

9 PM

Compilation

May, 2022

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General

Studies

Paper – 1

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GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN ISSUES

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

1. **This is what keeps educated women out of the workforce**

Source: The post is based on an article “**This is what keeps educated women out of the workforce**” published in the **Indian Express** on **05th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS1 – Women issues

Relevance: Female Participation in Economic Activities

News: Recently, an **International Deloitte survey report** was released. The survey finds that there is a trend of low and declining levels of women’s workforce participation in economic activities. Further, the trend has been worsened during the pandemic years

What are the challenges in front of women to participate in economic activities?

First, there are various factors which **influence the decisions** of **non-working women**. Second, they can act as **demand and supply side drivers**. Some of them are mentioned as below:

There is a **social environment**, wherein the boys are expected to be the **breadwinners** while girls are expected to perform functions of **care and reproductive work**.

There are rigid workplace demands, lack of sustained family/social support, personal responsibility to guide children and ensure their security. This reflects absence of good-quality childcare, counselling and mentoring.

How do these factors play out in the lives of women?

The situations create a **social environment** for girls wherein they go to school and college while they are waiting to marry. In case of working women, they have to face periods of hectic work interspersed by spells of no work.

Domestic situations like concerns over the security of school-going children, and critical moments like “students being at the end of school and college entry” force the working women to give up the job.

The situations impact the **choices of women**. The women are driven out of **full-time jobs** from the workplaces. They shift to voluntary work or paid activities (often intermittent work) including teaching, home-based marketing, consulting, tutoring etc.

Way Forward

There is a requirement of providing the **stronger supportive infrastructures** to women to ensure they work consistently during pandemics or otherwise.

URBANISATION AND RELATED ISSUES

2. **Time to solve a solvable encroachment problem**

Source: The post is based on an article “Time to solve a solvable encroachment problem” published in the “The Hindu” on 11th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Infrastructure, Road Transport etc.

Relevance: Urban Menace, Traffic and Parking Issues

News: Recently, illegal structures on public land in National Capital Regional of Delhi were razed using bulldozers. This has brought into forefront the major issues of encroachment in the urban areas.

What are the major issues in urban areas?

Traffic

The urban spaces are plagued with the problem of vehicular saturation. There is scarcity of land resources and continuing problems of unauthorized parking, blockage of major roads, entry areas like hospital access.

This has been due to the **auto boom** in the Indian Economy since 1991. There are around **350 million vehicles** on roads. Around **47 million** of them are cars which are stationary and occupying space unpaid for.

In India, traffic rules are routinely **flouted**, they are **poorly enforced**. In fact, motorists are often surprised when they are enforced effectively.

Other things

The urban areas witness the issue of **illegal encroachment**, ‘**squatters’ settlement**’, slum proliferation, among other things.

Way Forward

The New Motor Vehicle Act of 2019 should be strictly implemented. It mandates that a vehicle cannot be left at a spot that either impedes or endangers others. The act mentions barred zones which have been broadened to cover footpaths, bus stops, main roads, high-speed routes, entrances of premises and spots near traffic signals, crossings, pedestrian stripes, hilltops, bridges and street bends.

If there is **non-compliance** to the above provisions, the violation can lead to a fine and the towing away of the vehicle left unattended for over 10 hours in a public place, wrecked or abandoned cars.

Digital India, technologies like satellite or drone technology among others can be used to spot order and find cause-effect relationships in India’s **chaotic traffic systems**. The government can go for pricing the scarce resource.

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Delhi can roll out a **road-pricing policy** on a pilot basis aimed at **coffer filling** as much as market **discipline**.

The technology like space orbiters and smartphones etc. could be used to provide **real time analysis** of traffic, parking and other aspects. This can be extended to an era of varying tariffs based on demand and supply in real time.

GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN RELATED ISSUES

MARITAL RAPE AND RELATED ISSUES

3. **Marital rape is rape: Why modern India still won't accept this**

Source: This post is created based on the article “Marital rape is rape: Why modern India still won't accept this” published in Indian Express on 14th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper -1, Society

News: In a recent two-judge bench of the [Delhi High Court gave a split ruling](#) on marital rape. It ensured a future hearing of the matter with a larger bench.

Why marital rape has not been criminalized yet?

First, the concepts of rape and marriage have been seen as mutually exclusive, i.e. they could not be brought together. In the absence of a universal definition of marital rape, marriage has been depicted by only positive aspects like love, cooperation, and healthy sexual relations.

Second, even in western countries, marital rape was treated as an exception to the crime of rape till the early 1990s. The Soviet Union was an exception where marital rape was included in the law in the 1920s.

Third, taking the women as the property of husbands has been a long-held belief even in western societies. One of the examples of it is the government of India's argument in 2017 that removing the exception to marital rape would “destabilize the institution of marriage”.

GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN RELATED ISSUES

MARITAL RAPE AND RELATED ISSUES

4. **On marital rape, regressive notions undermine autonomy of women**

Source: The post is based on an article “On marital rape, regressive notions undermine autonomy of women” published in the **Indian Express** on 20th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS1–Society, Women issues

Relevance: Marital Rape Exception, Fundamental Rights

News: Recently, two judges of the Delhi High Court handed down separate judgments on the constitutional validity of the “**Marital Rape Exception**” under Section 375 of the IPC in **RIT Foundation v Union of India Case**.

What is the law?

Section 375 defines “rape” as when a man has sex with a woman without her consent. However, a husband having sex with his wife, regardless of consent, is not construed as marital rape. The husband can't be prosecuted for the rape of his adult wife.

Argument in favour of the marital rape exception by one judge

First, Sex within marriage has been carved out (by exception) from the definition of rape. Only in the absence of that exception, non-consensual sex within marriage would be seen as a rape.

Second, the marital rape exception is constitutionally valid. This is because the marital rape exception was “aimed at preservation of the **marital institution**, on which the entire **bedrock** of society rests”.

Third, the marital rape exception should prevail because the **impact** on a woman who is raped by her husband **cannot “be equated** with the impact of a woman who is raped by a stranger”. The “**disagreements**” in marriage are “but **natural**” and “may even **lend strength** to the **marital bond**”.

Fourth, at present, “**majority of Indian women**” are reluctant to file a complaint of rape against their husbands. There will be tens of thousands of rape complaints after the marital rape exception is declared unconstitutional.

Fifth, the court is **not empowered** to create a **new offence**. It means the court is not competent to **strike down** the marital rape exception that has already been carved out of an existing offence in the law. It would be unfair to punish someone for rape for conduct that was excluded from the definition of rape when it was undertaken.

Argument against marital rape exception

The marital rape exception is in violation of the **rights to life, equality, non-discrimination, and freedom of speech and expression** which are guaranteed under the Constitution of India. There is no reasonable basis to distinguish between **married** and **unmarried women**. Marriage is a relationship of equals. The marriage does not lead to giving up of agency and **sexual autonomy**.

The institution of marriage cannot be preserved at all **costs**. For example, when a man has non-consensual sex with his wife.

If a woman is raped by someone in whom you have **reposed trust** is likely to have an **indelible emotional impact**. It is difficult to understand how non-consensual sex can ever strengthen a marriage.

Even if a woman is reluctant to file a case, it does not mean that the woman should be **disempowered** to do so by the operation of the law.

Way Forward

The court should declare that its judgment will apply only to conduct **after the date of the judgment**.

The **Parliament** should revisit the marital rape exception. This would be the path of least resistance.

It is incumbent on courts to take decisions concerning **complex social issues**. As the marital rape exception violates **fundamental rights** under the Constitution of India. Therefore, it falls within the **Court's core competency**.

URBANISATION AND RELATED ISSUES

5. **Increasing the pace of India's urbanisation**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Increasing the pace of India's urbanisation**” published in the **Business Standard** on **19th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS1 Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Relevance: Trends of Urbanisation, Importance etc.

News: In recent years, the governments has started to realise that the cities are the drivers of economic growth.

Trends of Urbanization

In 1960, the global rate of urbanisation was at 33.61%. In 2003, more people were living in cities than in villages. In 2020, the global urbanisation rate was at 56.15% in 2020.

In fact, globally, the late 20th century saw rapid urbanisation, especially among the newly **decolonised countries** from **Africa, Latin America** and **Asia**.

According to the **World Urbanisation Prospects report**, the rate of urbanisation in Asia was close to 50% by 2018. Further, it is projected to be 52.3% for Asia and around 37.6% for South Asian (sub-region) by the year 2022.

India's trends

The 20th and 21st centuries witnessed India's rapid and sustained urban growth.

In 1960, India's rate of urbanisation was **17.94%**. In 2020, India's urbanisation rate was **34.92%**. Further, India is projected to have about **35%** urbanisation by the end of 2022.

State-wise trends in India

According to the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, the **UTs** having the **highest percentage** of urban population are Chandigarh (99.63% in 2020) and Delhi (99.23% in 2020). The **states** having large area and population like Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh) have the least percentage of projected population living in cities.

Merits of urbanisation

A city is a breathing entity which is **ever-growing** and **evolving**. The cities shapes culture and give impetus to the realisation of dreams and ambitions of people who come from the countryside. There is a positive correlation between **urbanisation** and **economic growth**. The cities and the process of urbanization offer a lot of **developmental advantage**.

Urbanization leads to rise of agglomeration economies, the formation of industrial clusters, and the increase in competitiveness among and within each state

Urbanisation also offers solutions to reduce **income inequality** and **poverty**. It enhances jobs and incomes as more talent is attracted to urban conglomerates.

What are the issues?

Looking at India's urbanisation rate, it seems India has a **sluggish rate** of urbanisation.

India's Urbanisation is below the **global rate of urbanisation** as well as the **Asian average of urbanisation rate**.

In India, “Cities” as a scope of study is a relatively new field. India has primarily been seen as a village-based country during colonisation and a few years right after independence.

In the post-independence years, industrial development, regional integration, and economic growth became priorities, and the “urban question” remained missing from the discourse of development.

Way Forward

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There is a need to increase the **pace of urbanisation** in the country. At the same time, the **influx of population** should not be concentrated in bigger cities only.

Smaller cities lying on the **periphery** of the **major industrial cities** should be primarily focussed from the point of **growth** and **investment potential**.

In addition, all the **backward cities** and **towns** should be given attention for investment and development.

GS1 – HISTORY – ART AND CULTURE

MUSEUMS IN INDIA

6. **A concerted effort in re-imagining museums**

Source: The post is based on an article “**A concerted effort in re-imagining museums**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **18th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS1 Indian Art and Culture

Relevance: Indian Museums

News: On the occasion of **International Museum Day** on May 18, the Ministry of **Culture** allowed free of cost admissions to all museums which are under its ambit for a week.

Advantages of making free admission into the museums

This will make our art and **culture accessible** to all and also provides an opportunity to propagate our **civilisational heritage**.

The provide an opportunity to re-imagine the progress made in our museums and cultural spaces.

What transformational shift has been visible with respect to our perspectives of our heritage?

First, there has been a shift from a **museum-centric approach** to a **cultural spaces approach**. As India is a **continuously inhabited civilisational state**, therefore, **our art, culture** and **heritage** are part of our museums as well as our day-to-day activities. Therefore, the government has moved to preserve and promote Indian heritage.

a) Now, the stolen heritages are restored to the original place it was taken from instead of putting into a museum. For example, the recently retrieved idol of **Goddess Annapurna** was returned to its rightful place at **Kashi Vishwanath temple, Varanasi**.

b) Second, the government has moved to build **specific-purpose museums** rather than rely on general purpose museums. For example,

– **Ten tribal freedom fighter museums** are being established across the country to recognise the role of tribal freedom fighters against colonial rule. For example, the Prime Minister launched the **Birsa Munda museum** in Ranchi.

– The **Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya** was inaugurated to showcase the contributions made by every Prime Minister of India and to pay a tribute to every PM of India since independence.

– In addition, **the Statue of Unity** to showcase the various facets of Patel, the **Biplobi Bharat museum** in Kolkata, the **arms and armour museum** at the Red Fort, a gallery on Gautama Buddha in Delhi, and the museum on Jammu and Kashmir have been established.

c) Third, now museums are looked at with a **whole-of-government approach** to provide a wholesome experience. India is home to over 1,000 museums representing different cultural, religious and scientific achievements. These museums do not just lie under the control of the Ministry of Culture. In fact, Other Ministries either manage or coordinate. For example,

– Indian railway manages the Railway museums,

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– The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** assists the **National Council of Science Museums**, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture to manage its 25 science cities, centres and museums.

– The government is widening public access through **modernisation** and **digitisation** of collections and exhibitions.

Fourth, the government has moved towards **modernisation**, **upgradation**, and **establishment** of new museums. These institutions will be closer to international standards of museology in the 21st century.

What are the challenges?

The adoption of such approaches like a **whole-of-government approach** among other requires new specialized domains of skills and perspectives. It requires continued upgradation of **Human capacities** and **domain knowledge**.

There are also challenges in **modernising** our **traditional museums** to make them more interactive, through technology interfaces, innovative curatorial skills and imaginative storytelling. It needs more **imaginative thinking** and has a different set of challenges.

The efforts in **digitisation** and **reprography** are painstaking processes that can take several years to complete.

Way Forward

The **new Indian Institute of Heritage** that is being set up as a world class university aims to address these challenges.

The Ministry of Culture's **first-of-its-kind Global Summit** on '**Reimagining Museums in India**' taught a lot of things which can be incorporated to devise a blueprint for the development of **new museums**, nurture a **renewal framework**, and reinvigorate **existing museums**.

GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN RELATED ISSUES

ABORTION CARE AND RELATED ISSUES

7. [India must shift the discourse on abortion rights](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**India must shift the discourse on abortion rights**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **26th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector, Health Sector

Relevance: Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 2021 and Reproductive Rights in India

News: Recently, two women public health practitioners who have studied and worked in India and the United States have voiced their solidarity with women in both countries for their abortion rights..

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 ("MTP Act") regulates the abortion practices in India.

Abortion Statistics

Global

According to the **WHO**, 6 out of 10 of all **unintended pregnancies** end in an induced abortion. Around 45% of all abortions are **unsafe**, and around 97% take place in developing countries.

India

According to **the National Family Health Survey 2019-2021**, 3% of all pregnancies in India result in abortion.

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More than half of abortions in India are performed in the **private sector**, whereas only 20% are performed in the **public sector** because **public facilities** often **lack abortion services**.

Around 27% of abortions are performed by the woman herself at home. Around 73% of these were medication abortions. Another 5% of all abortions done outside of **health facilities** were done with methods other than **medication abortion**. Most of these abortions were illegal as per the MTP Act.

A recent study found that **sex-selective abortions** in India could lead to 6.8 million fewer girls being born between 2017 to 2030.

Obstacles

The MTP Act 1971 and then amended in 2021 makes '**medical termination of pregnancy**' legal in India under specific conditions. The Act primarily protects medical practitioners as "**induced miscarriage**" is a criminal offence under the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

What are the issues?

The acceptance of abortion in Indian society is situated in the context of **population control** and **family planning**.

Many women face a lack of access, systemic barriers, social norms and cultural preferences, and even **criminal liability**. Therefore, many women continue to die due to unsafe abortions. As per a 2014 study, abortions account for **10% of maternal deaths** in India.

After more than 50 years of the MTP Act, women and transgender persons face major obstacles in accessing safe abortion care because

First, most of them are not even aware that abortion is legal or know where to obtain one safely;

Second, the MTP Act does not recognise abortion as a choice. There is a **lack of choice** and **bodily autonomy** of women. The decision of abortion is solely decided by the approval of medical professionals even in the first few weeks of the pregnancy;

Third, The Act mentions **only 'pregnant woman'**. It fails to recognise that transgender persons and others can also become pregnant.

Fourth, **unmarried** and **transgender people** continue to face stigma and can be turned away from health facilities, forcing them to resort to unsafe care;

Fifth, mandatory reporting requirements under **the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Bill (POCSO), 2011** against child sexual offences, impact privacy and hinder access of adolescents to safe abortion services;

Sixth, many are still coerced into agreeing to a permanent or **long-term contraceptive method** as a prerequisite for getting abortion services;

Seventh, health-care providers may impose their **own morality**. They may insist on 'husbands' or 'parental' consent for abortion.

Eighth, despite laws prohibiting sex determination, the illegal practice persists. The **unregulated ultrasound clinics** have mushroomed in India. They continue to facilitate the illegal practice of sex determination, resulting in unsafe abortions and female foeticide.

Way Forward

There is an urgent need for a perspective from an abortion for the purpose of a family planning and maternal health to an abortion which is done on the basis of a **sexual health and reproductive rights**.

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India must amend the law and raise the bar on **reproductive justice**. In addition, the **health systems** should be improved to provide good quality and respectful abortion care.

Reproductive injustice anywhere is a threat to the lives of people everywhere.

FAMILY PLANNING AND RELATED ISSUES

8. Meeting family planning goals

Source: This post is based on the article “**Meeting family planning goals**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Social issues – Health related issues

Relevance: Improving family planning access to younger population

Context: India’s family planning programme has improved access to contraceptives. This has led to a reduction in the Total Fertility Rate from 3.4 in 1990-92 to 2.0 in 2019-21, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS).

However, now India needs to focus on improving access to family planning services for not just adults, but also the younger population.

Why India now needs to focus on improving access to family planning services for its youth?

First, according to **NFHS-5 and the 2022 report by the United Nations Population Fund**, **there is a rise in adolescent childbearing in some States such as Tripura and Meghalaya**.

Second, COVID-19 has had a severe impact on economic resources and access to education, thereby influencing the choices women and the youth make about their sexual and reproductive health.

Hence, in order to meet the SDG of Family Planning by 2030, India now needs to focus on improving access to family planning services for not just the adult population, but also the youth.

India’s Mission Parivar vikas

In India, frontline health workers have contributed significantly in implementing Mission Parivar Vikas.

– It aims to accelerate access to high-quality family planning choices, to successfully increase the modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (mCPR), especially among female non-users from vulnerable communities.

They have achieved this by delivering contraceptives at homes and offering a wider basket of alternatives such as injectable contraceptives

What needs to be done?

Strengthen the capacity of health workers in using **the Family Planning Logistics Management Information System** to ensure the availability of and access to contraceptives by marginalised communities.

– **Family Planning Logistics Management Information System:** *It is a dedicated software to ensure the smooth forecasting, procurement and distribution of family planning commodities across all the levels of health facilities.*

Family planning interventions need to be structured around the health needs, and populations for whom the intervention is to be implemented. The youth are not a homogenous group.

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Key questions need to be answered wrt the sexual reproductive health needs of adolescents with varying profiles such as males and females who are in school, out of school, married, unmarried, and so on. There is a need to **break down the data** by key characteristics in order to reach specific groups of people in order to have the greatest impact.

Moreover, when addressing younger populations, **holistic health awareness programmes** on the right age of marriage, safe sexual behaviour, contraception, reproductive health, and diet diversity are paramount.

Involving men in family planning: The involvement of men in family planning needs to be given equal importance. Certain gender transformative approaches have shown promising results in various places.

– Several examples of involving men in the family planning discourse include the **PRACHAR project** in Bihar, the **Yaari Dosti programme** in Mumbai, and the **GEMS project** in Goa.

Utilising private sector: Many of the programmes in public health have also started using the capabilities of the private sector to improve service delivery. The private sector can offer innovative solutions in family planning, thereby improving the community's access to services.

Way forward

In several districts, more than one-fifth of the population in the adolescent age group are now entering the reproductive age group. Also, there are still many districts in India that have low mCPR, with a large proportion of them being the youth.

Hence, it is only by working holistically on overall health goals and addressing social determinants that we can ensure equitable family planning services for both adults and young people.

GS1 – HISTORY – FREEDOM STRUGGLE

FAMOUS PERSONALITIES

9. On Raja Ram Mohan Roy's 250th birth anniversary, remembering the legacy of the father of Modern Indian Renaissance

Source: This post is based on the article “**On Raja Ram Mohan Roy's 250th birth anniversary, remembering the legacy of the father of Modern Indian Renaissance**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS1 – History – Art and Culture

Relevance: About Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Context: One of the most influential social and religious reformers of the 19th century, Ram Mohan Roy, was born on May 22, 1772 in what was then Bengal Presidency's Radhanagar in Hooghly district.

As India grapples increasingly with changing social and religious circumstances, Roy's work in the sphere of women's emancipation, modernising education and seeking changes to religious orthodoxy finds new relevance in this time.

Early life

Roy was into a prosperous upper-caste Brahmin family, where he grew up within the framework of **orthodox caste practices** of his time: child-marriage, polygamy and dowry were prevalent among the higher castes and he had himself been married more than once in his childhood.

The family's affluence had also made the **best in education accessible to him**.

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A **polyglot**, Roy knew Bengali and Persian, but also Arabic, Sanskrit, and later, English. His exposure to the literature and culture of each of these languages bred in him a **scepticism towards religious dogmas and social strictures**. For instance: practices such as Sati

He spent considerable time **studying the Vedas and the Upanishads**, and the religious texts of Islam and Christianity. He was particularly intrigued by the **Unitarian faction of Christianity** and was drawn by the **precepts of monotheism** that, he believed, lay at the core of all religious texts.

Rabindranath Tagore called him a '**Bharatpathik**' by which he meant to say that Rammohun combined in his person the underlying spirit of Indic civilisation, its spirit of pluralism, tolerance and a cosmic respect for all forms of life," says historian Amiya P Sen.

Roy, the first among liberals

Confident about the strength of his heritage and **open to imbibing from other cultures** what he believed were ameliorative practices, Roy was among India's first liberals.

He was given the **title of Raja by the Mughal emperor Akbar II**.

He studied matters not in the abstract or in academic solitude, but with the practical objective of securing human happiness and freedom. That made him a modern man.

In 1814, he started the **Atmiya Sabha (Society of Friends)**, to nurture philosophical discussions on the idea of monotheism in Vedanta and to campaign against idolatry, casteism, child marriage and other social ills.

– The Atmiya Sabha would make way for the **Brahmo Sabha** in 1828, set up with Debendranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore's father.

- During the Bengal Renaissance, Brahmo Sabha ushered in sweeping social changes and birthed the **Brahmo religion**, a reformed spiritual Hinduism that believes in monotheism and the uniformity of all men, irrespective of caste, class or creed.

Education

During the course of his time in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), a period of about 15 years, Roy became a **prominent public intellectual**. He campaigned for the modernisation of education, in particular the introduction of a Western curriculum, and started several educational institutions in the city.

In 1817, he collaborated with Scottish philanthropist David Hare to set up the **Hindu College** (now, Presidency University).

– He followed it up with the **Anglo-Hindu School** in 1822 and, in 1830, assisted Alexander Duff to set up the General Assembly's Institution, which later became the **Scottish Church College**.

It was his relentless advocacy alongside contemporaries such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar that finally led to the **abolition of Sati under the governor generalship of William Bentinck in 1829**. Roy argued for the property rights of women, and petitioned the British for freedom of the press (in 1829 and 1830).

Faced criticism due to his views

He was among the first Indians to **gain recognition in the UK and in America** for his radical thoughts. But, he was often attacked by his own countrymen who felt threatened by his reformist agenda, and by British reformers and functionaries, whose views differed from his.

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General

Studies

Paper – 2

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GS2 – POLITY – PARLIAMENT AND STATE LEGISLATURE

DELIMITATION COMMISSION IN INDIA

1. **Delimitation Commission fails people of J&K, hurts democracy**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Delimitation Commission fails people of J&K, hurts democracy**” published in the **Indian Express** on **07th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Relevance: Delimitation Commission and Jammu & Kashmir Polity

News: Recently, the fifth delimitation commission chaired by **Justice Ranjana Desai**, furnished its award for Jammu and Kashmir. The Commission’s award has been severely criticized across the field.

Nature of Award of the Delimitation Commission

The recommendation of delimitation commissions cannot be **modified** or **changed** by Parliament or the concerned legislative assembly.

- The Poonch and Rajouri in Jammu division has been clubbed with Anantnag in the Kashmir division
- The Commission has allocated 47 seats to Kashmir and 43 seats to Jammu.
- The Commission recommended “at least” two seats on a nomination basis for the Kashmiri Pandit community.

What has been good in the commission’s award?

The **constituencies** have been made **coterminous** with the **district boundaries**. Hitherto, 18 assembly constituencies were grouped into each parliamentary constituency. This arithmetic formula distorted the entire system of democratic representation across areas.

What are the issues with the awards given by the fifth delimitation commission?

First, it was constituted during a **statutory freeze** on the increase or decrease of the parliamentary and legislative assembly seats up till the population Census of 2026.

Second, this is the **only** commission that has not redrawn the constituencies in accordance with the Delimitation Act of 2002. The commission instead invoked **Section 63 of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019**, which stipulated to increase the number of seats from present 83 to 90.

Third, the Commission was given the delimitation mandate for **five states**, but the mandate of **five north-eastern states** were withdrawn from its purview and its mandate was restricted to only **Jammu & Kashmir (UT)**. Finally, it will be the **first delimitation** award in the **country’s legislative history** that will not be placed before **the legislative assembly of the UT** that has been delimited. The elected legislators of J&K will not have the opportunity to approve the rules for their representation.

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Fourth, It is argued that the commission's award can lead the political binary of Jammu vis a vis Kashmir to become a **divisive bipolarity**.

Fifth, **Kashmir division** having a 56% share of the population will have only a 52% seat share. On the other hand, **Jammu division** with a 44% share in the population gets a 48% share in the legislative representation. Jammu has got an **additional seat**. In the process, the **cardinal principle** of “**one man, one vote**” has been bid adieu in J&K.

Sixth, the seats allocated to sub-regions referred in Section 60(2) (b) of the J&K Reorganisation Act 2019 are **unacceptably distortionary**. There are **four distinct regions**: The **Jhelum Valley** (which includes South Kashmir, Central Kashmir and North Kashmir), **Chenab Valley** (comprising Kisthwar, Doda, Ramban and Reasi), **Pir Panjal** (Rajouri and Poonch), and the **Tawi basin or the plains** (of Jammu, Kathua and Udhampur). These areas include “communities of interest” — common physical features, ethnicity, religion, and language.

Seventh. While the **two administrative divisions** of the UT, Jammu and Kashmir, may be relevant for developmental policy planning, these are not so for **democratic representation purposes**.

Eight, the **framework of legislative representation** proposed by the commission will prevent the formation of a **stable elected government** in J&K in the near future. The elections will lead to formation of **fractious patchwork coalition** and at worst a perpetually **hung assembly**.

Ninth, the award can become a precedent for award of other delimitation commissions across other states.

