on Safety, Health and Environment at Workplace** in 2009. The Government has compiled the available OSH information as **National OSH Profile** in 2018.

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At the state levels, the Uttar Pradesh Government carried out **participatory OSH training workshops** in various informal sectors in cooperation with employers and workers. The Government of Kerala applied the **ILO's participatory OSH training methodologies** to small construction sites. The Rajasthan Government also organized an OSH awareness campaign.

### Way Forward

The government should launch a **strategic National OSH Programme** across all the sectors. The agencies should effectively implement **The OSH and Working Conditions Codes 2020**, especially in informal sector where 90% of India's workforce is engaged. The code includes **fair and effective labour inspections**, and **active workplace OSH committees**.

At the national level, the **government needs to include all relevant ministries** to ensure that workers' safety and health are prioritised in the national agenda. The **resources should be allocated** to increase general awareness around OSH, knowledge of hazards and risks, and an understanding of their control and prevention measures.

At the state level, workers' and employers' organisations, should do bilateral discussions on the **safety and health training**.

A **reliable occupational accident and disease reporting system** should be created. It can help in making **effective prevention policies** and remedying victims.

The doctors should be trained on the various occupational diseases and workplace hazards and risks.

**Social dialogue** should be promoted to create a positive safety and health culture at workplaces. This can be achieved through **cooperation** and **discussions** between employers and workers.

## EASE OF DOING BUSINESS IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

### 65. Free India from the grip of regulations and compliances

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Free India from the grip of regulations and compliances**" published in the **Live Mint** on **26th April 2022**.

**News:** Recently, a report titled as "**Jailed for Doing Business**" was released by Observer Research Foundation (ORF) which referred to the laws and regulations regime in India – first **'Impediments to Growth'**. In addition, India's **Prime Minister** used the occasion of the **15th Civil Services Day** to point towards excellence in **public administration**

### What are the findings of the report?

The findings have been divided into **seven broad categories** ranging from labour, finance and taxation, environment, health and safety to secretarial, commercial, industry-specific and general areas.

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India's growth has been thwarted by stringent **regulatory** and **compliance regime** in India. There are around 69,233 unique compliances, of which 26,134 provisions can attract imprisonment for non-compliance.

Therefore, **starting** and **exiting** a business is very difficult in India. There is an **excessive criminalization of India's employer compliance** which has led to breeding of corruption, blunts formal employment and poisons justice."

**State-wise Pattern:** Gujarat (1,469), Punjab (1,273), Maharashtra (1,210), Karnataka (1,175) and Tamil Nadu (1,043) have highest number of compliances with imprisonment clauses.

The problem is worsened by the **complicated administrative system**. It adds to the regulatory woes.

### Measures Taken to simplify regulatory regime so far

The Union government of India has abolished nearly 1,500 laws between the period from 2014 to 2019.

The government should undertake **broad-based policy reforms**. There is a requirement for **rationalizing** business rules and regulations. It should include **restrained approach** on criminal penalties.

The initiatives for **deregulations** and **restructuring** of the country's **compliance mechanism** can improve the **general business environment in India**.

The reforms will safeguard the dignity of wealth-creators, innovators, entrepreneurs and business leaders in India.

The Prime Minister has made a **clarion call** to all the civil servants in the central as well as various states governments to kick off a **comprehensive reform process**. These reforms can take India to new heights of prosperity and well-being.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

### **GATI SHAKTI**

#### **66. On Gati Shakti Mission: Plugging the infra gaps**

**Source:** This post is based on the article "**Plugging the infra gaps**" published in the **Business Standard** on **25th Apr 22**.

**Context:** Ever since it was announced by the prime minister in October 2021, the Gati Shakti mission has been billed as one of the most transformational projects in the country.

Successfully planning and executing large scale infrastructure projects in India have always been a nightmare, leading to significant cost and time overruns.

Gati Shakti is a much-needed step in offering an integrated solution, say its advocates.



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However, not everyone believes the Gati Shakti mission is a radical solution. The author of this article sheds light on this particular aspect.

### What is Gati Shakti?

Gati Shakti uses **geospatial technology**, based on data sourced from different ministries and agencies, to map the entire terrain—and provide a “one view” to the planning and execution agencies.

It also offers an opportunity to bridge the coordination gap between ministries and plug bottlenecks.

