

9pm

Compilation

25th to 30th April, 2022

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General

Studies

Paper – 1

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ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

1. **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.

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.

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– 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.

– 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.

URBAN PLANNING AND RELATED ISSUES

2. 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?

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

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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 sewered to collect all used water.
- 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

Paper – 2

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DEATH PENALTY AND RELATED ISSUES

1. **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)

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

– 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

2. **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

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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.

– 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.

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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?

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

3. 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?

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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.

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**.

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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.

Governments, parents, communities and schools need to work together.

GS2 – POLITY – INDIAN CONSTITUTION

ONE NATION, ONE LANGUAGE ISSUE

4. **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.

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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.

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.

ISSUE OF INSTANT JUSTICE

5. 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

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.

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– 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.

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

6. 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?

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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.

- 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
HSRs are summary indicators, indicating only the net result of various calculations. They don't allow consumers to distinguish 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. HSR would give stars from half to five for all foods alike: Even the unhealthiest food would get some golden star – a symbol of goodness, confusing the consumer.	WLs, in contrast, can point to higher than desirable levels of specific elements , each carrying its own pictorial warning.
Further, experts in countries using HSR for some years such as Australia warn of their ineffectiveness in influencing consumer behaviour.	WLs, obviously, have a common-sense advantage over HSR and have significantly impacted consumer behaviour in countries like Chile.

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.**

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- 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

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

7. **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?

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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**.

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

8. **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

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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.

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

9. 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

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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.

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.

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– 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.

– 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

10. **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

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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

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.

Culture of freebies in India

11. 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

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.

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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.

– 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.

12. 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**.

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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, 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

13. 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.

"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.

IND-US RELATIONS

14. 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 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.

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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.

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

15. **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

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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**.

– 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.

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- 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

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

16. 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.

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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**.

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.

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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.

17. 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.

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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.

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**.

18. "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?

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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?

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.

ISSUES WITH THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

19. 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.

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

20. **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.

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 –

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(1) First, Russia may not accept subordination to China. Both have competing interests in the States 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

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

21. 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.
- 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.

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– India could also explore importing from **Thailand and Africa**—they produce three million tonnes each.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL ORG AND GROUPINGS

GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS AND RELATED ISSUES – G20

22. 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.

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.

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(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**.

GS2 – POLITY – UNION AND STATES

FEDERALISM AND RELATED ISSUES

23. **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.

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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.

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?

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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.

GS2 – POLITY – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

RIGHT TO HOUSING

24. 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

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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.

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

25. **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**.

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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.

– 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.

26. 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?

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’ 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**

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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

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.

27. 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?

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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.

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

28. 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

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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.

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

29. 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.

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- 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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Issue of increasing fuel prices

1. **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-cyclicity 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.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

2. 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

3. **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.

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Atmanirbharta and self-reliance

4. **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 **28th 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

5. **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 apprenticeship 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

6. **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**.

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AMWAY'S PYRAMID FRAUD IN INDIA

7. **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 joinees 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

8. 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

9. **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

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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

10. **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.

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11. 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.

12. 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

13. 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 monetary 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

14. **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

15. 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

16. 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

17. 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

18. 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

19. 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)

20. **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

21. 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

22. **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

23. **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 CO₂ 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: CO₂ capture is getting a great deal of attention, but it seems unlikely to make a significant contribution. But removing CO₂ 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 CO₂ 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?](#)

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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.