GS2 – POLITY – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH

2. **'Obnoxious' speech does not call for heavy hand of the law**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Obnoxious speech does not call for heavy hand of the law**” published in the **Indian Express** on **05th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Freedom of Speech and Expression and reasonable restrictions

News: Recently, the Delhi High Court conducted the bail hearing of Umar Khalid, an accused in the case related to the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act. He was booked under **the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)** for his speech delivered at Amaravati which has been seen as being part of a “larger conspiracy” to destabilise the government.

Observations made in the court

The Delhi High Court highlighted several parts of the speech that it found “**obnoxious**” or “**unacceptable**”.

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First, an accusation of “**jumla**” against the prime minister was said to have crossed the “Lakshman Rekha” of free speech.

Second, the court found the words “**krantikari**” and “**inquilab**” used by the accused unacceptable.

Thirdly, another observation made by the Court was that Khalid is an “**intelligent man**” who used indirect speech to goad his audience to violence.

What are the general exceptions to free speech?

The first is **hate speech**, which is closely linked to discrimination and violence against vulnerable and marginalised groups. For example, in history, there was a close link between antisemitic speech and the economic and social boycott of the Jewish people, which eventually led to the Holocaust.

The second is **incitement to violence**. This does not fall within the protection of free speech because it leaves neither the time nor the scope for response or reason. The incitement to violence leads an enraged mob to burn down a neighbourhood.

Further, in addition to above, there are certain forms of religious offence that are also criminalised in India.

Issues in the present case

In the present case, the speech of the accused falls **outside of the scope** of the above said **narrow exceptions**. The statements picked in the court are well within the mainstream of Indian political discourse. For example, there is a “**Revolutionary Socialist Party**” in Parliament.

Further, a person cannot deserve to be in jail for years without trial. The accused in the case has already spent more than **500 days** in jail without trial. In a civilised society, people cannot be jailed for speech as a regular matter.

In a civilized society, such kind of speech should attract **counter-speech** instead of the heavy hand of the state and the **law-enforcement machinery** to silence someone.

The general criticism of the Prime Minister in the public domain does not go against fundamental right of freedom of speech. The remarks highlighted in the case should be seen as an example of an **enthusiastic political speech** involving satire, parody etc.

The hearing of the case should be done on the **tangible record of events** i.e., things done and spoken, instead of **intangible things** like “**intelligent man**” and use of indirect speech to incite the violence.

CHILD EDUCATION

3. **The school dress is in the cross hairs**

Source: The post is based on an article “**The school dress is in the cross hairs**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **06th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector (Education)

Relevance: School Uniform, Karnataka Hijab Controversy

News: Recently, the Karnataka government had ordered a **school uniform code** to be followed in the classroom as well as the examination hall.

In fact, the Kendriya Vidyalayas (central schools) which are not governed by the provincial government have also fallen in line with the Karnataka order.

A historical background of school uniform

The colonial systems of education generally favoured the **strict enforcement** of the school uniform.

The idea of a school uniform has spread with **urbanisation, prosperity** and **privatisation**. In fact, rural and small-town schools seldom insisted on a daily uniform in the early years of Independence.

The supply of uniforms offered **business opportunities** for the schools, local cloth merchants, tailors and shoe stores. Therefore, the uniform business was encouraged and the private schools started demanding every day wearing of the **prescribed uniform**. It also induced **local monopolies**.

Importance of school uniform

A school uniform ensures children are uniformly dressed. It helps in the **regimentation** of the young.

Argument against Karnataka’s decision

In the long history of education, there is no evidence that a school uniform is a factor in learning. Sri Aurobindo in his “**The Ideal of Human Unity**” explained that diversity tempts for uniformity. But uniformity does not contribute to a sense of relatedness or unity.

The mandated **school uniform** can lead to curtailing the already **limited autonomy** of principals and teachers.

The Karnataka government should have focused on other education reforms. **Policy reforms** have been pending since the 1960s. **Pre-university** or **junior colleges** prevail in Karnataka. However, other states have adopted **the 10+2 model** recommended by the **Kothari Commission** nearly 60 years ago.

Key distinction between Uniform and Dress Code: (1) A **uniform** is different from a **dress code**. A uniform is more **prescriptive** than a dress code. The Dress code expects the student to

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avoid using clothes which displays status or wealth of the student, and **(2)** On the other hand, A uniform may go as far as **prescribing** not just the **colour** but also the **material** and the **design** or **cut**.

Way Forward

There is a need for a **significant reorganisation** of the **administrative system** in education. The school principals and teachers should be given a greater say and freedom in establishing the norms that govern institutional life.

The **Kothari report** recommended a **participatory role** for the community in matters of day-to-day life at school and decline for **bureaucratic authority**, creating greater room for school autonomy.

The government should have recommended a **dress code** instead of recommending a particular uniform. If elaborated, the uniforms should be used where inequality is pervasive in a society.

The government should open **public debates**. All the stakeholders, especially teachers should be allowed to participate. They are closer to students. They are more sensitive to what makes classroom life more comfortable for all.

The **Kothari Commission** suggestion should be implemented. The recommendation intended to make classroom teaching less stereotyped, more lively and child-centred.

HIGHER EDU AND RELATED ISSUES

4. Ed reform gone rogue

Source: This post is based on the article “**Ed reform gone rogue**” published in **The Times of India** on **4th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to the development of Education

Relevance: UGC’s Draft curriculum for its Four-Year Undergraduate Programme’, or FYUGP

Context: On 17th Mar 22, the University Grants Commission (UGC) released a draft curriculum for a ‘Four-Year Undergraduate Programme’, or FYUGP, a key component of the National Education Policy.

But the curriculum is filled with confusion and contradiction.

What is the draft curriculum released by the UGC?

The curriculum demarcates **three phases** for the students’ progression.

The first stage consists of three semesters and is devoted to basic courses labelled as **Language, Common, Introductory and Vocational**.

– In the Introductory portion, the student must take courses from each of Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. At the end of this stage, students will be allotted their Major discipline based on their grades (and not their performance in entrance tests or school).

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During the second stage, in semesters four through six, students will complete their Major along with a significant portion of two Minors.

– At the end of the third year, the student can graduate with a plain Bachelor's degree.

Some students can stay for a **fourth year, the final stage**, and complete a Bachelor's degree called Honours or Research. These students will be eligible for direct admission to PhD programmes in India.

What are the associated issues?

The current three-year Honours degree consists of 148 credits, of which 108 are assigned to the Major discipline. A student completing all four years of the FYUGP will complete 160 credits, of which 48 are for the Major and another 18 for Research.

Due to the proliferation of breadth requirements, the **FYUGP students will study an extra year and yet emerge with much less knowledge of their main subject** than preceding batches.

One market for FYUGP is students hoping to go abroad for graduate studies, for whom it is useful to be able to show an extra year of study. However, this **benefit will not accrue once foreign universities discipline has actually decreased!**

The **first three semesters ignore achievements** in school or any predilection towards a particular discipline.

– Someone wishing to major in Mathematics may be rejected due to poor performance in the common, demonstrate aptitude for Mathematics itself.

– Having stagnated or even regressed for three semesters, students will be asked to suddenly shift gears and complete the requirements for a standard Bachelor's degree in just three semesters. This is a recipe for disaster.

There's no unified vision. For instance: Consider the statement that while students may opt for a three-year degree, the four-year option is “a preferred option since it would allow the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education”. However, the fourth year is only available to students whose CGPA is at least 7.5 and this will restrict its benefits to, at best, only a quarter of the student population.

Further, a major part of the UGC document was directly copied from a webpage of the University of Michigan. Another significant portion was found on a webpage of the University of Arizona.

This **plagiarism** has revealed the inner workings of the committees that formulate the national policies and curricula. The curriculum has evidently been put together by a group that pooled their individual suggestions, but did not try to harmonise them in a common cause.

ONE NATION, ONE LANGUAGE ISSUE

5. **Distortion, imposition: Why Northeast groups are against Centre's Hindi push**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Distortion, imposition: Why North-East groups are against Centre's Hindi push**” published in the **Indian Express** on **04th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India, Govt policies and interventions

Relevance: Development of the Hindi Language and The Official Language

News: Recently, at the 37th meeting of the Parliamentary Official Language Committee, the **Union Home Minister** commented that nine tribal communities of the Northeast have converted their **dialects' scripts** to **Devanagari**. Further, all eight states of the Northeast have agreed to make Hindi compulsory in schools up to Class 10.

The comments have led to protests in the **several states of the region** because Northeast states people speak different language ranging from **Indo-Aryan** to **Tibeto-Burman** to **Austro-Asiatic families**.

What have been the reactions from the North-East Region?

(A) Tripura

Background: Kokborok has been the **official language** of Tripura since 1979. It is the **lingua franca** for most tribes of the state. The language relies upon **the Bengali and Roman scripts** which were adopted based on studies of the **Shyama Charan Tripura Commission** and **Pabitra Sarkar Commission**.

Response: The **Roman Script for Kokborok Choba (RSKC)** a conglomerate of **56 tribal organisations in Tripura** strongly opposed the forcible imposition of Hindi or Devanagari as the script for **Kokborok**.

It was argued that the **imposition of Hindi** script might disturb the **linguistic balance** in Tripura. The brotherhood and balance of **Bengali- and Kokborok-speaking people** in the states might be upset.

(B) Mizoram

Background: The Mizo language belongs to the **Sino-Tibetan family**. It is based on **the Roman script**, introduced by the British a long ago in 1894.

Response: The imposition of the Hindi script has been opposed by the Mizo people.

(C) Manipur

Background: Manipuri is one of the 22 languages listed in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. Therefore, Hindi and Manipuri have the same status. Further, **Manipur's Meitei Mayek** or **Manipuri script** is recognised by the Government of Manipur. In fact, it is a 2,000 years old script.

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Response: The Manipur student organization protested against the proposal of Hindi as a **compulsory subject** up to Class X in Manipur and of **Hindi script**. In fact, it would put extra pressure on students and hinder development of the local language. Therefore, they decried the imposition of Hindi as a **majoritarian policy**.

(D) Arunachal Pradesh

Background: Arunachal Pradesh is a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic state. A UNESCO survey identified **33 languages** as **endangered** and 4 as **critically endangered**.

Response: It is argued that Hindi can act as a **bridge language** in Arunachal Pradesh. However, Hindi cannot be imposed as it would further **distort** the **language dynamics**.

(E) Assam

Background: First, **Assamese** and **Bodo** are spoken in Assam. Both are listed in the **8th Schedule**. Second, While **Assamese** uses an **ancient script** of its own, **Bodo** is written in the **Devanagari script**. Third, Assam has dozens of **other indigenous languages** either having different script or without script.

Response: **All Assam Students' Union (AASU)** opposed the proposal of compulsory Hindi up to 10th because the students are already studying Hindi till Class 8.

Further, the **Devanagari script debate** is not an issue for the **Assamese language**. However, apart from Hindi language and script, all **other tribal and ethnic languages** should also be developed in Assam.

Overall argument against the proposal

NE Students' Union

The **North East Students' Organisation (NESO)** opposed "imposition" of Hindi as a compulsory subject. It would be detrimental to the propagation of **indigenous languages**. It would add another subject to the curriculum.

In fact, **the National Education Policy** says education should be imparted in the mother language. Hindi is not the mother language of the people of the states in the North-East region.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

DEATH PENALTY AND RELATED ISSUES

6. **A new track for capital punishment jurisprudence**

Source: The post is based on an article "**A new track for capital punishment jurisprudence**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **07th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – important provisions of the constitution of India

Relevance: The right to life and capital punishment

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News: Recently, the Supreme Court of India has initiated a ***suo motu writ petition*** (criminal) to frame guidelines on the **mitigation analysis** in the cases pertaining to **death penalty sentencing** or **capital punishment**.

Procedure for capital punishment

If a sessions court (sentencing court) award a capital punishment, then it is to be confirmed by the **jurisdictional High Court** (confirming court) under Chapter 28 of the **Code of Criminal Procedure**.

Evolution of the Jurisprudence related to death penalty in India

In ***Bachan Singh vs State of Punjab (1980)***, the supreme court called for balancing the **mitigating** and **aggravating circumstances** against each other. The court laid down the principle that the **death penalty** ought not to be awarded unless the alternative of life imprisonment is “**unquestionably foreclosed**”. It should be awarded only in a **rarest of rare case**.

However, in later judgment, the **Supreme Court** has begun to inquire into **sentencing methodology** with great interest.

In ***Rajendra Pralhadrao Wasnik vs The State of Maharashtra (2018)***, the Court directed to analyse the conduct of the convict in jail, outside jail if on bail for some time, medical evidence about his mental make-up, contact with his family and so on”. The court directed to furnish reports related to these aspects. These reports are very important for the **mitigation investigation**.

In ***Mofil Khan vs State of Jharkhand (2021)***, the court held that the “the State must prove that the reformation and rehabilitation of the accused is not possible” and that “the Court will have to highlight **clear evidence** as to why the convict is not fit for any kind of **reformatory and rehabilitation scheme**.”

In ***Manoj & Ors vs State of Madhya Pradesh (2022)***, the Court issued directions that all “report(s) of all the **probation officer(s)**” relating to the accused and reports “about their conduct and nature of the work done by them” while in prison should be placed before the court. In addition, a **trained psychiatrist** and a **local professor of psychology** should also conduct a **psychiatric and psychological evaluation** of the convict

What are the issues in award of the capital punishment?

According to a report by the **National Law University Delhi’s Project 39A** titled ‘**Matters of Judgment**’ there is **no judicial uniformity** or **consistency** in awarding of the death sentence. According to the Project 39A report titled ‘**Death Penalty Sentencing in Trial Courts**’, the courts have been lax in assessing the **aspect of reformation** while undertaking the **sentencing exercise**.

Way Forward

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There is a **new wave of thinking** in the domain of capital punishment. It was timely and necessary that the Supreme Court come up with the guidelines on the matter of **mitigation analysis**.

The court should explain what constitutes the **mitigating circumstances**, the role of a **probation officer** in assisting the Court and the **potential value addition** of a **mitigation investigator** to the sentencing exercise.

For a complete **mitigation investigation**, in addition to legal professionals, there is a requirement of **professionals** trained in **psychology, sociology** and **criminology**.

The SC's guidelines related to the **mitigation investigation** will strengthen **the doctrine of the rarest of rare**. This will ensure that the **sentencing** and **confirming courts** exercise their **capital punishment sentencing power** with greater fairness.

NATIONAL JUDICIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION (NJIC)

7. **The court's burden**

Source: The post is based on an article "**The court's burden**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **04th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Functioning of Indian Judiciary

Relevance: The National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation (NJIC) and Judicial Reforms

News: Recently, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) proposed a **National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation (NJIC)** with corresponding bodies at the State level at the joint conference of Chief Justices and Chief Ministers.

Arguments in favour

The court complexes have a lot of inadequacies in India. There is a wide gulf between the **available infrastructure** and the **justice needs** of the people of India. The proposed NJIC would immensely help in augmenting facilities for the judiciary.

There are already some agreements on the idea of **state-level bodies** for the same purpose.

Arguments against

There are experiences that **funds allocated** to many states for judicial infrastructure remain unspent. The proposal did not find favour with many Chief Ministers.

There are apprehensions that a national body would usurp the powers of the executive. Therefore, the proposal did not find favour with many Chief Ministers.

Measures that can be taken in the future

The Chief Justice of India proposed to have **adequate representation** of the Union/States in the NJIC.

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The state level bodies proposal is to be implemented as a **centrally sponsored scheme** (CSS), with the Centre and States sharing the burden on a 60:40 ratio. The allocated funds for proposed **State-level bodies** should be actively spent for speeding up implementation of the scheme.

It will naturally require greater **coordination** between States and the respective High Courts for creation of required infrastructure, especially for the lower judiciary.

The Government has to contribute a lot to **reduce the burden** of the judiciary. The Government should also focus on **other challenges**: pendency, chronic shortage of judges etc.

The government should implement court orders, leaving crucial questions to be decided by the courts.

The government should ensure **broad-based consultation** before passing legislation. This would reduce the litigation burden on the part of the courts.

The judiciary and the executive at the level of Chief Justices and Chief Ministers should have a conversation. It will infuse an **atmosphere** of **cooperation** for the judicial appointments, infrastructure upgradation and downsizing pendency in Indian courts.

ISSUES WITH JUDICIAL SYSTEM

8. **Why the judiciary is failing?**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why the judiciary is failing?**” published in **Business Standard** on **3rd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Judiciary, Rule of Law

Relevance: Issues with the Higher judiciary

Context: This article, the first in a series of three, suggests that although the rule of law is a necessary condition for the survival of civilised society, but it is not sufficient for the delivery of justice.

This first article will focus on the **judiciary**, especially the higher judiciary, the next one on **police reforms**, and the last one on **civil society**.

What are the issues associated with the higher judiciary in India?

As per the author of this article, the Supreme Court has failed to do its job, both as a constitutional court and a court of final appeals.

It has **neither been able to enforce the law satisfactorily**, nor **ensured relative uniformity** in judgments so that justice is seen to be delivered.

Public opinion on getting justice from the courts is unenthusiastic at best. This is the result of not only **endless delays**, but also a **huge variability** in verdicts. The variability can be gauged from the following instances:

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- Last month, a three-judge bench, headed by Justice U U Lalit, reduced the sentence of a rapist-murderer of a four-year-old child.
- On the same day, a lower court in Thane sentenced another rapist-murderer of a seven-year-old to death
- In 2021, the Bombay High Court, in a similar case, upheld a death sentence.
- The convicted rapists in the Nirbhaya case were all executed.

Another issue is the **Supreme Court's apparent preference for taking up limelight-hogging public interest litigation (PILs)** compared to bread-and-butter cases of justice.

- An analysis by the *Supreme Court Observer* shows that on an average, **over 26,000 PILs were filed annually** between 1985 and 2019, totalling over 900,000 PILs in all. Such huge number of PILs is the result of a general belief among litigants that PILs make more sense than regular legal recourse.

Real constitutional issues left unaddressed: Moreover, in recent years, the Supreme Court has taken up everything from deciding whether there should be bars on highways to whether SUVs should be taxed more for entering Delhi, and whether oxygen and vaccine supplies have been managed properly during the Covid spike of 2021.

- On the other hand, real constitutional issues — on the legality of the Citizenship Amendment Act, the rights of Hindus to administer their own places of worship, article 370 abrogation, and the review of the Sabarimala judgment — are being left unaddressed for years on end.

Courts expound on how governments cannot amend some “basic features” of the constitution **without ever defining what constitutes a basic feature.**

Bail, not jail, is supposed to be the norm, but the lower courts can ratify the arrest of anyone who publicly criticizes a powerful politician.

[Has the Govt made efforts at streamlining the court process?](#)

Yes.

In 1999 and 2002, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government made **major changes to the Code of Civil Procedure** and put timelines on the number of adjournments that can be given in civil proceedings, the issue of summons and the filing of written statements.

But the **Supreme Court effectively killed these laws by suggesting that these are mere guidelines, not legal limitations.**

Now, practically no time limits apply if a judge decides to endlessly prolong a case.

In the USA, a Sentencing Commission was established in 1984, which set guidelines for sentencing in similar cases, reduced the variability in judgments. But, here too, over time, the US higher judiciary diluted these guidelines so as to give judges greater leeway to use their individual instincts to decide cases.

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Way forward

For greater focus, the Law Commission has suggested that the Supreme Court should be split into two, one being a constitutional court in Delhi, and the other being a final court of appeals in non-constitutional cases.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – ISSUES RELATED TO DEVELOPMENT OF EDU

MEDICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

9. How to vernacularise medical education in India?

Source: The post is based on an article “**How to vernacularise medical education in India**” published in the **Indian Express** on **03rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector; Education Sector

Relevance: Medical Education Reforms

News: Recently, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh declared their intention to provide the MBBS course in Hindi.

Arguments in favour of using vernacular language in the medical education

This will help counter the **hegemony** of English in **professional education**. Few countries such as **Germany** and **China** have long been doing so successfully. Therefore, the Indian government can also replicate this in India.

One of the intentions of the move is to **increase access** to **medical education** beyond the **English-knowing elite**.

Arguments in favour of using vernacular language in the medical education

The measure would entail **significant costs**. The implementation would demand **regulatory** and **administrative alterations**. For example, translation of educational materials, training of trainers, etc. Further, the costs will depend on the **scale of implementation** and need not necessarily be a deterrent.

An argument advanced by critics is that this measure is fuelled by misplaced nationalistic sentiments.

This would erode the **competitive advantage** which Indian graduates have in the global scientific arena.

In contrast to Germany and China where local languages are used, English is firmly entrenched in India. Therefore, there will be two-fold challenges. First, the measure could face **considerable resistance** in assimilating local language into the existing ecosystem. Second, it is unlikely to spur **enough demand**. For example, this has already been witnessed in the case of engineering courses.

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If MBBS is taught in the regional language, then **postgraduate medical courses** and other medical courses would also need to be conceived in regional languages.

At present, the government wishes to expand the **private sector's** scope in medical education. However, the private sector is unlikely to welcome the move in the field of medical education.

There is no obvious correlation between knowledge of **English** and **socioeconomic status** in Indian society.

Today, a **considerable proportion** of medical graduates who have studied in English are employed in **allied sectors** (research, pharmaceuticals, administration etc.). There medium graduates in vernacular language are unlikely to be welcomed in these allied sectors.

It would lead to development of an **implicit hierarchy** between **non-English medium** and **English medium medical graduates**.

The **diversity** and **multiplicity of languages** across and within states thwarts the vernacularisation of medical education.

Medical doctors are **highly mobile professionals**. English medium medical graduates can find jobs across the country and the world.

English is a **mutually-intelligible option** in **technical** as well as **routine dealings** and **interactions**. Therefore, numerous local languages based medical education can lead to chaos.

Way Forward

Going for a **select few languages** with a large following could be an **optimum middle-path**. However, this is unlikely to obviate the need for **incorporating basic English skills** in the curriculum.

An **incremental approach** should be adopted in providing medical education in regional languages. For example, the government can start providing **paramedical courses** in the regional language. Such paramedical workers are often **less mobile** and **function closer** to the **patients**. Further, **vernacularisation** is one of many reforms in medical education. Many other measures require political attention.

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

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

10. **Agri trade beyond the Ukraine war**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Agri trade beyond the Ukraine war**” published in **Business Standard** on **4th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Export of food grains from India

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Context: The conflict in Ukraine has created an opportunity for India's agricultural exports, particularly wheat.

But, India's chances of becoming a stable supplier of wheat are limited in the absence of a long-term policy on foodgrain exports.

Out of the around 200 million tonnes (mt) of global wheat exports, **Russia and Ukraine** export 60 mt. India exported nearly 7 mt in 2021.

[Is India facing a pressure on its wheat stocks this year?](#)

Yes. Presently, India's wheat stocks are facing pressure due to the following reasons:

A possible decline in production and procurement:

- Production could be lower by more than 10 mt due to the heat wave in the second half of March.
- Due to a decline in production and private sector purchases, the government procurement of wheat this rabi season is expected to be around 20 mt or less (it was 43 mt last year). Govt needs

An increase in public distribution and the rise in exports

[Can India become a stable supplier of foodgrains beyond the Russia-Ukraine conflict?](#)

An analysis by experts shows the following –

The **prospects for sustained wheat exports by India are limited**

– India can substitute only a small part of the 60 mt of wheat exports by Russia and Ukraine.

Exporting for a year and then banning exports is bad for trade relationships.

Non-price factors like food safety, quality and the variety of wheat may also constrain exports. Similarly, **wheat may not be competitive globally** in most years for exports. Although India is competitive in the cost of production, it may not be so if we consider the minimum support price, which is 50 per cent over cost and other *mandi* charges.

[What is the overall situation wrt agricultural exports by India?](#)

India has exported more than 17 mt of **rice** both in FY21 and FY22.

Wheat exports were 2.1 mt in FY21 and 7 mt in FY22.

The country has done well in total agricultural exports in the last few years. As per data, **agricultural exports have grown by 20%** during FY22 to touch \$50 billion. This higher growth was achieved in spite of logistical challenges posed by the pandemic.

Way forward

It is possible to be a stable supplier of rice and wheat to other countries if there is a **long-term policy on exports of foodgrains**. Of course, the environmental costs of these crops must be considered, particularly in the production of rice.

Imports of edible oils and the rise in prices. India is the biggest importer of edible oils. Palm oil constitutes 60% of the imports (9 mt) followed by soyabean and sunflower.

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– The prices of sunflower oil increased due to the conflict in Ukraine, while soyabean oil prices rose because of dry weather in South America.

India will face higher food inflation in the near future. This is an opportunity for farmers to increase their incomes. But vulnerable consumers have to be protected with **safety nets like in-kind and cash transfers**.

What are the policies needed to improve edible oil production, reduce imports and prices?

Short term

– India is planning to engage with Indonesia on palm oil imports as there are limited alternatives. It is also trying to reduce cess charged on edible oil imports to soften prices.

– The government is promoting the production and productivity of oilseeds through the **national Food Security Mission: Oilseeds (NFSM-Oilseeds)** from 2018-19 onwards in all districts of India.

– In August 2021, the prime minister announced the **National Mission on Edible oils-Palm oil** to make India self-sufficient in cooking oils.

Alternative sources have to be found to reduce dependence on palm oil imports.

In the medium to long term, there is a need to have **atmanirbharta in edible oils**, as the demand for them will rise with urbanisation and increase in incomes.

Investment in R&D in oilseeds has to be increased for these crops.

Similarly, marketing infrastructure, development of value chains, price incentives, etc have to be given to farmers to **shift cropping patterns from rice and wheat to oilseeds** in several states, including Punjab and Haryana.

Hence, there is a need for a two-pronged strategy of increasing domestic production and engaging with other countries to have reliable imports.

HYPERGLOBALIZATION AND RELATED ISSUES

11. Ukraine rethinks on hyper-globalisation. Nations need to de-risk against overdependence on few suppliers

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ukraine rethinks on hyper globalisation. Nations need to de-risk against overdependence on few suppliers**” published in the **Indian Express** on **2nd May 2022**. **Syllabus:** GS3 Indian Economy, Effect of liberalization on Indian Economy

Relevance: External Sector, Self-Reliant India

News: Recently, Indonesia, the **world’s largest producer** and **exporter** of the palm oil has been experiencing domestic shortages of the same. This led to spike in the domestic palm oil prices in Indonesia and the world (including India). Therefore, Indonesia has announced to ban all exports.

What is the concept of hyper-globalization?

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In a hyper-globalised world, countries produce things in which they have **comparative advantage** and import those others can make at lower opportunity cost.