- **For more:** Read [here](#)

### What do the critics of the Gati Shakti Mission say?

As per them,

- the Big Data project might at best make a **peripheral contribution** to the challenges of infrastructure development.
- Bureaucracy will **hold back data sharing**—and evade the attempt to build transparency and break silos.
- Also, the portal has generated considerable interest among the private sector, particularly in the logistics and infrastructure space. But it remains to be seen whether the private sector will step up and be inspired to participate in infrastructure projects.

### What are some potential benefits of the mission?

The benefits are pretty obvious.

**Increased efficiency:** Instead of taking six months just to decide on the route for a high speed expressway, the Gati Shakti project will allow for a more integrated solution **in a matter of weeks**. That way, the transportation of goods can be speeded up, leading to **more efficiency** and **productivity** in the real economy.

**For example:** The **Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC)** on the western line, stretching from the JNPT port in Mumbai to Dadri in UP, is a prime example.

Concor, the listed entity owned by the Railways, built assets along this corridor. But much of it is unutilised because there are no proper transportation linkages with the regional economic hubs like Kandla, denting Concor’s return on equity.

The Gati Shakti portal might now offer the dedicated freight corridor project some alternative routes to bypass wildlife corridors or mining hubs in the eastern stretch, instead of the shortest route picked earlier.

**Fixing the lack of interconnections:** There are multiple agencies and ministries involved in the planning process, each with their own processes and ways of working. So, for instance, a new port is often built without adequate focus on rail or road linkages.

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Gati Shakti attempts to **fix this lack of interconnections by bringing all the different ministries on a common platform**, identifying these gaps and fixing accountability for each ministry for delivery and outcomes.

Also, the **cabinet secretary himself chairs the meeting of the empowered group of secretaries** from the key ministries to review the progress. The **Prime Minister's office (PMO)** also has visibility to the progress.

**What are the challenges that need to be addressed?**

Gati Shakti poses an **enormous challenge to the government's existing ways of working** — and its **ability to use data** for decision-making.

Moreover, it remains to be seen whether ministries can be persuaded to upload information on all these critical projects, especially the ones that are lagging behind, on the platform.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONEY AND BANKING

### **PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS – ROLE, ISSUES AND REFORMS**

#### **67. Public Sector Banks must move beyond recapitalization bonds**

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Public Sector banks must move beyond recapitalization bonds**” published in the **Live Mint** on **27th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy; Issues in mobilization of resources, growth and development

**Relevance:** NPA; Banking Reforms

**News:** Recently, the public sector banks (PSBs) had a huge amount of gross non-performing assets (NPAs) or bad loans. It peaked at ₹8.96 trillion or around 14.6% of total loans in March 2018. However, the gross NPAs have fallen to ₹5.59 trillion, or around 7.9% of total loans as of December 2021.

#### **What are the challenges before PSBs?**

The PSBs have constantly been losing market share to private banks due to competition since 2010.

For example, the PSBs share in overall outstanding loans has been reduced from 3/4th in 2010 to 55% in 2021. However, the share of private banks having risen.

#### **What factors have contributed to decline in the bad loans?**

There has been **writing off** of the bad loans, the **recurrent recapitalization** of PSBs by the government, the **recovery** of a few bad loans, and the RBI pushed the **prompt corrective action (PCA) framework**

– Over the years, the bad loans of PSBs had been written off against their accumulated capital.

**Recapitalization:** The government had regularly invested **fresh money** in them. From 2010-11 to 2017-18, the Centre infused ₹1.12 trillion.

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In order to put fresh money into PSBs, the government has issued **recapitalization bonds** worth ₹**2.79 trillion** so far. The bank bought these bonds. The Centre took that money and re-invested it back in the bank. Such bonds **recapitalized** the banks which were running short on capital. It also **prevented** the government from spending any money from its budget.

### Way Forward

The RBI Governor asked the banks to strengthen their **lending capacity** by raising capital. Banks are being encouraged to **raise capital** from sources other than the government. This is so because at present the government's shareholding in addition to LIC stands at 73% in PNB, 64% of Bank of Baroda and 80% of Indian Bank etc. However, the banks should not dilute the centre's share below the minimum requirement of 51%.

The **Second Narasimham Committee 1998** recommended that the minimum shareholding of the government in PSBs be brought down to 33%. It will ensure that the PSBs stay in competition.