For example, Indonesia and Malaysia produce **palm oil**; and Ukraine and Russia produce **sunflower oil**. They have comparative advantages in the palm oil and sunflower oil. Therefore, Indonesia alone is the largest exporter of palm oil.

What are the issues in hyper-globalization?

It leads to **too much dependence** on supplies from one or two countries. For example, palm oil, which accounts for roughly 40% of India's annual vegetable oil consumption, is almost entirely imported from **Indonesia** and **Malaysia**.

This can lead to supply disruption in case of crisis. For example, In wake of the Russia-Ukraine war, the supply of sunflower oil has been disrupted.

In fact, **high international crude prices** have led to diversion of **palm** and **soyabean oil** for making bio-diesel.

The **disruption** in the **supply** of commodities impacts the prices of the other commodities. For example, At present, palm oil prices are causing strain in the prices of vanaspati, margarine, bread, biscuits, noodles, frozen dessert, namkeens, mithai, soap and cosmetics etc.

Way Forward

Hyper-globalisation and leveraging **comparative advantage** work well in a world without **geopolitical frictions** or **natural disasters**. For example, 2011 Thailand floods impacted the computer hard drive supply chain.

In the real world, countries need to **de-risk** against **overdependence** on few suppliers, especially of products entailing heavy foreign exchange outgo.

The Indian government needs to **reduce dependence** on import of edible oils from the current 60-65%.

Domestic producers can be given **one-time capital subsidy** and **tariff support** based on long-term import **parity pricing**.

There are **collateral benefits**, too, from some paddy and wheat acreage getting diverted to oil palm or mustard.

FEDERAL STRUCTURE AND RELATED ISSUES

Issues pertaining to Schedules

12. **Revisit the Seventh Schedule to improve Centre-state relations**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Revisit the Seventh Schedule to improve Centre-State relations**” published in the **Live Mint** on **01st May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Issues and Challenges pertaining to the federal structure

Relevance: Issues related to the Seventh Schedule of the constitution of India

News: Recently, the Union government revoked the orders and guidelines issued under the Disaster Management Act (DMA), 2005 after covid knocked on India’s doors. The DMA has been the backbone of policy interventions to fight covid.

What are the constitutional provisions with respect to invoking the laws?

Any legislation can be passed under an enabling **constitutional provision**. Article 246 talks about the Union, state and concurrent lists which are mentioned in **the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution**.

Considering, **health** is a state subject mentioned in the **state list** and **disasters** do not find mention in any lists in **the Schedule VII**. Therefore, the union government invoked **the Disaster management Act (DMA) 2005** by relating to **Entry 23 (Social Security and Social Insurance)** in the Concurrent List of the Constitution. It was invoked to deal with covid-19.

How was the DMA 2005 used by the states?

Some states like West Bengal, Maharashtra, Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh legalized the **home delivery** of alcohol under the ambit of the DMA. Ironically, it was invoked for liquor delivery to promote **social security and social insurance**. It was also aimed to address a shortfall in tax revenues (Taxes on alcohol account for a significant share of the total revenue in many states)

However, at present the DMA has been revoked. Therefore, in the **absence** of **enabling legislation** (due to revocation of the DMA), the states will have to curtail the home delivery of alcohol.

What are the issues that plague the Seventh Schedule?

The Seventh Schedule was inherited from **the Government of India Act, 1935**. Therefore, it is a **relic** of the **colonial past**. The lists do not reflect the **complex realities** of India in its **75th year of independence**. For example, despite having health as the state subject, the Union government was in a better position to legislate on some issues related to health (vaccination, for instance)

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The states often shift their **responsibilities** upon centre. For example: (1) state highways are often classified as national highways, and (2) the states ask for the help of paramilitary forces in times of crisis despite having law and order as the state subjects.

States have also advocated the **transfer** of some subjects from the **Union** and **concurrent lists** to the state list. For instance, **entry No. 58** of the Union list is on the manufacturing, supply and distribution of salt.

States have also criticized the transfer of some subjects from the state list to the concurrent list.

Way Forward

The **Sarkaria Commission** and **the Punchi Commission**. Both advised comprehensive consultation between the Union and state governments before moving anything from the state list to the concurrent list.

N.K. Singh, chairman of the **15th Finance Commission**, has time and again argued for reforms in the Seventh Schedule.

Some have even advocated further **decentralization** of that Schedule by introducing a local government list in the light of rapid urbanization across countries.

There has to be periodic reviews of these lists—say, after every 20 years.

Administration of NCT of Delhi

13. [The Delhi dual governance conundrum](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**The Delhi dual governance conundrum**” published in **the Hindu** on **02nd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

Relevance: Administration of the National Capital Territory

Context: Delhi has been experiencing a prolonged confrontation on the relative powers of the territorial administration and the Union government. However, recently, **the 2021 amendment** to the **Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991** has been enacted. The aforementioned amendment is also under challenge before the Supreme Court.

Nature of Delhi in the federal scheme

Delhi is a Union Territory under Schedule 1 of the Constitution. It has the absence of statehood. However, it has been declared as the “National Capital Territory” which is governed under Article 239AA.

What are the factors that have led to power tussle in the Delhi Governance?

Dilemmas of dual governance: Delhi is governed by the elected **Council of Ministers** and the Central Government through the **Administrator of Delhi**, renamed as the **Lieutenant Governor (L-G)**. Therefore, issues in the governance of Delhi arose, with respect to who is empowered to

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control the agencies, namely the **Anti-Corruption Bureau, the Civil Services and the Electricity Board.**

The Supreme Court's pronouncements with respect to the dual governance of Delhi

Earlier, the Delhi High Court has decided in favour of the Central Government relying on the status of Delhi as a Union Territory.

The SC decided on the **substantial questions of law** in reference to the powers of the elected government of Delhi vis-a-vis the L-G pertaining to the Administration of NCT. The observations made were:

(1) The objectives behind the **Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act** shall guide the interpretation of **Article 239AA**. Article 239AA was interpreted from the perspective of the principles of federalism and democracy, thereby, according **a sui generis status** to Delhi in distinction from other Union Territories (UT) which were more centrally governed.

(3) The Delhi Assembly has the power to make laws over all subjects that figure in the Concurrent List, and all, except three excluded subjects, in the State List. Further, in these matters, the LG is bound by the "aid and advice" of the Council of Ministers of Delhi.

(4) The L-G ought to act on the "**aid and advice**" of the Council of Ministers, except when he refers "**a matter**" to the President for a final decision in case of a difference of opinion between L-G and the Council of Ministers. However, the SC ruled that "any matter" cannot be construed to mean "every matter". The LG should refer only in exceptional circumstances.

(5) L-G shall act as a **facilitator** rather than posing himself as an adversary to the elected Council of Ministers.

(6) The SC ruled that the National Capital Territory of Delhi **cannot** be granted the **status of a State** under the constitutional scheme.

(7) It was ruled that the **Anti-corruption Bureau (ACB)** comes under the Centre, the **Electricity Board** under the Government of NCT, **a Commission of Enquiry** under the Commissions of Enquiry Act can be constituted by the centre, the power to appoint **Public Prosecutor** is vested with Government of NCT.

What were the unresolved questions?

One Judge (In a two-judge bench of the SC) held that services should be outside the purview of the GNCTD, and the other judge held that officers below the rank of joint secretary are under the control of the Government of NCT.

Way Forward

Due to the split, the matter of services is being heard by a **three-Judge Bench** of the Supreme Court (SC). However, there are also demand to refer the matter to the Constitution Bench of the SC.

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The persons holding high office are expected to conduct themselves in faithful discharge of their duties. It would ensure smooth running of administration and protection of the rights of the stakeholders.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

PM's THREE NATION TOUR

14. In the time of war: On India's ties with Europe without upsetting Russia

Source: This post is based on the article “**In the time of war: On India's ties with Europe without upsetting Russia**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: Prime Minister's three-nation tour to Europe

Context: Prime Minister three-nation visit to Europe comes at a time when the continent is facing its biggest security crisis since the end of the Cold War.

While bilateral issues are at the centre of these meetings, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the major issue.

What were the key highlights of the tour?

In **Germany**, the partnership between the two countries was reiterated. Berlin has also announced €10 billion for bilateral cooperation.

– India and Germany also unveiled the contours of the next level of their partnership. Germany has said India is its “**central partner**” in Asia and that close cooperation would continue to expand.

In **Copenhagen**, the PM attended the India-Nordic summit with leaders of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland.

In the last leg, the Prime Minister held talks in Paris with French President Emmanuel Macron, who was re-elected recently.

What is the context of the three-nation tour?

The trip comes a few days after the President of the European Commission, Ursula von Der Leyen, visited India.

New Delhi's neutral position on the war has triggered both criticism and engagement from the West.

India has seen **several high-profile visits from the West**, with some top officials pressing New Delhi to cut back on trade with Russia, a traditional strategic partner.

Among the Nordic five, Sweden and Finland are now considering dropping their decades-long neutrality and seeking NATO membership.

What did both countries say on the Ukraine crisis?

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Both sides showed pragmatism over the Ukraine question.

Germany, like India, has deep economic ties with Russia. For India it is about defence supplies, and for Germany, it is for almost **40% of its gas import requirements**.

While the Russian aggression has prompted **Germany to raise its defence spending and join the western sanctions regime**, it has been reluctant in sending weapons to Kyiv, compared to other NATO members in Eastern Europe.

While Germany's chancellor urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to "stop this senseless murder and withdraw your troops", the Indian PM's **response was more measured**. He said that and that dialogue was the only way out

[What is the way forward?](#)

Europe is expected to take a more securitised approach to foreign policy from now, given the direction of the Ukraine conflict

INDIA – FRANCE RELATIONS

15. [Overcoming differences: On India's new push for stronger ties with Europe](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Overcoming differences: On India's new push for stronger ties with Europe**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **07th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations: Bilateral Relations

Relevance: India-France Relations

News: Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited **France** along with his visit to Germany, and Denmark (for the **Nordic Summit**). The visit turned out to be a comprehensive discussion on bilateral, regional and international issues with a **India-France joint statement**.

Background of India-France relations

Both have decades of an **unusually productive partnership**. Both share **six-decade-long partnership** in the field of space and strong **defence partnership**.

In 1998, France did not judge or impose sanctions on India for its nuclear tests. It was the first country to conclude a civil nuclear deal with India in 2008 after the NSG passed a waiver allowing India to access nuclear fuel and technology.

France and India worked closely for the success of the Paris climate accord. Both co-founded the **International Solar Alliance** in 2015.

What have been the major points in the India-France joint statement?

The joint statement recorded the differences on the Ukraine crisis. It included the possible ways of mitigating the war's "**knock-on**" effects.

France invited India to cooperate in **the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission (FARM) initiative**. The initiative ensures food security in the most **vulnerable countries**, particularly in terms of **wheat exports**.

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Discussion to set up industrial partnerships to build integrated supply chains in solar energy production for markets in Europe and Asia.

Both started a **bilateral strategic dialogue** on space issues, a frontier area contested by China, Russia and the U.S.

Way Forward

Recently, there were some developments in the construction of **six nuclear power plants** in Maharashtra's Jaitapur after more than 12 years of original MoU with the French company, EDF. In addition to improving relationships with **individual countries**, India should also give fillip to talks on the **India-EU FTA** (suspended since 2013).

16. **India and France: A deepening friendship**

Source: The post is based on an article "**India and France: A deepening friendship**" published in the **Indian Express** on **04th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations; Bilateral Relations

Relevance: Indo-France Relationship

News: The Prime Minister of India is going to visit France to congratulate Macron on his stunning re-election. For India, the visit is important to survey the international strategic landscape and take stock of bilateral ties.

Convergence of interest in the India-France relationship

India and France have **strategic convergence** on important aspects of international relations. Both have the **fundamental conviction** in a multipolar world and in the **concept of strategic autonomy**.

Since 1998, both countries have deepened the **strategic partnership**. For example, France supported India's Nuclear Test 1998.

India sees France as a preferred partner in **the Indo-Pacific**.

– Both countries have concluded a **Joint Strategic Vision for cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region** in 2018.

– Both share concerns of ensuring **maritime security**, ensuring respect for **international law** by all states, **freedom of navigation** and **overflight**, fight against **organised crime** and combating climate change in the IOR.

– Both have done "**Joint patrolling**" in the Indian Ocean, conducted **Varuna (Joint naval exercises)** in the IOR. Both are striving towards **maritime domain awareness** in the Indian Ocean region.

India and France share **strategic partnership** in the space domain. Both concluded a **Joint Vision for Space Cooperation** in 2018. For example, **situational awareness** in the space domain and cooperation in **satellite navigation** and related technologies.

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India and France are jointly constructing **the world's largest nuclear park** in Jaitapur, Maharashtra.

There are newer areas of cooperation such as **connectivity, climate change, cyber-security and science and technology**(S&T).

What are the challenges in bilateral ties?

Bilateral defence ties: France has largely stuck to the promised delivery of **Rafale aircrafts** to India. The challenge to move from a **buyer-seller relationship** to **an investor-investee relationship** involving making defence equipment in India accompanied by a **transfer of technology**.

In nuclear energy, the **Jaitapur nuclear project** has been stalled. It is facing a lot of domestic impediments.

What have been the measures taken by Indian leadership?

The Prime Minister of India has taken Indian diplomacy to the level of "**personalised diplomacy**". He has invested in personal relations and made a difference in relations between States. The PM has developed a close relationship with the **French President Emmanuel Macron** since 2017. Both the **Indian PM** and **the French President** are having good terms and relationship with the President of Russia. Therefore, they can jointly work to bring the horrific war in Europe to an end.

Way Forward

India is negotiating the **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** and the Investment Agreement with the EU. Therefore, PM Modi can persuade the President of France to support India on the negotiating table.

India should understand **France's assessment** of the **Sino-Russian axis** and EU's own relations with China. Further, India should put India's assessment of the situation in Ladakh and the state of Sino-Indian ties to the counterpart.

INDIA-US RELATIONS

17. Our two-speed ties with the US need convergence

Source: The post is based on an article "**Our own-speed ties with the US need convergence**" published in the **Livemint on 2nd May 2022**.

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

Relevance: Indian-the US Relations

News: The four-nation **Quad summit** is going to be held in Japan. The leaders will meet in-person. The US President and Prime Minister of India are going to meet in-person and have talks on bilateral relations.

What is the convergence of interests between India and the US?

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Both countries have acknowledged that there is a “**growing strategic convergence**” between India and the US. For example, China.

Both democracies have security concerns over **Beijing’s muscle-flexing** in the Asia theatre. Both are working to check this threat.

What are the challenges?

New Delhi’s position on Russia. Our stance has not been condemned outright by US politicians. Both nations have neglected **mutual engagement** in the critical area of economic relations. Both have not joined any **large** and **meaningful trade pact** in Asia.

The US walked out of what is now known as **the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)**, and India walked out of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**. China is a member of both. Therefore, it would help China to consolidate its position as Asia’s predominant economic and trade powerhouse.

India-US relationship is also shadowed by India’s strong relations with Russia and India’s position on Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Way Forward

India’s neighbourhood concerns and energy vulnerability should be handled through **India’s strategic autonomy** on its geopolitical position.

The US announced for the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)**, for its renewed trade thrust in the Indo-Pacific region. It would include four pillars: (1) fair and resilient trade, (2) supply-chain longevity, (3) infrastructure (including clean energy) and tax and (4) anti-corruption measures. The IPEF will involve “**fairness**” over labour issues.

The glue of cooperation for **mutual benefit** invariably lies in **economic partnerships**. Therefore, the US should come up with greater clarity on the IPEF.

INDIA-EU RELATIONS

18. The challenge for Middle Powers like India, France and Germany

Source: The post is based on an article “**Powers like India, France and Germany**” published in **the Indian Express** on **06th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations; Bilateral; Regional Grouping

Relevance: India-European Union relations, India-France relations and India-Germany relations.

News: Recently, the head of the European Union visited India, and Prime Minister of India visited the two European countries – France and Germany.

India’s relationship with the continental European Countries

Ex-French President Charles de Gaulle famously declared, “the strength and stability of India are essential for peace and tranquillity in South Asia”.

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German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer funded the establishment of the Indian Institutes of Technology.

What are the challenges?

Russia's invasion of Ukraine seeks to tear down the **post-Cold War security structure** in Europe. The west is dissatisfied with India's position in this regard.

There are **differences in the agenda of the EU and individual European countries**. This division has often posed a problem for India. Individual countries cannot offer **bilateral market access** in exchange for **bilateral defence deals**.

– For example, the French will sell Rafale jets in the name of **strategic partnership** but they cannot offer a trade and investment deal to India.

The European Union is unlikely to settle a **free trade agreement (FTA)** for a “**tariff-only**” **trade agreement** having exclusion of labour, environment and social issues. The Europeans cannot isolate trade from some of the very relevant dimensions connected to trade. The Europeans constructed the EU as the EU Single Market project to deal with **external competition**.

– In short, even as **Europe worries about Russia**, and **India worries about China**, it is still not clear what the two can and would do for each other, despite all the talk about partnership across Eurasia and Indo-Pacific.

For India, it is not clear how much and what it can unilaterally offer Europe beyond the promise of standing up to China or reducing dependence on Russia. This alone cannot be the foundation of a new strategic partnership.

India's relations with these **continental European powers** have been shaped by the Cold War. Therefore, the revival of old East-West tensions will cast a shadow on India's relations with the European Union.

Way Forward

The EU and G7 can **de-risk**, if not **decouple**, from aggressively rising China in the economic space.

These middle powers like Brazil, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Africa and others can work together to combine their “**strength and stability**” to ensure “**peace and tranquillity**” in their respective neighbourhoods. It will further impose some discipline on the **three big powers** from recklessly and unilaterally setting the **global geopolitical and geo-economic agendas**.

India should continue to seek a **global environment conducive** to its own economic development. It should work to ensure the world acknowledges its **civilisational contribution** to humanity.

Individual European nations, especially Germany and France, focus on their **own strategic and business interests**, including **defence equipment** sales.

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Both sides should acquire a better understanding of each other's security concerns. For example, The EU is concerned about **Russian aggressiveness** in Europe. India is equally concerned about **Chinese aggressiveness** in Asia.

The "**Middle Powers**", countries like France, Germany and India should seek policy space for themselves and not be forced into taking positions by **the Big Powers** — the United States, China and Russia.

19. Green partners: India must integrate with EU's renewables supply chain, with access to its technology

Source: This post is based on the article "**Green partners: India must integrate with EU's renewables supply chain, with access to its technology**" published in **The Times of India** on **3rd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: India-EU relations, Indo-German relations

Context: The Prime Minister's visit to Germany, the first leg of his three-nation European tour, has , set the stage for an essential aspect of India's development pathway.

Following talks, India's foreign secretary identified the joint declaration of intent on green and sustainable development partnership as perhaps the most important one.

– Both countries will create a **Green Hydrogen Task Force** and Germany will support **India's green growth plans** with an additional development assistance of €10 billion by 2030.

What is the significance of these developments?

These developments need to be seen in a larger context.

The urgency of mitigating climate change is critical.

IPCC's report in 2021 said that the **global surface temperature was 1.09 degrees higher in 2011-20** than the 1850-1900 baseline. Its consequences are already evident.

India has contributed of cumulative greenhouse gas emissions between 1850 and 2017. However, with a **coastline of about 7,516 km and 17% of the world's population**, it is already at the front line of the fallout of climate change. Therefore, it's in India's interest to enhance the use of non-fossil fuel sources for incremental economic growth.

Achieving Net Zero: At the Glasgow summit India outlined a net-zero commitment by 2070 as India's overarching aim. It is to be realised through two interrelated steps by 2030 – **a)** India is to reduce its projected carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes and **b)** 50% of its energy needs are to be sourced through renewables. This is where India's goals tie in with the EU's vision.

Having set a net-zero target by 2050, the EU is in the midst of a transition to sourcing most of its energy needs from renewables. Denmark, for example, has already sourced about 32% of its energy consumption in 2020 from renewables.

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What is the long term potential of PM's three-nation tour?

Renewables represent a menu of energy options. In the EU, wind and water provide most of the renewable electricity. This is being complemented by solar.

Advances in R&D are opening up more options, which also allows countries to de-risk their sourcing of renewable energy.

It is in this context that India's PM three-nation tour holds significant long-term potential.

Way forward

India needs more than development assistance. It also has to be a part of the EU's renewables supply chain with access to technology. This trip will lay the foundation.

20. Europe is looming larger than ever in India's strategic calculus

Source: The post is based on an article "**Europe is looming larger than ever in India's strategic calculus**" published in the **Indian Express** on **3rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations; Bilateral and Multilateral Relations

Relevance: India-Europe Relations

News: Recently, the president of the **European Commission** visited India. Further, the Prime Minister of India is scheduled to visit Berlin, Copenhagen, and Paris in Europe. He will attend the 2nd **India-Nordic summit**. These visits signal a glimpse of **India's post-Russian strategic future** in Europe.

What are the driving forces?

The Western sanctions have been imposed on Russia. Therefore, Russia is **deepening** its **alliance** with China.

India is also working to boost up its bilateral partnerships with key European countries—Germany and France.

India-Germany Relations

Both countries have been facing various challenges coming from the **Chinese muscular foreign policy and assertion**.

Germany is striving to reduce its **exposure** to **Russian** and **Chinese markets**. Therefore, India is an attractive new destination for German capital. The **full potential** of the commercial relationship is still to be realised.

In fact, **Germany** is tied far more deeply to Russia than India. Germany's annual trade with Russia is about \$60 billion while India's is at \$10 bn. Further, Germany relies heavily on Russian natural gas. Therefore, Both India and Germany have been under pressure to **disentangle** from their Russian connection. In fact, both don't like the Western pressures to reduce ties with Russia.

India-Nordic Countries Relations

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In the last few years, Delhi has learnt that the **Nordic Five** — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden can contribute significantly to **India's development**. They have a combined **GDP greater** than that of Russia.

The **First India-Nordic Summit 2017** produced a **framework** for an **ambitious bilateral agenda** on **technological innovation** and **sustainable development**. It implies that India has acknowledged the Nordic region as one of the various sub-regions of Europe which is important for Indians.

India-France Relationship

Both countries laid the **foundation** for a **strong strategic partnership** in 2018. Both are concerned about the implications of the war in the **Indo-Pacific**. There is going to be the **next phase** in the **strategic partnership** between both the countries.

France is said to be **India's "new Russia"** i.e., India's most **important strategic partner** in the coming period. For example: (1) France defended **India's interests** in the **UNSC**, (2) Both are partnering in the **Indo-Pacific theatre**, and (3) France is a major supplier of advanced arms to India.

What are the challenges for India?

India's stand on the war in Ukraine and India's strategic ties to Moscow can cast shadow on India's relationship with all the European countries.

The Nordic world shares **frontiers** with **Russia** over land as well as in the waters of the Arctic. Therefore, apart from Denmark, Iceland, and Norway which are founding members of NATO, the other two members of the Nordic five Sweden and Finland are now rushing to end their long-standing neutral status and join NATO.

Way Forward

India-Europe

Indian PM's tour to Europe can give India a better appreciation of the new mood in Europe developed due to Russian aggression.

The **India-Europe Trade and Technology Council** was launched by the European Union. This is the EU's second such council after the US. It marks the new contours of **the EU's strategic partnership** with India

The PM can explore the emerging possibilities for **stronger cooperation** with key European countries.

The **Western Europe** has become an important element in **India's foreign** and **security policies**. The crisis in Ukraine has intensified the imperatives for deeper strategic cooperation between India and its European partners. This is because the crisis has shattered the regional order in Europe that emerged in 1991.

India-France

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France has developed a **political framework** for the **peaceful integration** of Russia into the European order. Both India and France can expand the **defence partnership**. France is critical in expanding domestic production of weapons in India. It can promote greater participation of private and foreign capital.

India-Nordic

Indian PM interactions with the Nordic leaders might help Delhi appreciate the deeply-held fears about Russia among Moscow's smaller neighbours. India wants to build on the unique bilateral **green strategic partnership** with Denmark.

INDIA – GERMANY RELATIONS

21. [A defining moment for Indo-German ties](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**A defining moment for Indo-German ties**” published in the **Indian Express** on **04th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations; Bilateral Relations

Relevance: Indo-Germany Relations

News: The Prime Minister of India is going to attend the **sixth Indo-German Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC)** in Berlin. The IGC is the only such format that India has with any country.

Important initiatives taken at the IGC

Both have signed a **Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI)** for establishing **the Green and Sustainable Development Partnership**. It will fund green projects in India under public, private and PPP models.

Both have concluded the **Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI)** on **Triangular Development Cooperation** for projects in third countries. This will provide avenues to work together in the Indo-Pacific, Africa and beyond.

The **JDI on migration and mobility** was an important step taken during this IGC. This will facilitate the movement of a **larger number of Indian students** and **Indian professionals** to Germany. This will lead to a larger **trade in services** and augment the efforts for **digital partnerships**.

The joint statement shows immense congruence and commonality on the UN, Afghanistan and terrorism.

What are the other areas of convergence of interest between both the countries?

Both India and Germany are reluctant players in the **anti-Russian movement**. Both search for strategic autonomy.

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The **Indo-Pacific Region** is strategically and economically important for both India and Germany. Therefore, Germany wants to engage with India as part of its fledgling **Indo-Pacific policy**.

Germans are wary of the Chinese role in world affairs. There are signs of its departure from China. This is poised to bring **business engagement** to India.

The German economy is facing the wrath of the **pandemic** and **sanctions** on Russia. Therefore, it requires new markets for trade and investment. India is an important partner in this regard due to its **sustained economic growth** and **market size**.

India and Germany have established a **green partnership** based on **trade, investment, technology, functional collaboration, skill development, and sustainability**. For example, Indo-German energy forum, environmental forum, partnership on urban mobility etc.

Convergence of Interests

Germany introduced the **Indo-German Education Partnership** in 2016. This provided a **New Passage to India**. It has provided opportunities to Indian students in Germany. For example, New IITs like IIT-Indore have engaged with several technical universities in Germany for joint programmes. The **Indo-German Science and Technology** Centre has made valuable contributions.

What are the challenges in bilateral ties?

Both **Germany** and **India** do not share relations of a **traditional strategic partnership**. It has not been established so far.

Way Forward

A **biennial ministerial forum** is being introduced under the **Indo-German Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC)**. It will provide “**high-level coordination and political direction to the Partnership**”. It will provide a **coordinated institutional mechanism**.

India and the EU have agreed to restart discussions on a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, and an **investment agreement**.

At IGC, India should focus on harnessing the **entrepreneurship** and **private sector** of both countries to take the **climate-friendly** achievement of SDGs forward.