### GS3 – AGRICULTURE – FOOD SECURITY

#### **PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (PDS)**

#### **68. PDS has had a spectacular run. That may not last**

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**PDS has had a spectacular run. That may not last**” published in **The Hindu** on **27th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Agriculture and Allied Sector; The Public Distribution System and Food Security in India

**Relevance:** The PDS Reforms

**Context:** Its golden chapter was scripted in an environment of low global commodity prices and surplus domestic foodgrain production. That party is over, even as food inflation is back.

#### **Why was the 2020-21 year very important for the agricultural sector?**

(1) In 2020-21, Agriculture was the only sector to grow at 3.3%, even as the economy overall contracted by 4.8%. The farm sector added **11 million** when the rest of the economy shed 15 million jobs from **2019-20 to 2021-22**.

(2) Till **2015-16**, only a handful of states — Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal had a well-functioning PDS. In 2020-21, **India's public distribution system (PDS)** reforms were seen in **Bihar, Jharkhand** and **Uttar Pradesh (UP)**.

As per the **NITI Aayog's National Multidimensional Poverty Index**, the **offtake of rice and wheat** significantly increased both at the **all-India level** and for the three poorest states **Bihar, Jharkhand** and **Uttar Pradesh (UP)**.

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(3) The PDS was expanded beyond rice and wheat in some states. For example, Kerala leveraged its PDS network to supply **free food kits** to all ration card holders during the 2020 Covid lockdown.

(4) Unlike the **1943 Bengal** or **1966-67 Bihar famines**, this time India was able to avert widespread starvation during the Covid-19 pandemic. On 2020-21, the PDS system turned out to be the only **effective social safety net** amid massive job and income losses during the pandemic.

### **What were the factors responsible for improved functioning of the PDS system in 2020-21?**

**The National Food Security Act (NFSA)** along with **PMGKAY** has led to a massive jump in grain offtake through the PDS.

(1) The NFSA legally entitled **5 kg** of grain per person per month at highly subsidised rates of Rs 2/kg for wheat and Rs 3/kg for rice up to 75% of India's rural and 50% of the urban population.

(2) **The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) scheme** was launched in the wake of the Covid-induced economic disruptions. It mandated an extra 5 kg grain per person per month free of cost to the PDS beneficiaries.

Both the schemes led to increase in the offtake of the food grain in the poorer states like UP, Bihar and Jharkhand. The offtake of these states increased from 21.6% in 2012-13 to 28.6% in 2021-22.

### **What are the upcoming challenges to India's food security?**

This year, the **procurement** of food grain is likely to be short. The **wheat procurement** can be low due to poor crop yield owing to bad weather in March 2022. The **rice procurement** can be challenged due to disruption in supply of fertilisers in the Kharif season.

The **Food Corporation of India's stocks** can probably sustain the annual offtake for NFSA. But **PMGKAY** offtake can see challenges.

At present, the **global food inflation** is posing a challenge. The PDS is mandated to protect ordinary people from **extraordinary price rises**.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

### **GREEN HYDROGEN AND RELATED ISSUES**

#### **69. Energy independence through hydrogen**

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Energy independence through hydrogen**" published in **The Hindu** on **28th April 2022**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Energy and Infrastructure

**Relevance:** Hydrogen Economy

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**News:** Recently, the Indian government released **India's Green hydrogen policy**. It is expected to create a hydrogen economy and further boost India's energy transition.

Further, According to The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), India's hydrogen consumption is anticipated to leapfrog by 2050.

### **What are the benefits of the hydrogen fuel in the energy sector?**

In the long run, two envisioned prominent fuels are **hydrogen** and **electricity**. Thus, Hydrogen is a new age fuel and is touted as **India's gateway to energy independence**.

Hydrogen can be stored on a large scale and for a longer duration. It has the huge potential to **complement** renewable energy in India.

It can accelerate India's **clean energy transition**, thereby supporting India's ambitious plan to achieve 500 GW renewable capacity by 2030.

Hydrogen fulfils the three Es of India's energy road map — **energy security, energy sustainability and energy access**.

Hydrogen fuel can help in the **decarbonisation** of India's transport sector and India's industrial sector, like iron and steel, aluminium, copper sectors.

In comparison, the hydrogen **fuel cell vehicles** are more ideal for **long-haul transportation** than the Li-Ion batteries. They have the capacity for **faster fuelling** and **long-driving range**.

Hydrogen could help India to transition from the status of an **energy importer to a dominant exporter** over the next few decades.