Under the energy partnership, the **Green Hydrogen Task Force** has been established. It will develop a **Green Hydrogen Roadmap**. This will attempt to take R&D to the level of commercialisation.

A new period is reflecting **new priorities** in view of crises like the **pandemic**, the **economic downturn** and now, **Ukraine**.

22. Why Berlin Is A Key Partner For New Delhi

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why Berlin Is A Key Partner For New Delhi**” published in **The Times of India** on **2nd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: Indo-German relations, India’s foreign policy

News: Indian PM is in Berlin for the biennial Inter-Governmental Consultations. The IGC invitation was initiated by Germany during the Ukraine crisis, indicating the importance of India as a global partner.

This follows the visits of the UK prime minister and the European Commission president to India. The **Nordic Summit** will follow.

PM’s stop by Paris to meet the French president after a crucial election would be a good sign. India’s European policy seeking a multipolar world is in full swing.

What are the main features of Indo-German partnership?

India and Germany are **strategic partners**.

- The partnership mostly deals with **climate and sustainability issues**. There are **no traditional strategic elements** like space, nuclear, or defence partnerships. Nevertheless, there is a strategic aspect related to the revival of the partnership amid the Ukraine crisis and the reordering it brings.
- Germany and India are **supporters of globalisation**. Germany is the most reluctant in Europe to impose unilateral sanctions on Russia and on curbing engagement. It will suffer immense pain with the reduction in Russian energy supplies.
- **On Russia:** Germany and India agree that **Russia cannot be isolated**, remain engaged with it and insist it must play within the rules. **Maintaining a dialogue** is common to Berlin and New Delhi and this could form the basis of a viable political understanding.
- **On China:** With the Russian policy in bad shape, the China-cautious partners of German coalition Govt seek to deal with Beijing as a systemic rival. India does not want Russian action in Ukraine to distract from Chinese transgressions. A **commonality of view on the threat from China to the international order** is another aspect of the Indo-German strategic understanding.
- **On Green finance:** The Indo-German partnership has deepened its climate friendly agenda. More than **€1 billion annually** is committed by Germany for various green ideas, including solar power, electric mobility, smart cities and Namami Gange. An enhanced partnership on climate, green infrastructure, sustainability and development for the next decade will be the mainstay of the Indo-German strategic partnership.

Way forward

Given the success of the Indo-German environmental and energy partnership, it is time for India and Germany to take this model to other developing countries. Germany through the **Compact**

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for Africa, and India through the **India-Africa Forum Summit**, have dedicated African policies as well as an interest in Latin America.

- Replicating Indian development initiatives – some with German collaboration – in **Africa and Latin America** can be a major objective. This could initially promote green energy, training, women's empowerment and the achievement of SDGs.
- There is scope for **joint vaccine production**, for which Germany has committed funding for Africa, which is India's major market for pharmaceuticals and vaccines.
- The '**Achieving SDGs Together**' approach will perhaps be the motto of India and Germany ahead.

Germany needs to enhance its trade and investment with India. The recent visit of the German state secretary for economic cooperation and the brighter prospects for the India-EUFTA and investment agreements are encouraging.

- German companies are moving from their individual production approach to supply chain production lines. By **establishing regional or global manufacturing hubs in India**, they may utilise India's FTA with ASEAN and access to Africa to enhance exports from India.
- This could well be a **type of China +1 policy**. If this can be embedded in the German thinking, and used to wean Germany incrementally away from China, it will be a strategic boost to the Indo-German partnership.

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

23. [2nd India must make the most of the diplomatic attention it's receiving](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**India must make the most of the diplomatic attention it's receiving**" published in The Indian Express on **2nd May 22**.

Context: India witnessed a plethora of diplomatic activities in the past few days in light of the Raisina Dialogue, where representatives from Europe, and the West interacted with their Indian counterparts.

India's Quad partners the US, Japan, Australia, its partners in Europe and several ASEAN countries, see India as an **anchor that could help stabilise the present international situation**. They have a stake in India emerging as an influential power and are willing to contribute to that end. This is an opportunity that ought to be leveraged as part of a broader strategy to significantly advance India's long-term prospects.

It must be grasped.

[Should India downgrade its ties with Russia, and how have they developed over the years?](#)

No.

There are valid **legacy reasons for maintaining positive ties with Russia** just as some European countries have had to do.

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Present India-Russia relations are **not a continuation of the old Indo-Soviet ties**. That strategic partnership that helped India cope with the Cold War and the Chinese and Pakistani threats ended with the war and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Moscow no longer sees Beijing as its main security challenge, but for India, China became a bigger challenge.

India's economic and trade relationship with Russia has become **increasingly marginal**.

Prospects of a new energy partnership failed to materialise as for Russia, China emerged as a more proximate and attractive power.

Even the **defence hardware relationship has diminished progressively** as India has rightly tried to diversify its sources of supply.

Why India needs to rethink its Russia policy?

A key assumption in India's Russia policy has been that as a great power,

– **Moscow would be unlikely to accept a junior partnership with China;**

– And that it is China that was increasing its presence and influence in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, which Russia considers its “near neighbourhood” and security perimeter.

In the long run, **Russian and Chinese interests would not be aligned** and, therefore, India should maintain a close relationship with Moscow.

This was also the reason why India argued with the US and other western partners that they needed to be more accommodative of Russian interests so that it could distance itself from Beijing.

Even if the Ukraine war had not erupted, the February 4 **Sino-Russian Joint Declaration** should have led India to question the continuing validity of these assumptions.

The Sino-Russian commitment is to dismantle the existing Western-dominated international order, and estb a new order more aligned with their interests as major continental Eurasian powers. This new order is not the alternative which would enhance India's interests.

How India needs to shape its foreign policy engagement?

In a shifting geopolitical landscape, it is in India's interest to **remain engaged with Russia and China** as two leading powers in the world. Such engagement is important to ascertain how these powers are themselves adjusting to the changing geopolitical equations across the world.

Russia is already a seriously weakened power in a European order and will not be able to prevent Finland and Sweden from joining NATO.

The domestic politics of the **US** is unpredictable, and this **calls for caution**.

Europe will likely emerge as a more coherent and cohesive entity, anchored in German power, and playing a role more independent of the US until now. All the more reason why **India must deepen its all-round partnership with Europe**, build a shared vision of an altered geopolitical landscape and encourage Europe to play a greater role in the Indo-Pacific.

Way forward

The attention being paid to India reflects not what India is. but rather what India could become as one of the key architects of a new international order.

It is time to think strategically about India's place in a world which is in the midst of a historic transformation.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – Mob LYNCHING

MOB LYNCHING AND RELATED ISSUES

24. **Cowed down: On the need for strict anti-lynching laws**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Cowed down: On the need for strict anti-lynching laws**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **07th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Social Issues

Relevance: Mob Lynching

News: Recently, two tribal men were beaten to death in Seoni, Madhya Pradesh, on the suspicion that they were slaughtering cows.

Why mob lynching and aftermath incidents are disturbing?

These laws have led to a **stigmatisation of communities** such as Dalits, Muslims and tribals for their **dietary habits** and their **dependence** on **cattle products** for a livelihood. Therefore, the brunt of the mob violence has been borne by Muslims, Dalits and Tribal. For example, **Pehlu Khan murder** in April 2017 in Rajasthan.

The **priorities of the law enforcement agencies** are absurd. For example, the police department has stated that one of the dead men was involved in a “cow slaughter” in this case.

While implementing the cattle slaughter laws, the police fail to try and bring those involved in lynch mobs to justice.

The cattle slaughter laws seem to have been brought for **appeasement of majoritarian** impulses to garner political support instead of looking for **animal preservation**.

Judicial pronouncement related to anti-cattle slaughter laws?

In 2005, the **Supreme Court** had justified the total ban on cattle slaughter. The court interpreted the Articles 48, 48A, and 51(A) of the **directive principles of state policy** in the Constitution, that seeks to **preserve breeds** used in agriculture and **animal husbandry**, besides promoting compassion to animals.

The 1958 judgment had limited the ban only to “**useful**” **cattle** which are still engaged in **agriculture** and **husbandry**. Thus, stringent laws on cow slaughter were enacted.

Way Forward

The police should actively take action against the persons having alleged involvement.

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Four States (**Rajasthan, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Manipur**) have passed laws against lynching. These laws are under various stages of implementation with the Union government because lynching is not a crime under the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**.

The society should return to the rule of law in which such murderous acts do not go unpunished. It is time for a judicial rethink on legislation around cattle slaughter.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND RELATED ISSUES

25. **Invigorating the Ayush industry**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Invigorating the Ayush industry**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to health

Relevance: Cost effective healthcare via Ayush Ministry, traditional and integrative medicine

Context: The Ayush industry in India can provide cost-effective healthcare to people across States. It has all the ingredients of success, to co-exist with the modern health systems, as a choice-based system of traditional medicine.

The article lists out measures that can be implemented to reinvigorate the Ayush Ministry.

China’s example wrt its traditional medicine sector

The global market for herbal medicine was valued at **\$657.5 billion in 2020**. It is expected to grow to **\$746.9 billion** in 2022.

The Healthy China 2030 plan forecasts that the value of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) market may reach **\$737.9 billion** within China and globally by 2030.

The growth of the TCM industry in China is attributed to the **immense attention** the sector has received in the country.

– In 1982, the Constitution of China gave **full recognition to TCM**.

– Since 2009, there has been **continuous support for TCM in health policies**. China has focused upon developing quality infrastructure for TCM to co-exist with modern medicine under the same roof.

What has been the progress of the Indian Ayush sector over the years?

The Indian Ayush sector has grown by 17% between 2014 and 2020.

– Related segments such as **plant derivatives** grew by 21%, **plant extracts** by 14.7%, and **herbal plants** by 14.3% during the same period.

What measures have been taken in India to promote Ayush systems?

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In India, the **National Ayush Mission (NAM)** was launched in 2014 by the Department of Ayush, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, to promote Ayush systems and address the needs of the sector in a comprehensive way.

– **Objectives of NAM:** **a)** Providing cost-effective services, **b)** strengthening educational systems, **c)** quality control of drugs and **d)** sustainable availability of raw materials.

The industry is projected to reach **\$23.3 billion** in 2022, according to a Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), 2021, report. The Indian herbal medicine market is worth **\$18.1 billion**.

– Under the '**Medicinal Plants**' component of the NAM scheme (2015–16 to 2020–21), the cultivation of prioritised medicinal plants in identified clusters/zones is being supported. For the cultivation of plants, subsidies at 30%, 50% and 75% of the cultivation cost for 140 medicinal plants are being provided.

Further, last year it was announced that **medicinal plants will be cultivated on 75,000 hectares of land**.

The Ministry of Finance has also announced a **₹4000-crore package under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan** for the promotion of herbal cultivation.

Prime Minister laid the foundation of the **WHO-Global Centre for Traditional Medicine** in Jamnagar on April 19, 2022. This will be the first and only global outpost centre for traditional medicine across the world.

What is the way forward?

The Ayush sector requires a **multi-dimensional push**, ranging from initiatives at the institutional level, massive awareness and promotion of cultivation of medicinal plants by farmers, to trade-related interventions and quality focus measures.

Strengthen SMPBs: The National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) implements the medicinal plant component of Ayush through state bodies—State Medicinal Plant Boards (SMPBs).

– The **organisational structure of SMPBs needs to be strengthened**. They should have **experts** for conservation, cultivation, R&D, herbal garden etc.

On the trade front, **developing comprehensive databases** on Ayush trade, products and raw materials is needed.

Expansion of HS national lines to accommodate various features of traditional medicine and medicinal plant products based on existing requirements is required to provide more comprehensive trade data on Ayurvedic products. To date, most ISM (Indian System of Medicine) products, herbal products and medicinal plants products are not identified under specific HS (Harmonised system) codes.

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Integrative medicine: NITI Aayog has already constituted a committee and four working groups on integrative medicine, to provide deeper insights and recommendations in the areas of education, research, clinical practice and public health and administration.

Integration of Ayush systems into mainstream systems will certainly give wider acceptance for traditional systems of the country.

26. [On marital rape: The importance of consent](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**On marital rape: The importance of consent**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Social issues

Relevance: Regarding marital rape

Context: A split verdict in the Delhi High Court on the question of criminalising marital rape has reignited the controversy over legal protection for disregard of consent for sex within marriage.

[What has happened?](#)

Justice Rajiv Shakdher, who headed the Delhi HC Bench, **struck down as unconstitutional the exception to Section 375 of the IPC**, which says that intercourse by a man with his wife aged 18 or above is not rape even if it is without her consent

But, Justice C. Hari Shankar rejected the plea to criminalise marital rape pointing out that any change in the law has to be carried out by the legislature since it requires consideration of social, cultural and legal aspects.

[On what points did the judges differ with each other?](#)

Difference of opinion of the judges was on key points such as

- Difficulty in getting evidence
- The importance of consent
- Whether the state’s concerns about safeguarding the institution of marriage were valid, and
- if other laws against sexual violence protected married women, the issues involved may have to be ultimately adjudicated with the help of a third judge or a larger Bench of the High Court or the Supreme Court.

[What is the stance of the Central Govt on the issue?](#)

The Union government **has been opposing the removal of the marital rape exception**.

In 2016, it had rejected the concept of marital rape, saying it “**cannot be applied to the Indian context**” due to various reasons, not least because of the “mindset of society to treat marriage as a sacrament”.

However, in the final hearing, the Union government **did not take a stand** on the issue.

[What are the opinions of the Delhi HC Bench?](#)

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Justice Shakti Singh's opinion

- He says what is defined as rape in law should be labelled as such, irrespective of whether it occurs within or outside marriage.
- He finds that the marital exception violates equality before law, as well as deprives women of the right to trigger a prosecution for non-consensual sex. Besides, it also discriminates among women based on their marital status and robs them of sexual agency and autonomy.

Justice Hari Shankar's opinion

In contrast, Justice Hari Shankar's opinion, somewhat disconcertingly, de-emphasises the element of consent and highlights the importance of preserving the institution of marriage to such an extent that he holds that any legislation that keeps rape out of a marital relationship "is immune to interference".

Way forward

If marriage is regarded as a partnership between equals, an exception in a 162-year-old law should have had no place.

While there are other laws governing civil relationships that legitimise conjugal expectations, these cannot be seen as giving a free pass for violence within marriage, which is essentially what sex without consent is.

Whether the legislative route is more appropriate in making marital rape a criminal offence is a matter of detail.

What is important is that **sexual violence has no place in society**, and the institution of marriage is no exception.

MATERNAL HEALTH – ABORTION CARE AND RELATED ISSUES

27. Still a long way for termination as an unconditional right

Source: The post is based on an article "Still a long way for termination as an unconditional right" published in the "The Hindu" on 12th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector, Health Sector; Laws and policies; Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Medical Termination Law, Right to Abortion, Right to life etc.

News: Recently, the issue of abortion was in the news internationally. This **brings** into picture the legal status of abortions in India.

Legal Status of abortion in India

Under the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**, voluntarily causing (if not caused in a good faith) a woman to miscarry is an offence attracting a jail term of up to 3 years or fine or both.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act 1971 was enacted to legalise access to abortion in **certain circumstances**. It provided exceptions to the IPC provisions.

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In case of abortion in certain circumstances, the permission to terminate the pregnancy was sought from the judiciary. In various case, the courts had ruled that the **right of a pregnant woman** to decide on the **continuation** of her pregnancy is a part of her **right to health** and **right to life**. Therefore, right is **non-negotiable**.

Further, The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act 1971 was amended in 2021. It broadened the scope of the law.

Circumstances in which medical termination of pregnancy is allowed after amendment 2021

Grounds

- (1) If the continuation of the pregnancy involves a risk to the physical, mental health or life of the pregnant woman.
- (2) If the pregnancy is a result of rape or failure of contraceptive used to limit the number of children. The continuation of such a pregnancy can cause grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman.
- (3) If the continuation of the pregnancy can cause substantial risk to the infant child in the form of serious physical or mental abnormality.

Different Scenarios

The pregnancy can be terminated for any of the above reasons keeping into consideration the **gestational age** of the pregnancy. Further, the **medical opinion** of the medical practitioner registered under the MTP Act is also required.

- (1) Up to **20 weeks** of gestational age, opinion of a single registered medical practitioner.
- (2) From 20 weeks up to **24 weeks**, the opinion of **two registered medical practitioners** is required. This is applicable to women, either a survivor of sexual assault/rape or incest, minors, women with major physical disabilities, mentally-ill women, foetal malformation incompatible with life, change of marital status during the ongoing pregnancy, i.e., either widowhood or divorce, etc.
- (3) **Beyond 24 weeks**, the opinion of a **Medical Board** as set up in each State, as per the law, is required. The abortion can be permitted only on the ground of **foetal abnormalities**.
- (4) In exception to all that is stated above, the pregnancy can be terminated at any time by a **single registered medical practitioner** if necessary to **save the life** of the pregnant woman.

What are some associated issues?

The law does not acknowledge the right of a pregnant person to decide on the discontinuation of a pregnancy.

After **the right to privacy judgment**, it has been argued that the right of a pregnant person to continue a pregnancy or not has to be part of the **right to privacy** and **the right to life**. The amended law is not in sync with this judgment.

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The amended law is also not in sync with other central laws such as the laws on persons with disabilities, on mental health and on transgender persons, to name a few.

The amendments did not removed ambiguity between the MTP Act and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act or the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, to name a few.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

28. **How India is empowering women through policy**

Source: The post is based on an article “**How India is empowering women through policy**” published in the **Indian Express** on **10th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector, Education Sector

Relevance: Gender justice and gender egalitarianism

Context: The union government has brought into reality the maxim of **sarvajana hitaya, sarvajana sukhaya** (for the good of all, for the happiness of all), especially in the context of the women section of society.

Measures taken by the government

- The incumbent government has adopted a **system-wide gendered lens** to inform policy praxis.
- The government has worked to elevate the **social status** of women. Women have been recognised as the **head of the household** in the ration cards under the NFSA 2013, and to secure benefits under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).
- The **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** makes a household without any adult male members eligible for the scheme, removes the cap of five beneficiaries per family that penalised women in larger families and it extends substantial number of health benefits packages that are women-centric in nature.
- The government is challenging the **unequal status quo** and nurturing **nari shakti** by placing assets such as houses and LPGs in the hands of women.

How has the government worked in this direction?

The government has worked to bridge **gendered data deficits**. The **statistical architecture** of the nation has been rebuilt to **count women**. New gender sensitive data provided gender sensitive inputs in the **policy discourse** in India. This provides a **scaffolding** for **resource allocation** for policy-making.

First, the first nationwide **Time Use Survey (TUS)** 2019 has recognized the unpaid work of women devoted to caregiving and domestic services (7.2 hours a day) against the average Indian man’s 2.8 hours

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Second, the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** has undergone comprehensive, methodological renovation. Further, the NFHS-4 and 5 provided crucial information on nutrition, fertility, family planning, reproductive, maternal and child health and mortality parameters.

Third, the government has launched the **annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**. This encompasses timely **gender-disaggregated labour force statistics** such as Female Worker Population Ratio, Female Labour Force Participation Rate and Female Unemployment Rate etc.

Fourth, The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) collected data on **female foeticide** in 2014. Thereafter, the government launched **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign**.

Way Forward

Quantification is a step towards **resolution** and **rectification**. The government should continue to generate a plethora of **gender-disaggregated data**. This can be generated through either **implementation**-related statistics or through **surveys**. They would be used to inform or reform schemes.

The individuals and groups in academia, research and evaluation consultancies should conduct **audits** and **third-party assessments** of such data.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – CIVIL SERVICES

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF CIVIL SERVICES

29. **Actions that corrode the steel frame of India**

Source: The post is based on an article “Actions that corrode the steel frame of India” published in the “The Hindu” on 14th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 Role of Civil Services in Bureaucracy.

Relevance: Civil Services Reform

News: Recently, a group of retired civil servants’ known as the **Constitutional Conduct Group (CCG)** sent an ‘open letter’ to the Prime Minister. They appealed for an end to the politics of hate and violence against minorities, particularly Muslims. However, the allegations were rejected by another group of civil servants known as the **Concerned Citizens (CC)**.

These developments have brought in the debate on the conduct of Civil Servants.

How should the civil servants behave?

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel created **independent India’s civil services**. At that time, the administration worked with neutrality, and without favoritism.

The police and magistracy, judicial courts and other regulatory agencies (Not politicians) are **legally authorised** and **empowered** to take **preventive action** against potential troublemakers.

They are the real **enforcers** of the laws relating to criminal, economic and other offences, and maintain **public order**.

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Civil servants should work with **political neutrality**. They must have **independence** of thought and action. They should give **honest** and **objective** advice; and also speak truth to power.

In mature democracies, **public officials** are expected to discharge their **constitutional** and **legal responsibilities** with honesty, integrity and their own conscience.

India's **permanent civil service** with **political neutrality** is patterned on the **English constitutional model**. Therefore, India needs to learn a lesson from the **British Case**.

In Britain, a **career civil servant** investigated the case of flouting of lockdown regulations by the Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the Chancellor of Exchequer. The investigation found PM and FM guilty of violations of the lockdown regulations in force. The public and the political establishment accepted the integrity of the **investigation exercise**. Both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of Exchequer were penalized for the violation of regulations.

What are the issues in the civil services in India?

There has been a deterioration in standards of civil services since the **National Emergency** in 1975. There has been a decline in **adherence** to **political neutrality**. Now, there are **frequent allegations** that local officers take political sides in a conflict.

The politicians serve their **personal** and **party interests**, and ambitious officials work on the terms and conditions of **political masters**. This has led to a **dilution of standards** and creating a favorable condition for both **political** and **bureaucratic corruption**.

The politicians reward a **compliant bureaucrat** by offering **prized** and **lucrative assignments** to the bureaucrats. In case the bureaucrats do not follow the lines or diktats, the civil servants are **punished** and placed in an **inconvenient position**.

The protection and safeguards in Article 311 of the Constitution have been found to be inadequate.

Way Forward

B.R. Ambedkar advocated that **Constitutional morality** is not a natural sentiment, it has to be cultivated.

GS2 – POLITY – STATUTORY, REGULATORY AND QUASI JUDICIAL BODIES

ISSUES WITH REGULATORY BODIES

30. **Regulators don't need constitutional status**

Source: This post is based on the article "**Regulators don't need constitutional status**" published in **Business Standard** on **12th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Govt policies and interventions, Regulatory bodies

Relevance: Granting constitutional status to regulatory bodies in India

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Context: Should Indian regulatory agencies be given constitutional status? It is argued that Indian regulatory agencies are often unable to withstand political pressure from the elected government of the day, which affects the way they perform their functions.

So, granting them constitutional sanctity would “restore symmetry” between regulatory agencies and the elected government.

Though tempting, it’s still a weak argument.

Instead, provisions to secure **transparency and public accountability** will go a longer way in securing true independence for a regulator than conferring constitutional status on it.

What type of entities are given Constitutional status?

Mature constitutions cement the place of two types of entities in society.

First, those bodies that **make laws and must be elected** by the people. These bodies are hardwired into the Constitution to secure the people’s right to elect their representatives. **For instance:** Election of central and state legislature, their composition etc

Second, the Constitution fortifies institutions that are designed to **exercise checks and balances** on elected bodies and safeguard against majoritarian tendencies. **For instance**, it fortifies the position of the higher judiciary, the comptroller and auditor general’s office and the election commission, etc.

Why every apolitical body should not be granted Constitutional status?

Since Constitutions are (and should be) harder to amend than parliamentary law, granting permanence to every apolitical institution by hard-wiring it into the Constitution would make for a **bulky and potentially an easily amendable Constitution**.

Regulatory agencies do not comprise elected representatives of the people. In fact, many argue that they comprise technocratic elites who make regulations that have the binding effect of the law, license and regulate intermediating firms.

Credible commitment: When the government sets up a regulator, it cedes its sovereign powers to govern that area of the economy. By doing so, it signals its commitment (credible commitment) to policy stability. In fact, in a democracy, it is the legislature’s prerogative to decide whether to cede its sovereign power to regulate a sector, how much power to cede, and the constraints within which regulators must work. Since regulators exercise law-making and enforcement powers without having to ever face an election, making them accountable to the elected representatives is effectively the only way to hold them accountable to the people at all. This illustrates that they do not perform a function that should be hardwired in a Constitution.

No connection b/w achievement of its purpose and its legal status: A key argument for conferring constitutional status, specifically on the Reserve Bank of India, is to allow it to conduct monetary policy independently. The evidence to substantiate this claim is weak. **For instance:**

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Early findings of researchers at the Bank of England show no connection between a central bank's legal form and the achievement of its public purpose (Bholat and Gutierrez, 2019).

[What is the alternative to secure independence of regulatory bodies?](#)

In the absence of constitutional hardwiring, how “independent” are regulators set up under laws passed by parliament? The answer is that it depends on the **terms of the law setting up the regulator**. Following steps must be ensured:

- **Fair contract terms** for these agencies under their governing law
- Aligning the incentives of the persons heading the regulatory agencies with **public interest** and
- Requiring them to **consistently explain their actions to the public**. Transparency of conduct is one of the most effective ways of incentivising the agency to act in the public interest. **For instance:** Provisions built into the Reserve Bank of India Act in 2015, require the regular publication of the minutes of the monetary policy committee's meetings. This is a powerful provision that simultaneously secures independence and accountability, as it would be hard to explain decisions and votes that do not align with public interest.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

ISSUES RELATED TO PUBLIC HEALTH

31. The India hypertension control initiative

Source: This post is based on the article “**The India hypertension control initiative**” published in **The Hindu** on **13th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to Health

Relevance: Prevalence of Hypertension in India

News: A project called the India Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI) finds that nearly 23% out of 2.1 million Indians have uncontrolled blood pressure.

[What is Hypertension?](#)

Hypertension was defined as having systolic blood pressure level greater than or equal to **140 mmHg** or diastolic blood pressure level greater than or equal to **90 mmHg** or/and taking anti-hypertensive medication to lower his/her blood pressure.

[What is the IHCI?](#)

Recognising that hypertension is a serious, and growing, health issue in India, the Health Ministry, the Indian Council of Medical Research, State Governments, and WHO-India began a five-year initiative to monitor and treat hypertension.

India has committed to a “**25 by 25**” goal, which aims to reduce **premature mortality** due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by 25% by 2025.

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– One of the nine voluntary targets includes **reducing the prevalence of high blood pressure by 25% by 2025.**

The programme was launched in November 2017.

What has the IHCI found so far?

Its most important discovery so far is that nearly **one-fourth of (23%) patients under the programme had uncontrolled blood pressure**, and 27% did not return for a follow-up in the first quarter of 2021.

There were an estimated **20 crore adults with hypertension** in the country.

To achieve India's target of a 25% relative reduction in the prevalence of raised blood pressure, approximately 4.5 crore additional people with hypertension need to get their blood pressure under control by 2025.

How prevalent is the problem of hypertension?

Southern States have a higher prevalence of hypertension than the national average, according to the latest edition of the National Family Health Survey.

While 21.3% of women and 24% of men aged above 15 have hypertension in the country, the **prevalence is the highest in Kerala** where 32.8% men and 30.9% women have been diagnosed with hypertension.

Kerala is followed by Telangana where the prevalence is 31.4% in men and 26.1% in women.

The **prevalence of hypertension is higher among Sikhs** (37% for men and 31% for women), Jains (30% for men and 25% for women), and Christians (29% for men and 26% for women) than the rest.

COVID PANDEMIC – PANDEMIC MORTALITY DATA

32. Don't play politics with Covid death numbers, let's learn from them

Source: The post is based on an article "Don't play politics with Covid death numbers, let's learn from them" published in the Indian Express on 14th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 Governance

Relevance: Covid Excess Death, Public Data, Evidence-Based Planning, etc.

News: Recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has attempted to measure the cost of the Covid-19 pandemic across the world. This has been done through the estimation of **excess deaths**.

What is the excess death measure?

Registered deaths during the pandemic are compared to an average of registered deaths before the pandemic (baseline estimates) to produce estimates of excess deaths.

India's institutional arrangement for birth and death registration that have been used for estimating excess death

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The Civil Registration System (CRS) is the repository of all registered births and deaths in the country at the national, state, and district levels.

The provisions of the **Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1969** require every death to be registered within 21 days of the event.

Another source of data used to estimate excess deaths in the **household survey**, such as the **CVoter tracker survey**.

What were the issues in the estimation of excess death in India?

(A) Infrastructural issues

Unlike developed countries, the developing countries including India lack adequate **birth and death registration infrastructure**. This led to the generation of unreliable data which lead to **imprecise and speculative estimation of excess deaths**.

Even before the pandemic, India did not have an **infrastructure** for collecting **real-time** robust death data.

(B) CRS: The careful research of the death data from CRS has repeatedly revealed serious shortcomings, as given below:

The **baseline estimates of death** from the CRS are not a reliable source of death. There has been underreporting of the number of dead in the **pre-pandemic period** (example for 2019). For instance, the overall death registration in the CRS was 92% of the overall deaths estimated by the Sample Registration System (SRS).

Furthermore, when data is **disaggregated on other parameters** like gender, age, etc. the report becomes more unreliable.

The CRS death data for the pre-pandemic period were used as the baseline without adjusting for age, gender, and location. This would lead to exaggerated numbers of excess deaths.

In fact, the registration level in the CRS has **not** been **uniform** over the earlier years. It ranged from 75% in 2015 to 85% in 2018.

(B) Issues in Household Survey

The primary purpose of the survey is to track perceptions of governance, media, and other social indicators, not to collect death data from households. The CVoter tracker survey covers only **0.14 million adults**. And the **self-reported data** on death numbers gathered from telephonic surveys has **no on-field verification**.

Other issues

A reliable source of death data in India is the **Sample Registration System (SRS)**. Unfortunately, the SRS survey was not carried out during the pandemic.

In addition, media coverage and overall fear and interest levels during waves of the pandemic led to varying responses from people. The lack of accurate data on deaths has led to intense speculation and politicization.

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The Way Forward

The **Sample Registration System (SRS)** should be conducted soon. No matter how sophisticated the statistical methodology, there is no substitute for high quality data.

The pandemic has provided a **window of opportunity** to invest heavily in **building a robust and reliable infrastructure** that collects timely data on vital statistics, such as births, deaths and migrations.

This project should be given **national importance** and an urgent priority as such an infrastructure would become the cornerstone of public health in India. The central and state governments must **cooperate**.

33. WHO's Methodology Has Been Robust'

Source: The post is based on an article "**WHO's Methodology Has Been Robust**" published in the on **13th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to Health

Relevance: Civil Registration System, Sample Registration System, Mortality Data

News: Recently, the World Health Organisation estimated the excess mortality caused by the pandemic

What is the scope of WHO's estimate?

WHO is measuring the excess mortality to understand the net effect of a pandemic.

Here, excess mortality means the difference between what would have been expected to be the mortality if there had been no pandemic as compared to the actual mortality occurring which include covid deaths, deaths due to the disruption of other essential health services and worsening of social determinants like poverty.

India's institutional measures for recording death

The Civil Registration System (CRS): It is organised by the **Registrar General of India (RGI)**, and is uniformly operated across India. The states are required to implement it, and they don't have any flexibility.

Issues in CRS: This system faces a number of issues. The death registration in CRS is weak. In fact, the certification of cause of death is as low as 21%.

India's Sample Registration System (SRS):

It is implemented by RGI to overcome weaknesses in CRS and get a better sense of mortality in India. Therefore, people are sent to survey villages, to verify death registration, search for missing deaths and explore causation. By convention, it is considered to be the **gold standard** for mortality.

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Issues: India's Sample Registration System (SRS) is the main source of mortality data. However, SRS usually comes out after a **two-year lag**. Therefore, unfortunately, SRS data is not available for 2020 and 2021.

What are the issues in the estimation of excess mortality?

As per **SRS** and **CRS report** in 2019, Only 13 states and 4 UTs recorded 100% reporting which did not include large and populous states. Therefore, we cannot rely upon the death reporting done during covid when there was so much disruption.

Another important issue is that the Covid deaths were collected through a **parallel system** (collected directly from district administrators reporting it from laboratories and from hospitals), not through the civil registration and vital statistics system. Therefore, they had no **cross-reference** with the rest of the system. Like CRS and SRS.

Why WHO approach and its estimation about the bulk of the excess deaths in 2021 is correct?

There are numerous **direct** and **indirect** effects of using the **excess mortality** indicator. For example, it helps to take into account mortality which occurs due to indirect causes. Therefore, **the WHO's methodology** has been robust. If anything, it's an underestimate.

The WHO has used death data from those states which have put the death data in the public domain. Thereafter, WHO has extrapolated the data for the whole country.

WHO's numbers are in sync with at least **five other studies**. They have all come to similar conclusions.

Way Forward

Government should release its **own estimate** of excess mortality data as soon as possible. The data should not remain confined to the government itself.

The best way to validate it is to **triangulate** it across **different methods**. That holds out the validity of WHO's study

34. The bitter dispute over India's pandemic mortality

Source: This post is based on the article "**The bitter dispute over India's pandemic mortality**" published in **The Hindu** on **12th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to Health

Relevance: Data about COVID pandemic mortality in India

News: How many people died in India as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? This question has become the subject of a heated argument after the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated India's pandemic excess deaths at around 4.7 million.

The Government of India issued a strongly worded response, while media houses and editors also jumped in.

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What are some factors that need to be considered?

Precisely how many excess deaths occurred in India during the novel coronavirus pandemic will never be known.

All mortality studies, including the latest from WHO, involve choices about what data to include, how to fill gaps, and how to deal with uncertainty; there is always room for debate and disagreement about these choices.

Also, all the **estimates come with uncertainty and depend on choices**. For example, the WHO estimate drops from 4.7 million to 4.4 million if we consider the pandemic period to span April 2020-July 2021 rather than January 2020-December 2021.

Uncertainty does not mean total ignorance: even the most optimistic reading of the data puts excess deaths at six or seven times official COVID-19 deaths.

How has the Govt responded to such studies?

Several studies, most putting India's pandemic excess deaths at between three and five million, have been met by strident Government "rebuttals".

These rebuttals have highlighted the uncertainties (which is valid), and then jumped — without justification — to claiming that there are no excess deaths beyond recorded COVID-19 deaths.

What are the implications of the Govt's stance and the issues with it?

In its response to the latest WHO study, the Govt has said – "*India strongly objects to the use of mathematical models for projecting excess mortality estimates in view of the availability of authentic data*".

The "authentic data" in question is mortality data from the **Civil Registration System (CRS)**, and there are two implications:

- CRS data has been ignored by the researchers;
- CRS data does not support estimates of high pandemic mortality.

Both are wrong.

Issues

– Estimates of pandemic mortality, including those of WHO, are largely data-driven, and the main data-source is the CRS. This data strongly supports estimates of high pandemic mortality.

– The "modelling" that the Government objects to is largely simple data analysis and techniques for filling gaps in the data, entirely unavoidable if we are to use CRS data to estimate excess mortality.

Can a huge mortality surge be explained via increased registration coverage?

It is possible that in some States, registration coverage improved during the pandemic. But, overall, registration probably dropped during 2020.

Data from the Government's latest National Family Health Survey suggests that deaths that occurred in 2020 were less likely to be registered than deaths in 2019. Birth registration data

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from the CRS points in the same direction: after increasing by 5% during 2017-18 and 7% during 2018-19, birth registrations fell by 2.5% in 2020.

Way forward

The current state of affairs highlights both the value of India's CRS data, and the need to strengthen the CRS.

HEALTH SURVEYS, REPORTS – FINDINGS AND ISSUES

35. [Measuring the change: On socio-economic surveys](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Measuring the change: On socio-economic surveys**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to health

Relevance: Health surveys in India

Context: Findings of the [5th edition of the National Family Health Survey](#) were made public last year, providing some key insights into changes underway in Indian society.

India should invest more to enhance the reliability of various socio-economic surveys.

[What are some key findings of the NFHS 5?](#)

Findings of the survey throw light on traditional parameters, for instance immunisation among children, births in registered hospital facilities, and nutritional levels. While there is a general improvement in these parameters, there were mixed signals in nutrition.

- **Gains in childhood nutrition** were minimal, as were improvements in obesity levels.
- The **prevalence of anaemia** has actually worsened since the last survey in 2015-16.
- **Decline in TFR:** When highlights were made public last year, the focus was on India's declining total fertility rate that had, for the first time in the country's history, dipped to below the replacement level, or a TFR (Total Fertility Rate) of 2.1.

- If the trend were to persist, **India's population was on the decline** in line with what has been observed in developed countries, and theoretically means improved living standards per capita and greater gender equity.
- Because this TFR had been achieved across most States, it was also evidence that **population decline could be achieved without coercive state policies** and family planning has struck deep roots. The more detailed findings, made public last week, suggest that this decline is **agnostic to religion**.

The fertility rate among Muslims dipped to 2.3 in 2019-2021 from 2.6 in 2015-16, the sharpest among all religious communities when compared to the 4.4 in NFHS 1 in 1992-93.

- **Gender equity:** Another set of subjective questions that the NFHS attempts to answer using hard data is gender equity.

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- Less than a third of married women are working and nearly 44% do not have the freedom to go to the market alone. However, a little over 80% have said that they can refuse demands for sex from their husband. This has **implications for legal questions surrounding marital rape.**
- Only 72% of Indian men think it is not right to coerce, threaten or use force on a woman if denied sex, which again points to the vast territory that needs to be covered in **educating men about equality, choice and freedom in marriage.** This question made it for the first time in the family health survey, as did another question, about the number of registered births and deaths, in the family survey.

Way forward

Multiple surveys such as the NFHS, Sample Registration Surveys, the Census, labour, economic surveys and ways of interrogation are necessary for insights about a country as vast and complex as India; the Centre should invest more substantially in improving their reliability.

JUNK FOOD, HEALTH RATING AND RELATED ISSUES

36. [This food regulator needs to step up to the plate](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**This food regulator needs to step up to the plate**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th May 22.**

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

Relevance: Draft regulation for labels on front of food packets

Context: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is expected to issue a draft regulation for labels on front of food packets that will inform consumers if a product is high in salt, sugar and fat. It is expected to propose a system under which stars will be assigned to a product.

The draft regulation is based on a study commissioned by the FSSAI and conducted by IIM-Ahmedabad.

As per this article, the study has many methodological errors. Hence, the FSSAI cannot go ahead with a draft regulation based on a **highly contested study design** and whose **findings are not yet peer reviewed.**

Its decision to stick to a Health Star Rating based on an algorithm known to the food industry only, as a front of pack labelling, is without sound logic or evidence.

What are the associated concerns?

We need to **reduce the production, the marketing and the availability** of such unhealthy foods.

– Even if available, we need to change consumer behaviour in purchasing such processed food by due warning of their contents using the labels on the packets.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued a threshold for sugar, salt, fat, and calories per 100 grams of processed food packaged or 100 ml of liquid beverages bottled. Unless we generate competing technical data for the Indian population, **we have to abide by WHO norms.**

– We **cannot relax thresholds to suit the industry**, but industry must alter its composition to healthy limits. The FSSAI must ensure that.

Any order or guideline issued in public interest must be **mandatory from day one**. We cannot have the flexibility of voluntary adoption and staggered implementation.

No one denies that the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad is an institute of repute, but so are many others which were not invited or given a chance to bid for such a large expensive study.

On Front of the Package labelling: The participants of the study must have the capacity to objectively evaluate the various formats of FOPL based on the information content. They must have the ability to compare and identify least harmful, or identify higher content than recommended. Opinion of the consumer, who is not knowledgeable or illiterate, is pointless.

– The authors admit in this study that 13.8% of respondents have not had schooling at all or are illiterate, while 28%-35% of respondents are those who never read food labels. Therefore, they should have been excluded from making a relative comparison between labels in this study.

Missing data: The exclusion of young adolescent children aged 10-18 years — who are big consumers of packaged biscuits chips and bottled soft drinks — from the study is a big methodological error. It is a case of significant missing data.

GS2 – POLITY – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

SEDITION LAW IN INDIA

37. **Why the sedition law must go**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Why sedition law must go?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **13th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Sedition Law Versus Fundamental Right of the freedom of speech and expressions

News: Most recently, the Supreme Court directed the Union government and the states to refrain from using the law of sedition. In addition, the Supreme Court has also kept all previous cases under Section 124A of the IPC in abeyance till the matter is reconsidered in a comprehensive way.

Argument against the Sedition law

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The **colonial government** used the law of sedition liberally to **curb free speech**. However, the section on sedition was retained after independence and has been used on the same pattern so far.

In the Constituent Assembly, **B R Ambedkar** passionately argued that **liberty, equality and fraternity** should become the principles of our democratic lives.

The Section 124A of the IPC, has acted as a constraint on the exercise of the **freedom of speech and expression** which is enshrined as a **guaranteed fundamental right** in **Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution**. In fact, dissent, criticism and differences of opinion are vital for the functioning of any democracy. But the governments have used sedition to suppress and quell political dissent.

The Section 124A of the IPC has often been invoked with the aim to create an atmosphere of fear and servility against the dissenters. For example, it is used against **politicians, political activists, human rights activists**, civil rights workers and advocacy groups who dared question the government's stand.

The **NRCB data** exposes the untenability of Section 124A or UAPA. Most cases are disposed of at the police level by **withdrawing** the case or submitting a chargesheet in the court. In courts, there is an **abysmally low rate of conviction** and the cases are disposed of without conviction. It means the sedition charges are slapped in **flimsy nature** or are used to **intimidate** or harass those who question the government's fiat.

The law endangers our **fundamental constitutional values**. For example, the pendency rate in court remained 95%. This indicates **harassment** and **violation** of the **right to life and liberty** for a great number of people who are suffering because of the diabolical prison conditions in India.

The Law Commission of India in its "**consultation paper on sedition**" found many issues that need addressing around the working of Section 124A.

Way Forward

A Private Member's Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in 2011 to abolish Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code.

In order to improve the **democratic foundations** of our country, there must not be any space for sedition. The progressive citizens of India have been constantly asking for the **repealing** of the sedition law.

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38. Centre's plan to relook at sedition law is welcome but Supreme Court must take the review process to its logical conclusion

Source: The post is based on an article “**Centre's plan to relook at sedition law is welcome but Supreme Court must take the review process to its logical conclusion**” published in the **Indian Express** on **10th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Freedom of Speech and Express; Sedition Law

News: The government has expressed its views to shed colonial baggage after 75 years since independence, and has told the Supreme Court that it would re-examine the provision.

About Sedition law

The provision (Section 124A) of the Indian Penal Code was incorporated in its current form in the penal code (IPC) in 1898, nearly four decades after the IPC was introduced.

It defines the offence of “sedition” as exciting “disaffection” against the government established by law, or bringing it into “hatred or contempt” and penalises such an action.

The punishment prescribed ranges from **life imprisonment** with an **added fine** or an **additional jail term of three years**.

Constitutionality of Section 124A of the IPC

First, **the Punjab High court** and **the Allahabad high court** struck down the sedition law as an exception to free speech in the 1950s,

Second, the Supreme Court in **Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar (1962)** upheld its constitutionality. The SC said not all speech with “disaffection”, “hatred,” or “contempt” against the state are seditious. The speech that is likely to incite “**public disorder**” would qualify as sedition.

Argument against

The sedition law became obsolete in **the UK** in the 1960s and was finally repealed in 2009. In fact, **Singapore**, which like India inherited **colonial English law**, has also repealed the sedition law.

In fact, **the Law Commission** and **the Supreme Court** in their **successive reports** have reported the **rampant misuse** of the law. For example, the provision has been invoked against comedians, journalists and ordinary citizens who expressed their **dissatisfaction** with the government.

Way Forward

The **Supreme Court** has decided to **revisit** the **constitutional validity** of the sedition law which is a colonial provision.

The **Home Ministry** asked the SC to defer the hearing for now till a “**competent forum**”, presumably Parliament, **deliberates** on the issue of sedition law.

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The **authority** to identify and distinguish **genuine expression of speech** from **sedition speech** should not be left to the police

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIAN DIASPORA

INDIAN DIASPORA AND RELATED ISSUES

39. **The importance of emigrants**

Source: The post is based on an article “**The importance of emigrants**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **10th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: Indian diaspora

News: Recently, the Indian government proposed a **new Emigration Bill in 2021**. The bill will provide a **comprehensive data** set for the **efficient management** of Indian migrants. It proposes to integrate **emigration management** and streamline the **welfare** of Indian emigrant workers.

Provisions of the Emigration Bill

The bill proposes to modify the system of **Emigration Check Required (ECR) category** of workers applying for migration to 18 notified countries.

The Bill makes it mandatory for **all categories of workers** to register before departure to any country in the world to ensure better protection for them, support and safeguard in case of vulnerabilities.

The bill proposes to establish the **Emigration Management Authority**, an **overarching authority** to provide policy guidance.

It aims to improve the **protection measures** through registration of all emigrants, skill upgradation and training, and pre-departure orientation. For example, skilling of migrant workers, foreign language training etc. can be of great help for workers.

Besides workers, the Bill will also cover students (about 0.5 million students) who migrate for education.

Status of Indian Emigrants

Every year, about 2.5 million workers from India move to different parts of the world on employment visas.

According to the **Ministry of External Affairs**, there are over 13.4 million NRI worldwide. Around 64% of NRI live in **the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** countries, the highest being in the UAE, followed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Almost 90% of the Indian migrants living in GCC countries are low- and semi-skilled workers.

Other significant countries of destination for overseas Indians are the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and Canada.

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Importance of the Indian Diaspora for the host countries

The **skilled** and **semi-skilled Indian migrants** are involved in nation-building of the destination countries. For example, various Indian-origin executives have become CEOs of top U.S. companies. This highlights the contribution of Indian talent to the U.S. economy.

In addition, Indian **semi-skilled migrant labourers** have also contributed a lot in the global economy.

Importance of the Indian Diaspora for India

High remittances: As per a **World Bank Group report (2021)**, India receives the highest annual remittances in the world (\$87 billion), followed by China (\$53 billion) among others. Remittances in India have been substantially higher than even **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**.

Socioeconomic development: According to a report by the **National Statistical Office**, urban and rural households **receiving remittances** have 23% better financial capacity than **non-remittance-receiving households**.

NRIs can provide **hedging** against **unsystematic risks**. For example, after the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, overseas Nepalese increased their remittances. This provided vital support to the domestic economy after a shock.

Way Forward

The government should look into increasing remittances to **10% of GDP** and adopting **Philippines' model** of promoting labour mobility.

The **cost of recruitment** of such workers and the **cost of sending remittances** back to India should come down.

The reduction of informal/undocumented migration, formalising all remittances, safety and well-being of migrant labour should be the top priority of the Indian government. It can be done by regulating the recruitment agencies through information technology.

An integrated grievance redressal portal, **'Madad'** was launched by the Union government in 2015.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

INDIA-GERMANY RELATIONS

40. [A democratic and strategic dissonance in India-German ties](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **“A democratic and strategic dissonance in India-German ties”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **10th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: Indo-Germany bilateral relations

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

News: Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited three European nations Europe at a critical time, shaped by the ongoing **Ukraine** war.

India also attended the **sixth biennial India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC)**. This was of critical importance for **'long-standing bilateral commercial ties** and the **'Strategic Partnership** between India and Germany.

Convergence of interests

The **assertive China** is being visible on the world stage and in particular, at the border with India, New Delhi. This **geopolitical factor** of the rise of China particularly in the Indo-Pacific seems the most **compelling necessity** to come together.

On the lines of India-Russia defence ties, European countries have significant reliance on Russian gas and crude.

In fact, Germany is also reaching out to other **Asian powers** and building on democratic alliances as an outcome of its **Indo-Pacific guidelines**. It means Germany wants to reap **democratic dividends** that may lead to a convergence of views and possibly policies on Russia between the two countries.

There is a convergence of issues of economics, technology and climate change between India and Germany. These are low hanging fruits.

Issues in India-Germany relationship

India's position on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, abstention on critical votes on the war and continued economic engagement like cheap crude import has attracted criticism from the West. The convergence of interests to protect democratic values is not a **strong binding chord** between India and Germany. For example, India has adopted **pragmatism** on dealing with **Myanmar's junta**.

One of the factors that prevented the realization of the full potential in the bilateral relations between both the countries is the **lack of understanding** of each **other's strategic cultures** and **domestic politics**.

What was the reason the Indian PM visited Europe in general and Germany in particular?

Despite India's position on Russian invasion of Ukraine, India wants to continue its **bilateral engagement** with European countries such as **Germany, France** and **Denmark**. The purpose is to portray India as a **swing power** that can move deftly on the **geopolitical** and **diplomatic chessboard**.

India insists that its position on the war is **non-partisan** and should be appreciated by its **allies** and **friends**.

Way Forward

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India has to bring in **more nuance** to its approach with Europe. India should work to prevent any isolation by the West. India needs to manage a delicate **balancing act**. India should be able to assert its right to pursue its **national interests** and **strategic autonomy** in foreign policy.

Despite India's stand on Russia, Europe cannot overlook India's role as a major power and largest democracy in the world. For example, European countries expect India to amend its position on Russia and join hands with the European countries and the U.S.

Germany's invitation to India in the **G-7 meeting points** to the **emerging multipolarity** in the international system. The major powers such as Germany and India can play a greater role in bringing **peace** and **stability** in other theatres, particularly in **Afghanistan** and **the Indo-Pacific**.

In times of **shifting geopolitical alliances** and **realignments**, India and Germany can emerge as important poles in shaping the **new world order**.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

ISSUES WITH THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

41. **India's judiciary and the slackening cog of trust**

Source: The post is based on an article “**India's judiciary and the slackening cog of trust**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **09th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Functioning of Indian Judiciary

Relevance: Judicial Transparency and Accountability; and Judicial reforms

News: There has been the **erosion of trust** in the **lower judiciary** comprising **high courts**, and **district** and **sessions courts**. This makes it imperative to look into the **functioning** of lower judiciary in India.

About Justice

(1) **Substantive justice:** It is associated with whether the statutes, case law and unwritten legal principles are morally justified (e.g., freedom to pursue any religion). For example, **the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019** is alleged to be violative of the constitution, thus is a violation of substantive justice.

(2) **procedural justice:** It is associated with **fair and impartial decision procedures**. The case of Lal Bihari, who was officially declared dead but struggled for 9 years to prove that he was alive, involved violation of substantive and procedural justice.

What are the issues in the lower level of Indian judiciary?

(A) judicial corruption

(1) **political interference** in the judicial process by the legislative or executive branch, as refusal to comply can lead to **political retaliation**, and

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(2) **bribery**: it can occur throughout the chain of the judicial process including delaying or accelerating verdicts, accepting or denying appeals, or simply to decide a case in a certain way. For example, lawyers can charge additional “fees” to expedite or delay cases.

(B) Severe backlogging: According to **the National Judicial Data Grid**, there are 2.4Cr pending cases in India’s district courts. Out of the total, 23lakh cases have been pending for over 10 years, and 39lakh cases have been pending for between five and 10 years.

(C) Understaffing: In the subordinate courts, 4,432 posts (or 22% against sanctioned strength) of judicial officers were vacant (as of December 31, 2015). In the case of the High Courts, 458 (or 42% of the sanctioned strength) were vacant as of June 2016.

Some reports about judicial corruption

According to **Transparency International** (TI 2011), around 45% of people between 2009-2010 paid a bribe to the judiciary for quick disposal of case related to divorce, bail, and other procedures.

According to the **Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)**, a person spent at least ₹ 1,000 as bribes in bringing a petition to the court.

According to the “**Freedom in the World 2016 report**”, “India’s lower judiciary has been rife with corruption”.

According to **the GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal report 2017**, “there is a high risk of corruption at the lower court levels. Bribes and irregular payments are often exchanged in return for favourable court decisions”. For example, Tis Hazari District Court Senior Civil Judge was arrested for allegedly accepting a bribe to rule in favour of a complainant in a case.

What are the impacts of judicial corruption?

Such kind of corruption induced incidents in the lower level of judiciary lead to **erosion of public trust**. The erosion of trust in the judiciary could severely imperil governance.

The lack of justice delivery is bound to promote proclivity to deliver instant justice, extra-judicial killings, exercise of extra-constitutional authority, widespread corruption, and **unprovoked and brutal violence** against some sections of society (e.g., lynching of innocent cattle traders).

Judicial corruption leads to failure of **procedural justice** and to some extent **substantive justice**.

Way Forward

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle said, “It is in justice that the ordering of society is centred.”

The trust in the judiciary is positively and significantly related to the share of undertrials for three to five years under total prisoners. Therefore, the share of undertrials must be increased in India.

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC)

42. [How to make a Uniform Civil Code](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**How to make a uniform civil code**” published in the **Indian Express** on **14th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Uniform Civil Code (Article 44)

News: Recently, a number of state governments have proposed to frame a **Uniform Civil Code** for their states.

Step taken towards UCC in India So Far

Parliament enacted a **civil marriage law in 1954, the Special Marriage Act** and the **Indian Succession Act**. These enactments were made available to all citizens of India as a **secular alternative**. Thus, these acts together constitute a UCC of an optional nature for all Indians alike.