It can help in achieving the **Paris Agreement's goal** to limit global warming to 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels.

Hydrogen could lay the foundation of a new India which would be **energy-independent; a global climate leader and international energy power**.

It can help India achieve Prime Minister Modi's commitment of **Net Zero by 2070** in making India '**Aatmanirbhar in energy**'.

### **What are the challenges ahead in boosting India's hydrogen sector?**

The hydrogen fuel cell requires electrolyzers. Therefore, India would be required to augment its **electrolyser production capacity**.

The hydrogen fuel production would entail an **exponential increase** in **electricity demand**. India would require 110-130% of its current total electricity generation (2020-21) by 2050

The hydrogen manufacturing **requires a lot of water** (For example, production of 1 kg of hydrogen by electrolysis requires around nine litres of water). Therefore, water scarcity could also pose a challenge. It can **increase the cost of production** of hydrogen fuel.

### **What are the measures that can be taken for boosting the hydrogen economy in India?**

A road map for rapid growth in demand for electricity, especially from renewables should be prepared.

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Therefore, hydrogen project planning should be holistic and targeted in areas that are not water-scarce.

India should strive to seize economic opportunity so that industry can be encouraged to its full potential

### **Demand side:**

The mature industries such as refining and fertilisers, should be mandated to buy hydrogen fuel.

Government should incentivise industries manufacturing low emission hydrogen-based products like green steel and green cement.

Hydrogen can be blended with natural gas. For example, H-CNG stations can be promoted.

To promote FCEVs, Hydrogen fuel stations may be planned on dedicated corridors where long-distance trucking is widespread

The concept of carbon tariffs needs to be introduced on the lines of European countries.

### **Supply side**

R&D investment should be accelerated to bring its cost at par with fossils.

The Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) scheme could be leveraged by exploring biogas conversion into hydrogen.

A Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme may be introduced for hydrogen-based projects to commercialise and scale-up nascent technologies,

The Priority Sector Lending (PSL) can be extended to electrolyser manufacturing and hydrogen projects to promote affordable financing.

The government can launch **the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** reducing the cost of electrolysers. This could help India become a global hub for electrolyser manufacturing and green hydrogen.

### **On the transportation front,**

Ammonia, having high energy density, could be promoted as a mode of transportation.

The existing infrastructure used for natural gas transportation can be used for hydrogen gas transportation. Additionally, **hydrogen transportation projects** may be integrated with the **PM Gati Shakti Master Plan**.

#### **ENERGY SECURITY**

##### **70. How to shock-proof India's power sector**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**How to shock-proof India's power sector**” published in **The Indian Express** on **29th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Energy and Infrastructure

**Relevance:** Power sector in India and related issues, Coal shortage

**Context:** In October last year, India witnessed **significant power shortages** due to low inventory of coal at the power plants. After seven months, reports of coal-shortage induced power outages across states have surfaced.

States like Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat have asked industries to **reduce consumption** to manage the power deficit.

How can the Indian power sector become more resilient to **future shocks**?

**What are the reasons behind the present coal shortage?**

As economic activity resumed after the Covid-induced lockdowns, the **demand-supply mismatch** for commodities such as coal widened globally, leading to a surge in prices.

**Geopolitical tensions** have worsened the existing crisis.

**Global supply disruptions** due to the **Russia-Ukraine conflict** have sent coal prices touching historical highs. The cost of imported coal in India is expected to be 35 per cent higher in the fiscal year 2022-23 compared to the past year.

**Rise in domestic energy demand:** Even as coal stocks available with state thermal power plants fell, India also witnessed a sudden rise in energy demand in March — the hottest in its recorded history. The last week of March saw a 13% higher demand over past year trends, accompanied by high electricity prices on the power exchange.

– This has left distribution companies (discoms) with two options: **a)** Procure expensive power, but face uncertainty in revenue recovery, or **b)** resort to power rationing, as several states are doing.

**What steps have already been taken by the Govt?**

The Ministry of Power has taken a host of measures to alleviate the crisis. This includes

- giving directions to ensure maximum production of coal at captive mines,
- rationing of coal to non-power sectors, and
- a price cap of Rs 12 per unit on electricity traded on exchanges.

But the Govt needs to do more to enhance the sector's resilience to such disruptions from external factors.