In addition, the Parliament also enacted a new law called the **Hindu Marriage Act** in 1955 to regulate **religious marriages** among the Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. Further, A Hindu Succession Act came into force next year for the properties of those covered by the **Hindu Marriage Act 1955**.

The people of **Goa, Daman, and Diu** are governed by an archaic **Portuguese Civil Code of 1867**. A sizable section of citizens called **Renoncants** (Indians whose ancestors had during the French rule abandoned personal law) in **Puducherry** are governed by the **218-year-old French Civil Code of 1804**.

What are the issues in the central personal laws?

The Special Marriage Act is **patently discriminatory** in certain matters. It mentions the **prohibited degree of marriage** between **close relatives** (like the Hindu Marriage Act). Further, the Act does not prohibit marriages between **distant cousins** (i.e., **sapinda relationship**). Thus, an act, allows a Hindu to marry a second cousin despite **religious prohibition**, but a Muslim is debarred to marry a first cousin despite **religious permission**.

In fact, the Hindu Marriage Act relaxes the **rule of prohibited degrees** on the basis of custom but not under the Special Marriage Act.

During the **Emergency days**, the **Special Marriage (Amendment) Act** allowed both parties' (if Hindu) properties to be governed by the Hindu Succession Act instead of the Indian Succession Act. This was a **retrograde step**.

What are the issues in proposals for the state-level uniform civil code laws?

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A state-level UCC seems to be prima facie incompatible with Article 44 of the Constitution. The article advocates to secure a uniform civil code for the citizens **throughout the territory of India**. The proposal can overlook all-India characters.

Under the Constitution, **family** and **succession laws** are in the **concurrent jurisdiction** of the Centre and states. Therefore, law applicable in the entire country can be enacted by Parliament alone.

Argument in favour of the state proposals

The **anachronistic foreign laws** are still applicable on Indian citizens in certain parts of the country. Therefore, such a code can be enacted at the state-level.

The Way Forward

There should be a **single law of family rights** and **succession** for the entire country. The law should be in compliance with the constitutional guarantees for equality before the law and equal protection of laws

The parliament should amend the **discriminatory provisions** of the Special Marriage Act relating to prohibited degrees in marriage. In addition, the 1976 amendment restricting the applicability of the Indian Succession Act must be set aside.

To start, the parliament can **repeal** and **replace** the **archaic foreign civil code** prevalent in Goa, Daman Diu, and Puducherry with the central marriage and succession laws. This will be a logical move in beginning.

POLICE REFORMS AND RELATED ISSUES

43. **The good cop**

Source: The post is based on an article “**The good cop**” published in the **Indian Express** on **12th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Security

Relevance: Police Reforms

Context: There have been **the National Police Commission**, the **Ribeiro** and **Padmanabhaiah committees**, and other commissions which directly alluded to police reforms. In addition, the **Malimath Committee** and the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** indirectly expressed requirements for police reforms. The Supreme Court acknowledged the requirement of police reforms in **Prakash Singh judgment of 2006**.

Structural control over police machinery

Constitutional Provisions

The State List has public order and police.

The Union List mentions the armed forces of the Union, CBI and some reasons for preventive detention.

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The Concurrent List mentions to deal with criminal law and procedure and some reasons for preventive detention.

Centre-State Aspect

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has **Police-I Division** and **Police-II Division**. The latter one is responsible for controlling the **central armed police forces**.

What are the issues in Indian policing machinery?

It involves corruptions like a police officer may brush up a case on payment of his terms like presents from parties.

The police officers **threaten** and **bully suspects** and innocent persons to give information they are supposed to possess.

The police officer instead of working like a **detective** procure confessions by improper inducement, by threats and by moral pressure.

Measures Taken So Far

In **Prakash Singh Guidelines 2006**, the court's gave directives in seven domains to induce **transparency** and **reduce discretion** which are desirable for improving **police efficiency**. There are: (1) State security commissions; (2) the appointment and tenure of DGPs; (3) the tenure of other police officers; (4) the separation of investigation from law and order; (5) police establishment boards for transfers, postings and promotions; (6) police complaints authorities; and (7) the National Security Commission. Subsequently, a **draft Model Police Act** was framed in 2006.

So far almost all states have complied with the seven directives of the Supreme Court issued in Prakash Singh Case.

Recently, the Central Government has reviewed **the Model Police Act, 2006**. Accordingly, a **draft Model Police Bill, 2015** has been prepared and placed on the website of BPR&D.

What are the issues which still persist in the police department even after implementation of the directives?

Compliance has remained in the letter of the law, not in the spirit. For instance, the composition, powers and other aspects of the State Security Commission do not comply with the directives in spirit. Same is the case with other six directives as well.

Meanwhile, the structure varies across states. This concern was highlighted by **the Police Commissions of 1860** and **1902-03**. This has not improved till 2022. This results into **inefficiency**

States often readily request **the central armed police forces** whenever there is a problem.

In tracking compliance in letter and spirit across states, it was found that there was no state which was fully compliant with the seven directives.

Way Forward

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As 'police' is a state subject, therefore, the primary responsibility to formulate a **new Police Act** or amend their **existing Act** on the lines of **the draft Model Police Bill** prepared by the Central Government lies in the hands of the state government.

In 2016, the **Niti Aayog** published a paper on building **smart police**. It suggested moving police to the **Concurrent List**.

However, the State List entry (related to police) should not be moved to the Concurrent List alone. It will be perceived as hampering rights of States and interpreted as greater centralisation. Therefore, the central government should go for a **complete overhaul** of the Seventh Schedule. Now the pandemic is out of the way, it is necessary to bring police reforms back on the agenda. The country deserves to move on from 1861.

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

HIGHER EDU AND RELATED ISSUES

44. **The multiple crises in Indian universities**

Source: This post is based on the article “**The multiple crises in Indian universities**” published in **The Hindu** on **9th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to development and management of Education

Relevance: Higher education and related issues

Context: Problems being faced by Universities in India.

What are some indications of the worsening state of India's universities?

Spending on higher education (as a % of government expenditure) has stagnated at 1.3-1.5% since 2012.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education continues to **push higher education institutions to increase their intake capacity by 25%** (in a push to implement the 10% quota for economically weaker sections),

The Ministry of Finance has sought to **ban the creation of new teaching posts**.

At the central level, **student financial aid was cut** to ₹2,078 crore in FY 2022-23 from ₹2,482 crore in FY 2021-22; **allocations for research and innovation were down** by 8%, reaching ₹218 crore.

What are the challenges being faced by the Universities?

Universities are plagued by multiple crises –

Financial crunch: Investments in university infrastructure have shrunk. Most Indian universities and colleges have overcrowded classrooms, poor ventilation and sanitation, and unsatisfactory hostel accommodation.

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- The Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA), which provides funding for all infrastructure loans to institutions, saw its budget reduced from ₹2,000 crore in FY 20-21 to ₹1 crore in FY 21-22.
- Stifled cash flow has led to delays in salary payments for deemed/central universities. Hence, **most universities are running on a deficit** — Madras University saw an accumulated deficit of over ₹100 crore, forcing it to seek a ₹88 crore grant from the State government (Raman A. Ragu, March 2022)
- Faculty members have faced salary delays for months, with salaries coming in weeks later. This has led to **cuts in discretionary spending** – many colleges in Delhi are unable to afford subscriptions to basic databases and journals.

Grants under the UGC's minor and major research project schemes have declined from ₹42.7 crore in FY 2016-17 to ₹38 lakh in FY 2020-21. India has over 1,040 universities, but just 2.7% offer PhD programmes, given paltry funding and poor infrastructure. The National Research Foundation (NRF), to improve research infrastructure in universities, has not yet been approved, and may have a limited budget (\$5-6 billion spread over five years).

Fall in standards: Academic standards and processes are not being maintained.

- **Examination paper leaks** have become common – the Hindi examination of the National Eligibility Test of the UGC, which enables post-graduate students who pass to teach in State and Central colleges, was leaked in June 2021.

Repression: Universities have played a crucial role in strengthening democracy and civil society. For instance:

- The **Central Hindu College (Delhi)**, inaugurated by Madan Mohan Malaviya, was a centre for political debate during the freedom struggle, with students and teachers joining the Quit India movement, and involved in the defence of Rash Behari Bose and Lala Har Dayal in 1915. And yet, of late, **institutional apathy has given way to repression**. Police action against students of select universities (JNU, Jamia Millia, for instance) for campus protests, along with arrests and incarceration, have cast a shadow over free expression in campuses.

What measure are required to be taken?

There is an **urgent need for increased funding**, along with establishing **dedicated funding streams for infrastructure grants/loans** and financial aid. Universities can also be freed up to utilise other revenue streams such as start-up royalties and advertising.

Funding for research needs to rise significantly, with institutions like the NRF supplementing (and not replacing) existing schemes (including those from the Ministry of Science). Funding should also be allocated to **enable course-based research experiences** for undergraduates.

Improving the sanctity of the examination process will **require a decentralised approach**, with universities allowed to take decisions on academic programmes, promotions, cohort size, etc.

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We need to **embrace tolerance for a diversity of views in our campuses** – our students have formative experiences there and must have the space to define themselves as individuals.

GS2 – POLITY – PARLIAMENT AND STATE LEGISLATURES

DELIMITATION COMMISSION IN INDIA

45. **With delimitation over, a look at the slate for J&K**

Source: The post is based on an article “**With delimitation over, a look at the slate for J&K**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **13th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Functioning of the parliament and legislative assemblies in India

Relevance: Jammu and Kashmir Assembly

News: In recent, the Delimitation Commission awards for redrawn map for Jammu and Kashmir’s Assembly has been notified.

Background

The State’s Assembly had been dissolved. It was under President’s rule. Thereafter, the State of J&K had been divided into **two Union Territories** under **the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019**. And fresh elections could be held under the J&K Reorganization Act 2019. Therefore, the delimitation of J&K assembly was very important for conducting fresh elections.

Composition of the Commission

Apart from **Retired Justice** Ranjana Prakash Desai, **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)** Sushil Chandra **and J&K State Election Commissioner** K.K. Sharma were ex-officio members of the commission.

Criticism of the commission’s award

A long list of objections was made against the commission’s draft. But the final report does not summarise the objections nor address them point by point.

The commission has **not explained the methodology** based on which it awarded more seats to Jammu province relative to its population than the Valley province having a relatively larger population base. For example, Jammu gained **6 Assembly Seats** against **1 seat** gained by the Valley Province.

– In fact, the majority of the **six new constituencies** that are acquired by Jammu are Hindu-majority. Further, one Jammu constituency has a population of just over 50,000 people whereas a Muslim-majority constituency having the same physical features have close to four times its population.

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It did not explain why **Jammu's Muslim-majority seats** now comprise less than a quarter of the province's total seats despite the fact the Muslims comprise over a third of the province's population.

The commission's recommended the President to **nominate Pandit migrants** to 2 Assembly seats, along the lines of reservation for Anglo-Indians in Parliament. However, it is silent on the nomination for Pandits who live in the Valley and West Pakistani refugees who live in the J&K.

What is good in the award?

The commission proposed to **match the boundaries of Assembly and parliamentary constituencies**. This will ensure that Assembly and parliamentary constituencies match local administrative and police boundaries.

What are the challenges to the commission's award?

Further, the Supreme Court of India is about to hear the **challenges** to the **reorganisation act 2019**. In continuation, if the Court decides the challenges are **valid**, then the delimitation exercise will be **nullified**.

The redrawn constituencies may result in **greater polarisation** of the community and people living in J&K in the next election. It may lead to risk of greater communal violence.

If the outcome of the J&K Assembly election results reflects a **sharp divide** between **Jammu** and the **Valley**, then it will make it more difficult to put together a **coalition administration** in the J&K Assembly.

Way Forward

The Election Commission should not delay announcing **dates** for the **long overdue Assembly election** in Jammu and Kashmir as the redrawn constituencies have been notified.

In order to ensure the **peace process** in Jammu and Kashmir, there has to be a clean election, speedy restoration of statehood.

In fact, the commission itself proposed that the **report** be **placed** before **the legislative assembly**. Therefore, let the new Jammu and Kashmir assembly approve or query the delimitation report.

The government must give **attention** to **fundamental freedoms** of over a thousand Kashmiris who are held up in prison under sedition charges. They have been denied bail or asked to furnish punitive sureties.

46. On Delimitation in J&K: Beyond the boundary

Source: This post is based on the article "**Beyond the boundary**" published in **Business Standard** on **8th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity – Union and States

Relevance: Analysing the Delimitation in J&K

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

Context: Political considerations instead of constitutional proprieties appear to have influenced the delimitation of the Assembly and parliamentary constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) by the fifth Delimitation Commission. The commission submitted its recommendations recently.

[Under what provisions the fifth Delimitation Commission was set up?](#)

In setting up the fifth **Delimitation Commission**, the govt invoked a section of the **J&K Reorganisation Act of 2019**, which raised the number of seats in Jammu and Kashmir from 83 to 90 (to account for the fact that Ladakh was carved out as a separate Union Territory under this legislation) and sanctioned delimitation under the 2011 census.

It is worth noting that the commission's original mandate covered five states, including those in the Northeast, but these were dropped in early 2020, leaving J&K as the sole unit within its purview.

[What are the issues associated with the decision?](#)

Objective not clear: It is unclear why the exercise was undertaken when there was a freeze on the readjustment of parliamentary and Assembly seats in India until 2026.

The Act, which granted J&K's special status, has been **pending in appeal before the Supreme Court** for well over a year. Given the multiple constitutional questions that arose during the rapid passage of the law through Parliament, there is a risk that the Act may be overturned.

[Why the commission's recommendations have met with criticism?](#)

The **commission's recommendations have been rejected** by almost everyone in the Valley, primarily because of the seat distribution both in the Assembly and Lok Sabha.

– For one, it has retained the old, politically troublesome communal binaries between Jammu and Kashmir by allocating them 43 and 47 seats, respectively. In the Assembly, this new set-up **tilts the vote shares significantly**. Now, Jammu with 44% of the population will vote for 48% of the seats, whereas the Kashmir division with 56% of the population will vote for 52% of the seats.

The earlier configuration was better aligned to population share, with Jammu having 44.5% of the seats, and Kashmir 55.4%.

– The realignments of the parliamentary seats, too, have been problematic, with critics viewing the restructuring of the Jammu and Anantnag seats as **reducing the influence of the Kashmiri-speaking Muslim voters**.

PERARIVALAN'S RELEASE AND RELATED ISSUES

47. **In Perarivalan's case, the constitutional battle between governor and government**

Source: The post is based on an article “**In Perarivalan's case, the constitutional battle between governor and government**” published in the Indian Express on 20th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: The President, The Governor's Pardoning Power

News: Recently, the Supreme Court of India exercised its power under Article 142 of the Constitution and ordered the release of A.G. Perarivalan, a convict in the Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case.

This has put an end to the battle between the Raj Bhavan and Secretariat that has lasted more than two decades.

What is the legal position on mercy pleas?

The **Article 72** of the Constitution of India allows the convicts to file a mercy plea to the **President**. However, the constitution has not stipulated a time period for the consideration of the mercy pleas.

The **Article 161** allows the convicts to file mercy pleas to the **Governor**. The Madras HC has ruled that the governor cannot exercise the power of pardon without the advice of the council of ministers.

Section 433A of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) mentions that the prisoners cannot be released from prison unless they had served a **minimum sentence of 14 years** in prison.

The court opined that a life sentence means imprisonment for the remainder of one's life. The convicts can apply for remission under Sec.432, CrPC. This can be done in cases where death sentences are commuted.

Background of the present case

The assailants were tried under the **Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 (TADA)**. Perarivalan was given the death sentence by the Special Court and was confirmed by the SC in 1998.

The convict petitioned the **Tamil Nadu Governor** for mercy under **Article 161**. The Governor had dismissed the petitions.

The Convicts also filed mercy plea to the President of India. However, **Pratibha Patil, The President of India** rejected the mercy pleas of the convicts after a delay of 11 years

Later, when the convicts were about to be executed, the convicts moved the Madras HC challenging the execution of the death warrant. Further, the case was transferred to the Supreme Court.

The SC ruled that the president's non-consideration of the mercy plea was not within a reasonable time. The president took 11 years. Therefore, their death penalty was commuted to the sentence of life imprisonment.

Later on, all the convicts applied for remission from the governor. The state cabinet also advised the governor to grant pardon. After inordinate delay, the convicts moved to the court. The court held that “**the Governor cannot sit on the state's recommendation on the release of all seven life convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case for so long**”. The court was informed that the governor was awaiting the final report of the CBI's Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA).

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Later, the **T N Assembly** passed a resolution granting mercy to the seven accused in 2018. The governor did not take any action. The convict reached **the Supreme Court** where the governor stated that the matter was to be dealt with by the President. This matter has been dealt with in the present case.

What has been ruled in the present case?

The court ruled that the **authority** to grant pardon is with **the governor** and he is bound by the **advice** of the state government.

The court held that the **action of the governor** in delaying the matter for more than **2.5 years** was unacceptable.

The court stated that **“a barbaric crime does not have to be visited with a barbaric penalty”**. India’s penal system is undoubtedly reformatory and not retributive.

Way Forward

The Office of the Governor has often been manipulated by the government at the centre. This has perverted the constitutional scheme. The governor’s office should not be manipulated for narrow political considerations. The Governor should work based on his wisdom.

48. Law and public opinion: On Perarivalan release

Source: The post is based on an article **“Law and public opinion: On Perarivalan release”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **19th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Important Provisions of the Constitutions of India

Relevance: Governor’s Power

News: Recently, the Supreme Court ordered the release of A.G. Perarivalan, one of the seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

How was he released?

The Supreme Court has invoked its extraordinary powers under **Article 142 of the Constitution of India**.

Why was he released?

The mother of the convict, vast sections of public opinion and many political parties have been campaigning for years for his freedom. He drew **public sympathy** because he was only 19 at the time of assassination.

In 2018, the **State cabinet** recommended the **release** to the **governor**. However, the Governor referred the advice to the President. The Centre argued, that the cases involving murder under the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** come under the **President’s exclusive jurisdiction** in matters of remission of life sentences.

What has been held by the Supreme Court?

The **remission** comes under the State’s jurisdiction. Therefore, the Governor is bound by the State Cabinet’s advice when acting under **Article 161**. Therefore, the governor’s reference to the President was **“inimical to the scheme of the Constitution”**.

The **Governor’s remission powers** are exercised solely on the **State Cabinet advice**. The release of these convicts would require the **Centre’s concurrence** under CrPC.

What remains to be resolved?

The Supreme Court failed to clear the issues of the **absence of any time-frame** for the President or the Governor to decide on the matter. Traditionally, this has been the cause of **indefinitely delay** in executive decisions.

DELIMITATION COMMISSION IN INDIA

49. **Delimitation fallout needs no political**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Delimitation fallout needs no political forecasting**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **19th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Functioning of the Parliament of India

Relevance: Delimitation of Parliamentary Constituencies

News: India’s electoral democracy is going to observe the delimitation of the constituencies for the Lok Sabha. This will be based on the population figures returned by the next decennial Census post 2026.

Arrangements made in the Constitution of India

Article 82 of the Constitution of India provided for a periodic, Census-linked re-arrangement of constituencies to make the representation in Parliament tenable.

History of India as Bharat

India’s foundation for the **Bharat** that is mentioned in Article 1 of our Constitution can be traced back in the history of India.

North India has often been referred to as **Upper India**. North India always had the upper hand in the affairs of the nation, of being bigger, and more populous. The nation’s capital has always been in the North. These things reinforced the perceived image of India’s north as **India’s political summit**.

The Indian National Congress (INC) always kept India’s regions at **equal front** and **symmetry**. For example, It conducted its annual session in **South India** vis-à-vis at Bombay (1885), Madras (1887), Amaravati/Amraoti (1897), Coconada (1923), Belgaum (1924), and Avadi, Madras (1955) among others.

The **All-India Kisan Sabha**, the peasant wing of the **Communist Party of India** also conducted its sessions very pointedly in southern venues as much as in northern. For example, at Palasa (in 1940), and at Srikakulam.

What are/may be the issues in India’ electoral representation?

At present

The **543 Members of Parliaments (MPs)** represents a vastly increased population in the Lok Sabha. If there is a high number of people per constituency, then each voter yields a lower impact on **parliamentary representation**.

Issues in case of re-arrangement of constituencies post-2026

The delimitation will give more MPs to the States/UTs having greater population growth, and will give less MPs to the state/UTs having low population growth.

For example, according to the projections made by the **Technical Group** formed by the **National Commission on Population for 2011-36**, the share of the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan would increase in India’s total population. Whereas, the share of the states of Tamil Nadu, undivided Andhra, Kerala and West Bengal will see decline in India’s Population in 2026. The delimitation will inevitably lead to a **reduced representation** for States that have managed to **stabilise** their populations, and to a higher representation for States that have not stabilised their populations.

What are the alternatives?

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One, the government can go on for another freeze until all States have achieved population stabilisation. [Note: To solve this anomaly, **the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution** was enacted to cause delimitation freeze in 1976 and same was extended to **2026** through the **84th Amendment**]

Two, the demographic and statistical experts can devise a **mathematical model** along the lines of the '**Cambridge Compromise**' used for the apportionment of the seats of the European Parliament between the member-states. The formula needs to be customised for our needs.

Way Forward

India cannot afford a tension on the **north-south front**. Therefore, the **upperness syndrome** of the past should not come back in the guise of delimitation.

At present, the most important thing is that India needs to limit its population, not representation. The southern States or the population-stabilising States of India continue to enrich our legislative and parliamentary processes.

GS2 – POLITY – CONSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER BODIES

NITI AAYOG AND RELATED ISSUES

50. [Reforming the NITI Aayog](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**Reforming the NITI Aayog**" published in **Business Standard** on **16th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Govt policies and interventions

Relevance: Reforming NITI Aayog

Context: The justification for the establishment of the NITI Aayog has been more or less disproved by the way development policies are being formulated in the present Union government regime.

[Why NITI Aayog was established?](#)

The word "niti" in Hindi means policy and one can say NITI Aayog is the Policy Commission of the Union government.

The Planning Commission was designed for a top-down command economy and had to be replaced because India is a diversified country, and its states are in various phases of economic development along with their own strengths and weaknesses.

In this context, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to economic planning is obsolete. It cannot make India competitive in today's global economy.

[What kind of role has NITI Aayog played since it was established?](#)

Looking at the work of the NITI Aayog over the past seven years, it would appear that its role in development policy has been mainly that of a **formulator of programmes** to realise grand goals announced from above.

– **For instance:** The prime minister announced that agricultural incomes would be doubled by 2022-23 and the NITI Aayog had to work out how this improbable target could be achieved.

A visit to the NITI Aayog website and the list of reports and papers it has prepared show that it **focuses mainly on sectoral issues** rather than on the overall development strategy.

– One indicator of this is the **retaining of the old Planning Commission's sectoral divisions** but winding up of the large and influential Perspective Planning Division and Finance Division into a relatively small **Economics and Finance Division**, which seems to focus more on monitoring than on developing growth or equity or sustainability strategies.

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What are the issues involved?

No medium- or long-term strategy formulation by NITI Aayog: Most policy initiatives seem to be shaped by immediate sectoral compulsions and political impact and lack a long-term perspective.

Top-down approach: Formulation of development policy is now top-down, not just with the Union government imposing its vision, but with the head of the Union government playing that role. The public hoardings and other publicity measures that associate virtually every governmental activity with the image of the prime minister (as in the Covid vaccine certificates) reinforce this perception.

The real problem of **strategy formation for development** is that it is not being done. The NITI Aayog has produced some vision documents; but they are not agreed strategies, formulated after widespread consultations with experts and discussion with the states.

What are some key features of a development strategy?

A grand strategy for development must spell out the **opportunities and threats** faced by the key objectives of development which are growth, equity and sustainability.

It must then **identify the changes** in the role of the public and private sector, shifts in global economic alliances and policy shifts that are required to maximise benefits from opportunities and manage risks from threats.

The time frame for a grand strategy has to be **long-term**, but the more specific strategies derived from it must take into account **short- and medium-term challenges** that the country faces.

What are the challenges to India's future growth?

The most immediate challenge for growth is the **disruption of the global economy** brought about by the Ukraine war and related sanctions, the **Covid shutdowns** in China and the **rising tide of inflation**.

The goal of **equity in growth** is a another difficult challenge.

Sustainability of growth: This includes components like climate change, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions etc

What are the steps that need to be taken?

India needs a strategy to **grow rapidly in a global economy** in which competitive advantages will be shaped by new-age technologies like, machine learning, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, etc. A grand strategy that does this can then be the basis for more specific strategies for infrastructure, technology development, educational quality, and skill formation and so on.

To ensure equity in growth, we need to **design and implement an employment generation and skill development strategy** that would allow the disadvantaged to earn enough to raise their living standards in a market environment. This strategy can be supplemented with public support for education, health care and social security.

India also needs to **tackle the inequality in the pace of development between states**, like the northern and eastern states and the southern, western and north-western states.

A grand strategy for sustainability must **look beyond just climate change** to the broader challenge of environmental conservation in a rapidly changing production and consumption environment.

Way forward

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NITI Aayog must bring in the talent required and launch a process of broad-based consultation, particularly with the states, to secure a **broad national consensus on a long-term growth strategy**.

Specific programmes must be based on the implementation of this strategy.

The NITI Aayog must be converted from a Department of Development Implementation to a High Command of Development Strategy.

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

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

51. **Putin's Made India The Swing State In Geopolitics**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Putin's Made India The Swing State In Geopolitics**” published in **the Times of India** on **21st May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations, Bilateral Relations, Regional Grouping, Multilateral Relations

Relevance: India as a Swing State; India's position in the global and regional geopolitics

News: Currently, The Russia-Ukraine War is ongoing. And the Prime Minister of India is going to attend the Quad summit in Tokyo next week.

What are the developments in the Russia-Ukraine war?

Although Ukraine may never become a NATO member, it is being strongly supported by the Western countries.

Sweden and Finland formally applied to join NATO. This will infuriate Russia. It will change forever the nature of European security.

What are the consequences of recent developments?

(A) Russian Worries

Russia may end up at the bottom end of the spectrum in terms of **global political** and **economic isolation**.

According to reports, Russia's imports from **technologically advanced countries** are dropping exponentially. This will impact **Russia's ability** to manufacture complex weapons and systems. The war has pushed the Western countries to seize **Russian government** and **oligarch assets** overseas and use that for Ukraine's reconstruction because Europe is not willing to pay for Russia wrong.

(B) Some European worries

The US is being accused of changing its war aims from **Ukraine** to **Russia**. It is putting Europe at the centre of it.

The war has escalated to a position to which Both Russia and Europe had not planned on.

What are the challenges for India?

The Indian leadership had the tough task of doing **two things** at once – explaining India's **Russia policy** due to India's **traditional dependence** on Russia, and focussing on **partnering** with Europe in clean, green, tech-powered development.

The war has led to increase in **energy costs**, **fertiliser costs** and **general inflation** which have become headache for **India's post-pandemic recovery**

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The war has challenged India's plan to transition to a **less carbonised future**. Therefore, the war is rapidly becoming India's war.

Way Forward

India's leadership has explained to his European counterparts that India is accelerating its **diversification** away from Russian military equipment.

The Indian government needs to engage with its international partners and tell them about India's interest and plans to deal with the current mess.

India needs to address the challenge of **rising** and asserting China. India should build a partnership with Europe that is clean, green, digital and non-China.

In the new strategic context, India in many respects is acting as a **swing state**. However, it is in its **best interests** that it bends its **trajectory** more to the West. There is a growing space for India. The United States and Europe desire to engage more fundamentally with India. Therefore, India should think big with the US on the **Indo-Pacific** and **global security**.

52. [A war that is shrinking India's geopolitical options](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**A war that is shrinking India's geopolitical options**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **17th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations, Bilateral, Grouping, Multilateral relations

Relevance: Global and Asian Geopolitics, India-China Relations, India-Russia relations

News: The confrontation between Russia and Ukraine is now raging on with no end in sight, and with its long-term implications yet unknown.

What are the consequences for India?

India's initial phase of diplomatic rush is over. Its geopolitical options are shrinking as the war drags on.

Diminishing options

Earlier, India's balancing act propelled it to the centre stage of **global attention**. Therefore, a number of **high-profile visits** were seen in India. India had a number of geopolitical options. But, the number of **options** seems to be **limited** for at least **three reasons**:

One, **Russia** which is a key strategic partner of India is **no longer available** to India for balancing purposes. Now, Moscow is more dependent on India today than the other way round.

Two, By the time the war ends, **Asia's regional balance of power** would be shifted in Beijing's favour. Therefore, India's challenge of managing China would continue to increase. The Ukraine war has complicated the China conundrum for India.

Three, today, the **focus** of the **United States** and its **western partners** has **shifted** from China and the Indo-Pacific to the **Ukraine theatre**. Further, the war will further weaken the **American influence** in the **Southern Asian region** due to preoccupations with the European theatre.

Others

In the longer run, a war-fatigued and weakened **Russia** will become a **junior partner** to China. For New Delhi, instead of how to please both sides in this war, now the bigger question is how manage China which is rapidly consolidating in the region under its influence.

Today, India's **immediate to medium term engagement** with Russia can have a **second-order fallout** in the **medium to long term**.

War is impacting India's **north-western continental strategy** towards Afghanistan and Central Asia. Earlier, India withdrew from Afghanistan due to Taliban's return. This led to decline in

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India's strategic interests in Afghanistan. Now, due to war, China's role into the region will increase, so **India's footprint** will be reduced in the Central Asian region.

Measures taken by India

The Chinese Foreign Minister's visit to India is an indication that Beijing also seeks to calm the tempers on the LAC.

During the Chinese Foreign Minister visit, Indian leaders made it clear that the normalisation of **diplomatic** and **political ties** between India and China can happen only after the **disengagement** of troops from the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The Indian Prime Minister is to attend the BRICS Summit in China. It should leverage the summit.

India can exploit **China-Russia ties**. At present, Moscow can **nudge** Beijing to stop its aggression on the LAC. If China heats up the LAC at present, India would have to turn to the West and the U.S. for political, diplomatic, and intelligence support which would not be in Russian interests. It is important that two of its **Asian friends** China and India do not clash, at least while the war is still on.

What are the challenges if India exploits Russia-China ties?

If China stabilises the LAC at the **nudging** of Russia, it would also expect India to go slow on the Indo-Pacific.

At present due to the Ukraine war, India cannot utilise the **many inherent contradictions** between Moscow and Beijing.

Moscow should understand that the Ukraine war is going to boost Beijing's attempts to take over its **backyard** using **economic means**, which the **NATO** has been doing to Russia using military means.

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

HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES

53. The technical higher education market dissected

Source: The post is based on an article "**The technical higher education market dissected**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **17th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector; Higher Education

Relevance: Higher Technical Education Reforms

News: During the past two years, the higher education technical institutions have seen a drop of 18.3% and 6.01% in the number of institutions and intake capacity, respectively.

Background of technical higher education

Much of the growth in technical higher education has been after 1991, when the **All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** became functional.

Between 1961 and 1991, the number of technical higher education institutions increased five times (53 to 277) and the enrolment increased Six times. Most of this growth has been in the government sector.

Between 1991-2020, the institutions have gone up by 40 times and the intake capacity rose 15 times to touch **32.85 lakh**. Much of this expansion has been in the private sector.

What are the issues?

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Supply exceeds demand: The total demand (based on number of students appearing in NEET, JEE etc.) for **technical higher education** appears to be more than overall available seats. Therefore, a large number of technical institutions are unable to fill their sanctioned seats. Their **capacity utilisation** is falling which stands at 53.53% in 2020-21.

The AICTE prescribes a minimum specific **student-teacher ratio (STR)**, ranging from 7.5 to 20. However, the majority of the institutions are unable to admit students. Therefore, their **STR** has gone down from 5.5 in 2012-13 to 3.0 in 2020-21 due to inadequate admissions.

Due to lower STR, these institutions are threatened by lack of **economic sustainability**. This has a **negative impact** on the creation of **quality infrastructure and human resources**.

In order to increase admission, the institutions demand for relaxation in the **eligibility criteria** for admissions. For example, relaxation in minimum percentage of marks in the school board, condition of studying science and mathematics at the intermediate level in schools, etc.

The technical **higher educational institutions** are differentiated and highly hierarchical. For example, the IIT, the NIT, the IIIT, etc. among others are the most sought after.

The **high-quality private institutions** resort to an **exploitative pricing policy**. They charge high fees. After all, **the Veblen Effect** (what is expensive is perceived to be excellent) also works in higher education institutions.

Way Forward

The AICTE should provide a **broad framework** and guidelines for determining the permissible level of fees. Then, **the State-level fee fixation committees** should work. This would be in the **true spirit of federalism** which expects States to be a responsible partner in the process.

AICTE Act mandates it “to take necessary steps to prevent **commercialisation** of (in) technical education”.

The **AICTE** should take all such steps for the **coordinated** and **integrated development** and **maintenance of standards**.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA

54. Improving cold chain systems

Source: The post is based on an article “**Improving cold chain systems**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **18th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector; health Sector

Relevance: Vaccine Cold Chain Management

News: The pandemic showed us that there were weak links in the supply chain, especially in the cold chain. This means that vaccines alone do not save lives. It requires a **strong service delivery network**,

What are the factors that can lead us to a sustainable vaccination programme?

A key factor is **cold chain management** because improper supply of vaccines can lead to decline in the potency or effectiveness of the vaccine.

In addition to cold chain management, electricity is required as a supportive infrastructure for cold chains.

Why should India build a strong foundation for the cold chain system?

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India runs the **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)** to deliver routine immunisation. It was launched in 1985. Further, the programme was revitalized in 2014 to achieve full immunisation coverage of all children and pregnant women at a rapid pace.

India has rolled out one of the largest vaccination drives (Covid-19) in the world. The COVID-19 vaccination efforts relied on the **cold chain infrastructure** established under the UIP.

The pandemic has also encouraged an interest in **preventive health technology**, especially in vaccines.

Globally, nearly half the vaccines distributed around the world go to **waste** due to a failure to properly control storage temperatures.

In India, around 20% of **temperature-sensitive healthcare products** are found damaged due to insufficient cold chains.

Way Forward

The government has developed a **cloud-based digital platform** Co-WIN. This helped to facilitate registration, immunisations and appointments, and issues digital vaccine certificates, highlighting the benefits of digitisation.

The Health Ministry has been digitising the **vaccine supply chain network** through the use of cloud technology. For example, **the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN)** is being developed with support from **Gavi**, the **Vaccine Alliance**, and implemented by the **UN Development Programme**. This will support healthcare workers in the last mile in **supervising** and maintaining the **efficiency** of the vaccine cold chain.

There is a need to **improve electrification**, especially in the last mile. The **solar-driven technology** can be explored to integrate sustainable development. For instance, 72% of the functioning health centres in Chhattisgarh have been solarised to tackle disruption in service.

The world including India need to **build back better and stronger**. In the post-covid era, there is an opportunity to develop **unbroken** and **resilient cold chain systems** that can augment the **immunisation landscape**.

The government needs to invest in the cold chain management for immunisation facilities. This would lead to **India's future pandemic preparedness**.

ISSUES RELATED TO PUBLIC HEALTH

55. Bridging the health policy to execution chasm

Source: The post is based on an article "**Bridging the health policy to execution chasm**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **20th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector, Health Sector

Relevance: Public Health Professionals or Public Health Management Cadre, Indian Public Health Standards

News: The Union government has released a **guidance document** on the setting up of a '**public health and management cadre**' (**PHMC**) as well as revised editions of **the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS)** for ensuring quality health care in government facilities.

Background

The health sector has been facing **multiple challenges** of handling an **epidemic** and **pandemic** in the last few decades like avian flu in 2005-06, the Swine flu pandemic of 2009-10 etc. There has been **emergence** and re-**emergence** of **new viruses** and **diseases** (Zika, Ebola, Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic fever, Nipah viruses, etc.)

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The National Health Policy **2017** recommended for the ‘**public health and management cadre**’ in India.

What are the issues in India’s health care system?

Traditionally, the focus of public health services has been on medical care or attention on treating the sick.

At present, most Indian States have a **teaching cadre** involved as faculty in the medical colleges and a **specialist cadre of doctors** involved in clinical services in clinics and hospitals.

The above structure restricts similar career **progression opportunities** to two teaching cadres and specialist’s cadre.

Therefore, health-care professionals have **limited interest in opting for public health** as a career choice.

India has a perennial shortage of trained public health workforce and infrastructure. This shortage is likely to drift India towards a **medicalised care system**.

Despite the first release of the IPHS 15 years ago, only a small proportion around 15% to 20% of government health-care facilities meet the Indian Public Health standards (IPHS).

There has not been much attention on **public health services** and **workforce** in India. There was little policy attention on a need for a public health cadre and services in India.

Importance of the revised guidance documents, PHMC etc.

The public health and management cadres and the revised IPHS can help India to make progress towards the **NHP goal**.

The proposed **public health cadre** and **the health management cadre** have the potential to address the weaknesses in our health care system.

– India’s pandemic response failed because there was an absence of trained public health professionals at the policy and decision making-levels in India. The **doctors/clinicians** or a **bureaucrat** could not fulfil the role of the epidemiologists and public health specialists who are in a better position to deal with a pathogen and its behaviour.

The revised version focuses on increasing access and then ensuring quality health services through public health facilities,

What are the challenges ahead?

The **implementation** of the previous versions of the **guidance documents** has not been up to mark. For example, the IPHS has not been implemented properly in the last 15 years. Therefore, it is difficult to predict the outcome of the PHMC guidance document.

This has been thwarted due to inadequacy in the two primary factors in effective implementation:

(1) **Inadequate financial allocations** and (2) **Inadequate trained workforce**.

Way Forward

The revised IPHS is an **important development** but not an end itself. There should be an **independent assessment** on how the IPHS has improved the quality of health services.

The **Fifteenth Finance Commission** grant for the five-year period of 2021- 26 and the **Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)** allocations are the new assured sources of funding for public health services. They can be used to strengthen the public health services.

A **centre of excellence** in every State should be designated to guide the process for implementation of the public health and management cadres. The reluctant states should be nudged through appropriate incentives.

The government can do **mapping** and an analysis of **human resources** available for recruitment for public health. They should be well trained. Setting up these two new cadres should be used as an opportunity to improve and standardise the quality of training in public health institutions.

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The implementation of PHMC should start in the next **few months** to avoid the risk of it becoming a low priority.

The health staff available should be **equally distributed** for all other categories at government health facilities. Further, the vacancies of health staff should be filled up fast.

56. **Focusing on public health engineering**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Focusing on public health engineering**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **17th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to Health

Relevance: **Public Health Engineering**

News: According to Startup India, one in five children die before their fifth birthday because of poor sanitation and hygiene conditions.

What are the environmental degradation problems?

Global

According to the United Nations, Globally, around 80% of wastewater flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused which pose a significant environmental and health threat.

India

According to the **World Bank**, about **70%** of **sewage** is discharged untreated into India’s water bodies. This contaminated water led to a staggering 21% of diseases in India,

What are the issues involved?

Both as professions and as practice, **engineering** and **public health** have been traditionally understood as different fields in India.

In India, **public health engineering** is executed by the PWD or by health officials. This differs from **international trends**. For example, **Europe** has specialized candidates in wastewater engineering.

There is the issue of **population growth**, diminishing resources and risky exploitation of natural resources.

Currently, the civil engineers don’t have **adequate skills** to address public health problems. And **public health professionals** do not have adequate engineering skills. Both fail to understand the nexus between wastewater and solid waste management and public health issues clearly.

Majority of **diseases** are **water-related** like transmitted through consumption of contaminated water, vectors breeding in stagnated water, etc.

What steps need to be taken?

It is essential to find and implement **innovative ways** of treating wastewater to achieve sustainable development goals of clean water and sanitation.

Innovative solutions are also needed to address the **growing demands** for water consumption and **preservation** of both surface water bodies and groundwater resources.

There is a need to expand the **scope** of **public health/environmental engineering science**.

Both **engineering** and **public health field**, together can work in different fields like **wastewater treatment systems**, for understanding **complex quality** and monitoring processes, designing and managing **septic tank systems**, supplying good quality water in adequate quantities, etc.

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The Government should launch **public health engineering** as a two-year structured master's degree programme or through diploma. It should be developed as an interdisciplinary field. Public health professionals can be groomed through **in-service training**.

The **health** and **engineering institutes** should provide knowledge in areas of **environment science** in the refresher course.

On one side, **public health professionals** can contribute to engineering through well-researched understanding of health issues, etc. Similarly, engineers can contribute to **public health** through their problem-solving approach. Thus, combination of **engineering** and **public health skills** can lead to development of **public health engineering**.

The **decentralised** and **onsite wastewater management systems** should be designed based on **hydro-geological data** and observations of climate patterns.

Public health engineering can help **policymakers** to understand processes, trends, and the latest technology in water and wastewater quality monitoring, treatment, and management.

There is a need to **hire environmental engineers** to address **public health problems**.

Institutions like the **Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M)** are considering initiating public health engineering as a separate discipline.

In wake of India's **Jal Jeevan Mission**, India needs a cadre of public health engineers, who can help in identification of sustainable sources of water, monitoring the quantity and quality of supply, among other things.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

GYANVAPI MOSQUE ISSUE

57. [On Gyanvapi Mosque, we are debating the wrong question](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**On Gyanvapi Mosque, we are debating the wrong question**” published in **The Indian Express** on **18th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Govt policies and interventions

Relevance: Gyanvapi Mosque dispute

Context: Recently, the Varanasi court ordered a video survey of the Gyanvapi Mosque. The implied intention was to find out whether the fundamental claim of the petitioners that the mosque has been built by destroying or appropriating a temple is correct or not.

This issue here is not about secularism or that of minority rights. The question is, how will the “true nature” of our conflicted architectural sites be defined, and who has the power to define it. Reading architecture with political philosophy tells us that that depends on **what values we adopt in state formation**.

[How modern values of state formation are different?](#)

Historically, rulers derived legitimacy primarily in two ways:

– **In the case of intra-state matters**, the legitimacy for the king to rule came from God in the Abrahamic world and from mythology in the Pagan world.

– **The case of inter-state matters**, kings asserted themselves through brute force and violence. The values of pre-modern state formation were divine/mythological and violent/expansionist.

It was against these values that those rulers judged the function of architectural sites. A ruler who possessed the building by conquering the city or by becoming the king through **clerical**

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legitimacy decided what a mosque, temple or palace will be appropriated into or whether it will be allowed to exist at all.

Since the French Revolution, the legitimacy is now not derived from divinity, or any historical practice, and rejects violence. This has generated a long history of political thought and modern states were created on the **values of modern morality**.

[What is the legal position wrt conversion of a place of worship?](#)

As per the **Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991**, the conversion of any place of worship from its religious character as that character existed on the 15th of August, 1947 is prohibited.

– Basically, the Act states that if a site was a temple on August 15, 1947, it shall remain a temple and so on for all religious sites.

Reason for selecting 15th Aug 1947 as the cut-off date: The Act does so in the spirit of a modern nation-state. It means that since we resolved to become a modern nation on August 15, 1947, and realised it on January 26, 1950, we shall cut our ties with the systems of politics that defined our past.

– On the 15th of August 1947, India resolved to create a break from the past and **redefine its values of political legitimacy**. From that day onwards, India was to be defined by, and courts were to judge conflicts using the **values of a modern state** enshrined in the constitution. Not against the values of the systems of politics or mythology that existed before.

[What are the issues with the court-ordered investigation in this case?](#)

As per the Places of Worship Act 1991, we define the “true nature” of our architectural sites against the values of modernity and not those of mythology or medieval warfare. The philosophical and practical resolution to that, as understood in the Act, is to **not entertain mythological claims to historical sites and to not investigate their archaeology for claims of possession**. By ordering a survey of the Gyanvapi Mosque, the courts have done exactly the opposite.

By conducting such investigations into religious sites, the courts have, like they did in the case of Babri Masjid, **legitimised the values of an anti-modern polity**. They have **acted against the values** that they are supposed to uphold. Courts cannot be acting on claims of mythology or those of medieval capture.

[Way forward](#)

Despite precedents that speak otherwise, the higher courts must maintain the status quo. Architecture of today shouldn't be defined by an arbitrarily chosen portion of its history. Such petitions need to be rejected.

ROAD SAFETY AND RELATED ISSUES

58. [The road to safety](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “The road to safety” published in the “The Hindu” on 16th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Infrastructure, Transport Infrastructure, Urban Infrastructure

Relevance: Issues and Problems in India's road infrastructure, road accidents

News: Recently, The Delhi government has initiated a drive to **enforce lane discipline**, starting with **strict compliance** on the bus lane. Trials over the last month have thrown up several lessons

What are the road-safety-related problems in India?

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Every year, around 50,000 accidents take place in our mega Indian cities. A quarter of them are fatal, which leads to avoidable deaths. Nearly half of those who lose their lives are pedestrians. The burden of death is borne by the young. The **opportunity cost** of lost human lives is immense. **What are the causes of traffic, accidents, and others' problems in Indian Cities, especially Delhi?**

Around half of the accidents occur on account of overspeeding and a **quarter** are due to dangerous **driving**. Further, almost half of the accidents are due to collisions with buses and trucks.

In India, in some cases, a **driving license** is obtained through wrongful means with help of an unscrupulous tout.

Even obtaining a license doesn't equip a person with driving etiquette like sticking to the lane; maintaining speed and traffic signals, etc. Therefore, there is a **large gap** between a **lab environment test** and **reality**.

The propensity of people to use **personal vehicles** instead of public transport also adds to the chaos. For example, Delhi has the **highest per capita registration** of personal vehicles — nearly 110 cars per 1,000 people, as against a national average of 25.

Measures taken by the Delhi government (Delhi Model)

Since 2009, In Delhi, the road deaths have gradually tapered despite **increasing numbers** of vehicles due to efforts of the Delhi Police. This has been done by working upon **black spots** by adopting **traffic-calming measures** and **enhanced enforcement**.

In case of deviations from the lane, the **bus driver** will invite harsh penalties. It would be useful to look at the **skill sets of Indian drivers**. A driving skill test confirms the ability of the driver to wield the wheel

To obtain a driving license – Delhi now has **automated driving test centres**, which have reduced the margin of **human intervention**.

Delhi's government is working on **road design** to accommodate all users fairly.

Delhi Traffic Police has installed speeding cameras in the city, with an **automatic number plate recognition system**. This has led to a spike in the number of challans and a slowdown of vehicles in the city.

The Way Forward

To obtain a driving license: the **simulator tests** and **psychological evaluation** could be embedded in the regulatory framework.

The city roads should be **remodelled** with intuitive **road designs** and **signages**. There should be **different zones** of road usage for pedestrians/cyclists, buses, and other vehicles.

There should be designated pick-up and drop-off points for taxis and auto-rickshaws. In this regard, a **pilot stretch** has been redesigned collaboratively with IIT Delhi.

There should be **cooperation** and **coordination** among all the important agencies directly and indirectly related to traffic problems such as the road-owning agency, the municipal body, the traffic police, and the transport enforcement wing for strict enforcement of the traffic rules.

Disciplining traffic requires a **collective behavioural change**. Therefore, the onus of change lies as much on **citizens** as on the government. The government can deploy **technology tools** and **artificial intelligence** to cause deterrence in traffic violations.

The **public transport** system can be improved with the introduction of the **Mobility as a Service (MaaS) solutions**. This will integrate all options of public mobility on a common digital platform.

A commuter could then choose to hop onto a bus, metro, a cab, or an auto.

A **government-backed digital aggregator** of all mobility options would make public transport more efficient and provide inbuilt solutions for last-mile and first-mile connectivity.

SEDITION LAW IN INDIA

59. **On sedition, the Supreme Court has aligned itself with the collective conscience of India**

Source: This post is based on the article “**On sedition, the Supreme Court has aligned itself with the collective conscience of India**” published in **The Indian Express** on 18th May 22.

Syllabus: GS2 – Fundamental Rights, Indian Constitution

Relevance: Sedition law

News: The Supreme Court’s seminal intervention in a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of section 124A of the Indian Penal Code is a **watershed moment** in the progressive expansion of human rights jurisprudence.

The SC directed the Union government and the states to refrain from using the law of sedition. In addition, the Supreme Court has also kept all previous cases under Section 124A of the IPC in abeyance till the matter is reconsidered in a comprehensive way.

Why SC’s intervention in this case is significant?

In what is seen as a first in judicial history, the Supreme Court has virtually **rendered redundant the provision of a criminal law without expressly declaring it as unconstitutional**.

In an example of judicial statecraft, the court has **shielded individuals against a harsh law without violating Parliament’s legislative remit** or the executive’s command over policy decisions.

The intervention of the SC leans in the favour of the libertarian bent of the Indian Constitution.

Why the sedition law must go?

Rampant abuse of the archaic colonial law in recent times, compromising the citizens’ right to liberty & legal due process, right to reputation and dignity.

Suppression of dissent: Cartoonists, journalists, activists, intellectuals, students and politicians have suffered prolonged incarceration and oppressive criminal trials for their convictions and beliefs.

For more – Click [here](#)

What is the likely impact of the SC’s intervention in this case?

It can nudge the government to enact an **anti-lynching humanitarian law** and a comprehensive **law against custodial torture**, considering the proven inadequacy of the guidelines issued by it for its elimination.

What is the situation wrt custodial torture in India?

A report by the National Campaign Against Torture has confirmed that 1,731 persons died in custody in 2019 alone.

The **absence of an anti-custodial torture law**, a glaring gap in the architecture of the criminal justice system, is inexplicable considering the Article 21, recommendations of the Select Committee of Rajya Sabha (2010), the Law Commission of India (2017) and the Human Rights Commission and the judgments of the Supreme Court (Puttaswamy, 2017; Jeeja Ghosh, 2016; and Shabnam, 2015).

Way forward

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It is expected likewise from the court to intervene suitably and **read down the UAPA and other criminal laws** that have been repeatedly misused to trample upon the civil liberties and rights of the people.

This would **enhance India's soft power** in its engagement with the international community. The court-inspired initiatives would also **validate the nation's pre-eminent role in the shaping of a new world order.**

Governments for their part must know that they can stand only when founded upon liberty and justice. For the present, the prime minister has done well in deciding to revisit a law that is anathema in a free country.

60. In abeyance of Section 124A, a provisional relief

Source: The post is based on an article "In abeyance of Section 124A, a provisional relief" published in the "The Hindu" on 16th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Sedition Law v/s Right to freedom of speech and expression

News: Recently, In Supreme Court of India in **S.G. Vombatkere vs Union of India** has directed governments, both at the level of the Union and the States, to keep "all pending trials, appeals and proceedings" arising out of a charge framed under Section 124A "in abeyance".

About Section 124A

How have the Court granted a temporary suspension of the provision?

The Union government has submitted an **affidavit** indicating a willingness to re-examine Section 124A.

The affidavit allowed the judges to issue such an interim order where the provision will be kept in abeyance until the Government, and Parliament, take a final call on the matter.

Argument against the provision

K.M. Munshi said in the Constituent Assembly, "*The criticism of the government is the essence of democracy*".

It is a **colonial-era law** used against India freedom fighters. For example, the act was invoked against Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mohandas Gandhi.

K.M. Munshi argued in the Constituent Assembly to delete the word "sedition" as a permitted restriction on free speech to prevent perpetuation of 124-A of the I.P.C". Therefore, The Constitution did not permit a restriction on free speech on the grounds of sedition.

The law has been used as a **restraint** on dissent, to crush opposition aimed at the government. The governments across India continued to charge people with the offence.

In the 1950s, two different High Courts struck down Section 124A as offensive to freedom.

In the **Kedarnath case**, the SC limited **the scope of law** to "acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order, or incitement to violence". However, the **limitations** imposed have rarely been observed. The law has been over exploited.

Since 1973, the sedition law has also been treated as a **cognisable offence**. The police can arrest a suspect without a warrant.

Since the **1962 Judgment**, the Supreme Court's reading of **fundamental rights** has undergone a **transformative change**. For instance, the Court has, in recent times, struck down **penal laws** on grounds of lack of clarity in language, and of the chilling effect on free speech. The CJI had indicated that the law was an **anachronism**, a colonial-era relic.

Argument in favour

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In 1962, the Supreme Court in **Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar** declared the Section 124A as a valid restriction on free speech on grounds of public order.

The Way Forward

The government's intention of re-examining the law indicates that "the Sedition law is not in tune with the **current social milieu** in India.

The Court may constitute a Bench of **five judges** to decide upon the **constitutionality** of the sedition law.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

61. **The neighbourhood in turmoil, lessons for India**

Source: The post is based on an article "**The neighbourhood in turmoil, lessons for India**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **21st May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations, Bilateral Relations, Regional Grouping etc.