**What further measures need to be taken to ensure future resilience of the power sector?**

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### **Create an enabling ecosystem to ensure power plants work efficiently.**

– India has about **200 GW of coal-based generation capacity** which accounts for nearly 70% of the total electricity generated in the country. However, according to a CEEW assessment, a disproportionate share of generation comes from older inefficient plants, while the newer and efficient ones remain idle for want of favourable coal supply contracts or power purchase agreements.

- **Revisiting fuel allocation** and **supporting the priority dispatch of efficient plants** could help India reduce coal demand by up to 6% of our annual requirement, and set aside more coal for emergency situations.

### **Enable discoms to undertake smart assessment and management of demand.**

Advanced tools for medium- and short-term demand forecasting exist, but few discoms have adopted these to inform their procurement decisions. With more than 90% of power being procured through long-term contracts, discoms have little incentive to dynamically assess and manage demand.

- Introducing **time-of-day pricing** and promoting **efficient consumption behaviour** would help shave peak demand and avoid panic buying in the market.

### **Empower electricity regulators to help bring down discom losses.**

Despite two decades of sectoral reforms, the aggregate losses of discoms stand at 21% (2019-20). These losses are also the reason for discoms not being able to pay the generators on time, resulting in payment delays to Coal India, which, in turn, is reluctant to supply coal on request.

- Besides the ongoing initiatives like introducing smart meters and network strengthening, empowering regulators would be critical to **infuse payment discipline across the supply chain of the electricity sector.**

### **Way forward**

Given its development aspirations, India's power demand is set to rise substantially and become more variable.

Increasing climatic and geopolitical uncertainties underscore the need to become more efficient in the way India generates, distributes and consumes energy.

Govt needs to act now for the long-term resilience of India's power sector.



### **ACHIEVING NET ZERO**

#### **71. Net Zero by 2050 will hit a major timing problem technology can't solve. We need to talk about cutting consumption**

**Source:** This post is based on the article “**Net Zero by 2050 will hit a major timing problem technology can't solve. We need to talk about cutting consumption**” published in DTE on **28th Apr 22**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Climate-change

**Relevance:** Reducing consumption is essential to achieving the Net-zero emissions target.

**News:** Many climate activists and scientists are reassuring that the climate crisis can be solved rapidly without any changes to lifestyle, society or the economy.

They suggest paths such as **a)** Switching from fossil fuels to renewable power, electric vehicles and energy efficiency technologies, **b)** Adding seaweed to livestock feed to cut methane and **c)** Embracing green hydrogen for heavy industries such as steel-making. But this is not an ideal solution.

**Read more:** [Achieving Net Zero by 2070 and the Associated Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why reducing consumption is essential to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions?

**Growth in consumption:** Between 2000 and 2019, renewable electricity witnessed 135% growth. In the year 2000, fossil fuels supplied 80% of the world's total primary energy consumption. In 2019, they provided 81%. This is because the world's energy consumption has been growing rapidly.

**Challenging timeline:** The world is on a very tight timeline. The global emissions have to halve within eight years and hit net-zero by 2050. If the world doesn't achieve climate goals, then it's likely the **planet will cross a climate tipping point** and begin an irreversible descent into more heatwaves, droughts, floods and sea-level rise.

**Issues with technologies:** CO<sub>2</sub> capture is getting a great deal of attention, but it seems unlikely to make a significant contribution. But removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere does not occur on a large scale because these technologies are speculative, risky and very expensive.

Hence, if the world's energy consumption grows at the pre-COVID rate, technological change alone will not be enough to halve global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030. Further, to keep global warming under 2°C the world needs to slash the global energy consumption by 50% to 75% by 2050 as well as greatly accelerate the transition to 100% renewables. So, the world needs a **lifestyle change driven by social policies**.

**Read more:** [Is net zero emission concept zeroing in on Climate change?](#)

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of April, 2022

What should be done to reduce consumption?

The world needs to reduce consumption in high-income countries while improving human well-being.

The 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report on climate mitigation acknowledged the importance of collectively reducing energy consumption. To do this effectively, government policies are needed to boost renewables and to reduce consumption. Such as

**1)** Creating a carbon tax and additional environmental taxes, wealth and inheritance taxes, **2)** A job guarantee at the basic wage for all adults who want to work and who can't find a job in the formal economy, **3)** Non-coercive policies to end population growth, especially in high-income countries, **4)** Boosting government spending on poverty reduction, green infrastructure and public services as part of a shift to Universal Basic Services.

This will make the human civilisation resilient to face climate change.