Relevance: India's Foreign policy to deal with countries in our immediate neighbourhood

Context: India's **foreign policy** while dealing with the neighbouring countries in the South Asia Region has **changed** from 2016 to the present.

Rather than prevailing over any uncooperative neighbour using any means possible, India has now shifted towards using soft-power diplomacy, thereby improving ties with each of the South Asian countries.

However, it has virtually ignored the political developments in Pakistan.

What are the changes that have taken place in India's foreign policy?

Foreign Policy pre-2016

The Government of India adopted a "**muscular foreign policy**" with the **uncooperative South Asian neighbour**. For example, India put Pakistan on notice on terror attacks. It also cancelled Foreign Secretary-level talks with Pakistan. Further, India has been alleged to have intervened in the Sri Lanka's and Nepal's domestic Politics.

Foreign Policy post 2016

India has abandoned its uniformly muscular "**one size fits all**" approach to the region. At present, the government has made peace with a much **more consensual**, and **conciliatory policy** in the neighbourhood.

– For example, India has not been held responsible in any of its neighbouring countries, namely Myanmar, Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka which have undergone electoral changes. India has been **improving** its **ties** with each country (except Pakistan) in South Asia through high-level visits, extending development aid and lines of credit, and enabling a rush of soft power diplomacy.

India is focused on **people** in the neighbourhood rather than just those in power. For example, in **Afghanistan**, India negotiated with Pakistani officials to ensure it could send **food grains** for the Afghan people.

India has toned down **rhetoric** on **domestic issues** in the neighbourhood. For example, the Indian Government's public reaction to **Durga Pooja violence** against Bangladesh's Hindu minority in 2021.

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Way Forward

India cannot maintain a **silent** or “**neutral**” position in relations to South Asian Countries. This is not in the interest of India.

– For example, India faces the direct impact of almost every crisis in South Asian country like refugee influx, economic crisis etc. Therefore, they must be watched more closely.

India should learn that the potent combination of **populism, hyper-nationalism, religious majoritarianism**, and a **strident anti-elitism** does not pay in the long run.

– For example, the popular leader may come to power, but their popularity can decline sharply and suddenly. For example, fall of K.P. Oli, Imran Khan and Mahindra Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka. This means nothing is forever, especially in a democracy.

The **economy matters** above all.

– For example, In **Pakistan, Nepal** and **Sri Lanka**, the defeat of populists has come due to slowdown in **growth, jobs** and **rising inflation**, instead of the Opposition parties. The **economic mismanagement** has brought changes in the neighbourhood

India must survey the impact of **new vulnerabilities** on smaller neighbouring countries as the vulnerabilities could be exploited by **global powers** like China

New Delhi must find newer ways to **energise regional groupings** such as the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** and the **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative**.

Finally, the Indian government must learn that **lack of consensus building** in political culture let down the popular leaders in neighbouring democracies.

– For example, Rajapaksa, Oli and Khan turned their opposition into “the enemy”, and froze out the media, non-governmental organisations

INDIA AND AFGHAN RELATIONS

62. [Help Afghans](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Help Afghans**” published in **the Times of India** on **19th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations; Regional Grouping; Bilateral Relations etc.

Relevance: India-Afghanistan Relations; Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure

News: At present, the four-day meeting of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure** is being organized in Delhi, India.

Importance of the meeting

At present the **global attention** has been shifted to the Ukraine war, sanctions and their economic impact. Therefore, the US has abandoned Afghanistan to the **Taliban**. Therefore, SCO’s RAT member countries, including those from Pakistan and China are focussing on Afghanistan.

Situation in Afghanistan

This is a **virtual collapse** of **administrative structures**, the **local economy**, **Healthcare facilities** etc. Around half of the Afghanistan’s population is facing acute hunger.

The **humanitarian** and **social condition** in Afghanistan has become terrible. For example, Girls can’t attend secondary education, women can’t get a driving licence and a job in the market. The **Afghan refugees** are pouring into neighbouring countries like Iran and Pakistan.

India’s concern

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The security situation in Afghanistan affects all SCO members, including India.

The **Islamic State** and the **Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan** have stepped up their activities on both sides of the **Durand Line**.

This jeopardises India's **painstaking investments** in Afghanistan over the last two decades. Pakistan always tries to block Indian moves to work more closely with Tehran to maintain a **strategic foothold** in the region.

Most of the governments are reluctant to deal with the Taliban. Therefore, there is absence of any **concerted global effort** to help.

Way Forward

India should help itself by continuing to **send humanitarian aid** to Afghanistan despite the Taliban regime.

In addition, the government should also expedite **emergency visas** for Afghan nationals.

INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA

63. For a better South Asian neighbourhood

Source: The post is based on an article "**For a better South Asian neighbourhood**" published in the **Indian Express** on **17th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations, Regional Grouping

Relevance: SAARC, South Asia, India's Neighbourhood Policy, India's bilateral relations with the South Asian Countries

News: Recently, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan have been facing a lot of hardship. All the South Asian countries are facing the problem of **higher oil** and **food inflation**. This has resulted in **popular unrest** across the region. This underlines the **geographic imperative** that binds India to its neighbours in the Subcontinent.

How is India at the centre of geographic imperative in the South Asia region?

India has had a long tradition of **hosting political exiles** from the region. Delhi has welcomed leaders from the neighbourhood taking shelter in India. For example, Dalai Lama from Tibet or Prachanda from Nepal.

India's emerging **neighbourhood policy** requires the Indian leadership to provide support and assistance at such crisis time.

What are the challenges in the South Asian Regions?

India-Sri Lank relations

In the past, India has been involved in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. It has caused deep distrust between **Delhi** and the **Sinhala nationalists**

India-Nepal relationship

The **Chinese influence** is growing in Nepal. For example, China has built a new airport near Lumbini, Nepal.

India is facing the challenge of **turbulent triangular dynamics** between Delhi, Kathmandu, and Beijing.

There is a **deep political discomfort** between India and Nepal. Nepal's politics have been dominated by the **communists** in the last two decades.

India-Pakistan

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India-Pakistan **bilateral relationship** has been **frozen**. Islamabad's policies are deliberately **anti-geographic**. For example, the recent controversy in Pakistan over the routine appointment of a "trade officer" in its high commission in Delhi.

The Pakistan is unwilling to **expand trade ties** or at least have a **limited trade liberalisation** with India. For example, Pakistan said it can't trade with India unless Delhi reversed its **2019 constitutional changes in Kashmir**.

Pakistan Army has been long viewed as a **decisive arbiter** in Pakistan's political and policy disputes.

At present, Pakistan is facing a **political crisis**. Delhi had little reason to believe that Pakistan's new government can alter its self-defeating policy towards India.

Way Forward

Overall

All the countries in South Asia should work with the **logic of geography** amidst the **deepening regional and global crises** accentuated by **Russia's invasion of Ukraine**.

The **cultural geography** can help in reshaping the **Subcontinent's regional relations**. **Religion and culture** are deeply interconnected in South Asia. Therefore, all **religious pilgrimage sites** should be developed across the region. They should be made accessible. This will improve **tourist revenues** and also calm the **troubled political relations** between nations.

The Subcontinent can be reconnected through **sacred geographies** — including the Ramayana trail and Sufi shrines.

A more **intensive regional cooperation** is one of the tools for managing the new dangers by the countries in the region.

India-Sri Lanka Relations

The Sri Lankan current crisis raised hopes for **transcending** the **internal ethnic divide** in the island nation. This can rebuild **political confidence** between Colombo and Delhi.

India's has provided both material and financial support during this **unprecedented economic and political crisis** in Sri Lanka. This has generated much **goodwill** in Sri Lanka.

India-Nepal Relations

The **Nepal congress** has returned and its readiness to deepen ties with India has opened the door for a **recalibrating India-Nepal ties**.

In addition to **revitalising cultural geography**, better management of **economic geography** is inevitable.

Prime Minister Modi visited Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha in Nepal. There is an idea of a "**Buddhist circuit**" across the India-Nepal border. There is wider **international interest** in the **Buddhist's historic sites**.

The Indian government should accelerate **transborder transport** and **energy connectivity** in the eastern subcontinent.

India-Pakistan Relations

Delhi and Islamabad had agreed to open the **Kartarpur corridor** to make it easier for Sikh pilgrims to visit the shrine in Kartarpur in Pakistan.

India must continue to bet that the **geographic imperative** will eventually prevail over Islamabad's policies. India must continue to find ways to work with Pakistan.

INDIA-NEPAL RELATIONS

64. [PM Modi's recent Nepal visit saw a successful deployment of India's soft power to repair bilateral ties](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**PM Modi's recent Nepal visit saw a successful deployment of India's soft power to repair bilateral ties**” published in **The Indian Express** on **19th May 22**, and the article “**Can Lumbini bridge the Delhi-Kathmandu gap? Modi's visit this week was important. Results of Nepal's national polls in November will be key factor**” published in **The Times of India** on **18th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: Indo-Nepal bilateral ties

Context: Indian Prime Minister's recent visit to Lumbini (Nepal) on Buddha Poornima.

[What is the significance of the visit?](#)

This visit assumes significance since the two countries should have had the best relationship in South Asia, but have been unable to capitalise on their connections, caught in the crossroads of Nepalese internal politics.

It also conveys a **shared culture between India and Nepal** and an **attempt to deploy Indian soft power** to reclaim some space in India's Himalayan neighbour.

Significance of the venue:

– Lumbini was an inspired choice for the bilateral summit, especially since India and Nepal enjoy a close, people-centred, multi-layered, and multifaceted relationship. That Lumbini is the **birthplace of Lord Buddha** is testified by the **Pali inscription** on the pillar erected by Emperor Ashoka in 249 BC, 339 years after Buddha's enlightenment.

– Nepal lies in the centre of the Himalayan ranges, described in the **Markandeya Purana** as extending from “sea to sea”, in the east from the Dihang bend down to the Bay of Bengal, and in the west from the Indus bend down to the Arabian Sea.

– Kalidas, in **Kumarasambhava**, called the Himalayas “the Kingdom of heaven”. Its topography and rivers make Nepal one of the best endowed countries in Asia. At the same time, the ever changing Himalayas, with an uplift rate ten times higher than that of the Alps, suffer from seismic fragility.

Significant agreements signed during Modi's visit –

– A proposed collaboration between Madras IIT and Kathmandu University for a joint degree programme, and

– A second in the higher education sector between Indian Council of Cultural Relations and Lumbini Buddhist University for the establishment of a Dr Ambedkar Chair for Buddhist Studies.

[How can infrastructure projects help revive the Indo-Nepal ties?](#)

The real potential for turnaround in bilateral relations lies via the route of infrastructure projects. One of the big stumbling blocks in the India-Nepal relationship used to be Delhi's **inability to complete agreed upon infrastructure projects** in Nepal, including roads, railway lines and mega power projects. Over the last few years this has changed.

– Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba invited Delhi to take up the long stuck **West Seti hydro power project**, which was once taken up by Australia but abandoned, and later coveted by China Three Gorges Corporation.

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– The offer follows India’s success with the **900 MW Arun III hydropower project**, developed by Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN), a joint venture between the Centre and the Himachal Pradesh government.

- **Significance:** India-Nepal relations are rendered complex by Nepal’s overdependence on India, according to former Nepalese ambassador to India, Lok Raj Baral. Export of surplus Nepalese hydropower to India can reverse this situation. The agreement to have Indian PSU Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) develop the Arun-IV project is welcome in this context

[What are some pending issues that need to be addressed?](#)

Moving forward, India and Nepal need to address the following issues:

1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship: It has long been a thorn in the relationship. India is willing to consider reviewing, modifying, or updating the Treaty in line with the requirements of the 21st century.

China factor: Nepal joined China’s Belt and Road Initiative in 2017, but little progress has taken place on the two identified projects – constructing a **transHimalayan network**, including a **rail connection** from Tibet to Kathmandu, Pokhara and Lumbini, and creating a Nepal-China Free Trade Area.

Unlike Nepal’s other partners, including India, China does not provide much grant assistance to Nepal. **Stepping up its investments and development partnership in Nepal** will allow India to address the China factor.

Kalapani boundary issue: Deuba has a difficult inheritance on the Kalapani boundary issue because Nepal’s previous regime vitiated it by altering maps and making exaggerated claims. Deuba has proposed a **resolution through a dialogue mechanism**. Only 2% of the India-Nepal boundary remains to be settled. Differences exist only in the areas of Kalapani and Susta. India and Nepal can resolve their boundary issues should both sides have the will to do so.

[Way forward](#)

There is some urgency in getting India-Nepal relations back on the rails. Nepalese parliamentary election is due by November this year. Its outcome will determine much of the future trajectory of India-Nepal relations.

65. **Modi in Lumbini: Buddhism provides India a cultural inroad in Nepal – it may not be enough to counter China**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Modi in Lumbini: Buddhism provides India a cultural inroad in Nepal – it may not be enough to counter China**” published in **The Indian Express** on 17th May 22.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations – India and its neighbourhood

Relevance: Indo-Nepal bilateral relations

News: On the occasion of Buddha Purnima, PM Modi **made a trip to Lumbini** in Nepal, becoming the first Indian PM to do so. He offered prayers at the Mayadevi temple, believed to be the Buddha’s birthplace, and then laid the foundation for the International Buddhist Conference and Meditation Centre.

The trip has come one month after Nepal PM’s India visit.

[Why the PM’s trip to Nepal is being considered significant?](#)

The trip is being projected as a “cultural visit” but there are many who call it India’s late awakening from a deep diplomatic slumber.

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– Late awakening, because Delhi has been **indifferent to the deep inroads China** has been making in Nepal.

– And moreover, **very little has been done to repair Indo-Nepal bilateral relations**, which suffered immensely b/w 2016 and 2021. India not only refused to welcome Nepal's constitution promulgated in September 2015, but also launched an economic blockade for 134 days.

Hence, PM Modi, by befriending Deuba, has made an **effective attempt to repair the damage** in bilateral ties that took place

Deuba, who is also the chairman of the Nepali Congress, recently accepted Modi's invitation for his party and the BJP to establish fraternal relations — something the Chinese Communist Party tried with the unified Communist party of Nepal.

[What has been agreed at Lumbini?](#)

India and Nepal agreed to develop a **Buddhist circuit**, linking shrines located in the two countries with Lumbini occupying a prime position.

India also agreed to set up the **Dr B R Ambedkar Chair in Lumbini University**, with around 1,000 students, including from China, enrolled.

[China's efforts at establishing its foothold in Nepal](#)

China **first offered to spend \$3 billion to build up Lumbini as the world peace city** under the aegis of its NGO – Asia Pacific Exchange and Foundation – co-opting Maoist leader Prachanda as its vice chairman.

China has also built a **monastery in the core area of the Lumbini Development Project**. China's offer to develop it as the World Peace Centre and **construct a railway line connecting Tibet and Kathmandu** is as yet in abeyance, but not completely given up.

[How has Lumbini become the centrestage for competing international forces in Nepal?](#)

The **increased presence and influence of the US and the European Union, along with India**, has become more pronounced in Nepal's domestic politics – especially following the political changes of 2005-06.

China retaliated with a matching presence and economic investments. This has had an impact on internal politics and policy-making in Nepal. But unlike its competitors, China's outlook had depth and took into account multiple dimensions.

Lumbini, thanks largely to China, has now become sort of a microcosm of the competing international forces in the country.

India first reacted to the Chinese presence in Lumbini on November 8, 2011, in the wake of enthusiastic publicity by the Chinese about the World City initiative.

[Way forward](#)

Modi's visit to Lumbini and the laying of the monastery's foundation may give India a foothold and cultural space. But that provides zero guarantee that it will be able to outdo its competitors, including the West and China, who are already deeply entrenched in Nepal.

66. [The importance of Lumbini](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "The importance of Lumbini" published in the "The Hindu" on 16th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 International Relations; Bilateral Relations

Relevance: India-Nepal Ties

News: Recently, The Prime Minister of India visited Lumbini, Nepal for the first time in the last few decades.

How this Indian PM's visit to Lumbini, Nepal is important?

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The visit reiterated the **message** of peace; compassion; non-violence; tolerance; dialogue and debate; reconciliation; consensus; and the middle path forged (preached by the Buddha) in Indian society which is facing strife and turmoil and anger and hatred.

In a **Political sense**, Indian PM's visit has put to rest the **unnecessary debate** on whether the Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal which is a sensitive issue for Nepal.

In a strategic sense, the visit was aimed to counter the **growing presence** of China in **Lumbini**, which is close to the Indian border. For example, it has built the **largest monastery** in Lumbini, sponsors **international conferences** on Buddhism, sponsors **massive celebrations** on Buddhist festivals, promotes Chinese tourists to Lumbini, and Chinese investments in the region. It means China is exploiting the **soft power potential** of Buddhism in Nepal.

What is India's soft potential?

India is home to some of the **most sacred sites** of Buddhism: Bodh Gaya; Sarnath; Kushinagar; Shravasti; Nalanda; and Rajgir, among several others.

Both Lumbini and the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya are UNESCO World Heritage sites. They are to Buddhists what Mecca is to Muslims or Kashi is to Hindus.

What are the issues from the Indian Side?

India has not utilized its **soft power potential** in Lumbini. Although, India assisted in building a **small museum** in Lumbini in the late 1990s. Further, an India Ambassador planted a sampling of the sacred Bodhi tree in the gardens of the Maya Devi temple where Gautama Buddha was born in 2014.

Lumbini is home to **beautiful monasteries** from several countries. But India does not have a monastery in Lumbini.

There were talks about developing a **Buddhist circuit** between the major pilgrimage sites in Nepal and India. But, talk has not fully translated into action.

There is the poor state of border infrastructure and immigration and other facilities in the area. The road networks are poor. For example, it is a nightmare to cross the Sunauli-Bhairahawa India-Nepal check post that is designated for tourists.

The relationship between the **monasteries** of foreign countries in Bodh Gaya and the local communities is fraught.

What should be done?

India can assist the international committee for the development of Lumbini and Nepal in the implementation of the master plan for development of Lumbini, which is pending for decades.

The basic infrastructure like **roads network** between India and Nepal should be upgraded. For example, Kushinagar Airport (India) as well as Bhairahawa Airport (Nepal) should be constructed timely. Further, **the integrated check post** could also be built speedily. The measure would **boost tourism** and **the local economy**.

On the lines of a master plan to **develop Lumbini**, India should also adopt a **master plan** for Bodh Gaya in order to develop it as a **sacred place** for pilgrimage for both Hindus and Buddhists. India can set up a **high-level coordination committee** comprising representatives of State governments, Central governments as well as of foreign monasteries to promote coordination between foreign monasteries.

The Buddhist circuit, namely **Lumbini-Bodh Gaya-Sarnath-Kushinagar** should be declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** with master plans for each segment of the circuit.

India and Nepal can organise an international conference on the development of the Buddhist circuit as a **joint initiative**.

India can also establish an **international museum** of Buddhist traditions in Bodh Gaya and invite all Buddhist countries to participate.

CHILDREN EDUCATION

67. **National Assessment Survey lays out post-Covid challenges. Teacher- and student-centred approaches are needed**

Source: This post is based on the article “**National Assessment Survey lays out post-Covid challenges. Teacher- and student-centred approaches are needed**” published in **The Indian Express** on **27th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Governance

Relevance: Issues related to development of education

News: A study commissioned by the Centre, the National Assessment Survey (NAS), details the magnitude of the learning crisis during the pandemic across the country.

Conducted in November 2021 among students of more than one lakh schools in 720 districts, the NAS shows a **sharp dip in the performance of students** in almost all subjects during the pandemic years.

The Union education ministry has said that the NAS data will help states in taking remedial measures, both short-term and long-term.

Must Read: [Ministry of Education releases NAS 2021 report](#)

What is the learning crisis that developed during the pandemic?

India witnessed one of the **longest school closures** in the world.

For the better part of the past two years, teachers struggled to cope with the pedagogical challenges posed by the switch to online classes.

The country’s **digital divide** proved to be a hurdle for a large number of underprivileged learners.

Field reports by private agencies and state government bodies have indicated that this disruption resulted in an **alarming regression in children’s foundational skills** — reading, writing, doing simple mathematics.

– The NAS 2021 report reveals that the breakdown affected even states that traditionally do well on educational parameters. The average scores of Delhi’s Class V students in mathematics, for instance, were well below the national average.

What are some challenges that need to be overcome?

The pandemic seems to have put on the back-burner the implementation of school education reforms envisaged by the NEP.

Funds for training teachers have been **slashed by nearly 50%** in the current budget

The **outlay for the Mid-Day Meal Scheme** — whose positive impact on school enrollment, student retention and nutrition of children is well-documented — has **come down by almost 10%**.

Instead, there seems to be an **over-reliance on e-learning**. But as the NAS shows, these methods cannot be a substitute for the interactions in a classroom.

What needs to be done?

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The first step should be to **acknowledge that children are returning to schools with diminished skills**, as well as recognise that some learners may have experienced more setbacks than their peers.

Planners and school administrators should **give teachers the freedom to adopt creative approaches** that turn classrooms into spaces where students can shed the anxieties of the past two years and regain skills at their own pace.

– This would require **re-imagining pedagogical practices** and a **shift from syllabus-centred approaches** of the past to learner-centric methods. The New Education Policy 2020, announced in the first year of the pandemic, recognises this imperative.

Way forward

Several studies, including the annual ASER reports, have underlined that most of the failings of the country's educational system arise from the **lack of connect between the lived experiences of most students and what is taught in classrooms**.

The pandemic-induced crisis is an opportunity to take corrective measures. Failure to do so will endanger the academic future of an entire generation.

GS2 – POLITY – INDIAN CONSTITUTION

PERARIVALAN'S RELEASE AND RELATED ISSUES

68. **Who wields the power to pardon?**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Who wields the power to pardon**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **27th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India; Issues and Challenges pertaining to the Federal structure.

Relevance: The Centre-State Relations, The Governor's Power

News: The Supreme Court has ordered to release **A.G. Perarivalan**, one of the seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. This has brought into limelight the Governor's powers of pardon or remission under **Article 161** of the Constitution of India.

Supreme Court's Observation

The SC ruled that a Governor is bound by the **State government's advice** in matters relating to **commutation/remission of sentences** under Article 161. The Court invoked its extraordinary power under Article 142 and ordered the release of Perarivalan.

What is the criticism against the office of the Governor?

In the past, there are numerous instances in which the **gubernatorial offices** of the Governors have been **used by the Centre for political purposes**.

The Constitution makers never thought of giving Governors powers similar to those of elected representatives. Therefore, the post is a nominated one and not an elected one.

The Governor's post is “useless when inert and dangerous when active”. For example, in the Perarivalan episode, there was inertness of the Governor which proved dangerous.

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The Governors are often accused of becoming **agents** of the party at the Centre and obstructing the implementation of **welfare measures** by the popularly elected State governments.

The Governors are alleged sitting on Bills passed by State legislatures without performing their duties under the Constitution.

Why did the Supreme Court issue a release order under Article 142?

The Governor had not done his duty under the Constitution. The Governor was given enough time, opportunity and warnings by the court. The Governor was blatantly disregarding the court's observations.

The delay impacted the **liberty** of a person who was **legally** and **constitutionally** entitled to be released.

The judiciary is the final **arbiter of the Constitution**. If the Governor does not do his job, the court could pass appropriate orders.

What is the significance of the Perarivalan judgment?

The verdict has underlined the **imperative** of **federalism** in the context of **gubernatorial amnesty**. The judgment in this case is being seen as a victory for **federalism** and **State autonomy**.

The **Article 161** is more about the Governor's duty, rather than power.

The Governor's duty is to abide by the recommendations of the State cabinet while performing his functions, including the power to remit, suspend or commute sentences under **Article 161**.

The Governor need not have sent the matter to the President. The Governor's power under Article 161 is in no way inferior to the President's role under Article 72.

The Governors should exercise their power timely.

The judgment recognises the power of the state in matters of remission, commutation, etc.

The verdict upholds the human rights of prisoners. The judgment shows a great amount of **judicial discipline** by adhering to the established principles of law. The court invoked Article 142 to do **"complete justice"**.

What are the lessons for our justice system?

Justice delayed is justice denied. Each organ of governance has to work towards the preservation and promotion of human rights.

The institution is working very hard. India has one of the lowest **judge-to-population ratios** in the world.

There is a problem of judicial vacancies in various High Courts and tribunals. The High Courts are functioning with 50% strength.

The judgment shows the importance of **pursuit** of the cause by litigants, their lawyers, the court and the media.

The judgment upheld the **individual's freedom** and **dignity**, the basic promises of the Constitution.

Way Forward

The Governor

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The Governor is not bound by an arbitrary decision by the cabinet passed by non-application of mind or extraneous considerations. The device of judicial review is the most effective check against such aberrations.

The powers of nomination of the Governor should be re-considered.

The **Justice Sarkaria Commission** wanted the Governor to act as “**a friend, philosopher and guide**” to the Council of Ministers. The Governor should be a “detached figure and not too intimately connected with the local politics of the State”.

The Governor should act within the constitutional framework.

Indian Judiciary

We need to have Regional Benches of the Supreme Court to reduce the workload.

The retirement age of judges can be increased to 70.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVERNANCE RELATED ISSUES

ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE (ESG) FRAMEWORK

69. The ESG rating conundrum

Source: The post is based on an article “**The ESG rating conundrum**” published in the **Business Standard** on **23rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy, Ecology and Environment

Relevance: Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Framework

News: In recent years, the **environmental, social and governance (ESG)** investments have emerged as a subject of great interest and significance across the globe. In this context, the SEBI had brought out a consultation paper on the need to regulate ESG rating providers.

Increasingly, corporates are adopting higher ESG norms, and investors are preferring such investments.

Importance of ESG

The ESG investments lead to public good as well as make business sense. They are beneficial for both —the shareholders and all other stakeholders.

Rating by ERPs

The **ESG rating providers (ERPs)** offer rating products in two categories: (1) **risk ratings:** an assessment of a company’s resilience to ESG related risks, and (2) “**impact**” **ratings:** an assessment of the impact of a company’s operations on the environment and society.

What are the challenges in the development of universally acceptable ESG standards?

Globally, there are no **universally recognised ESG reporting standards and frameworks**. The **investors** and **corporates** have been using different **standards and frameworks**. For example, GRI, TCFD, SASB, among others. This may lead to **greenwashing** and **misselling**, and the **potential risks** to investor protection, transparency and capital allocation in markets, among others.

There is **no consistency in disclosures and transparency** of the methodology and rating process.

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Assessing impact rating is more complex and arduous compared to risk rating.

Investors are more concerned about **risk rating**. It means, **ESG impact ratings** are not the mainstream ESG rating product currently being offered by most providers.

There are concerns over **desirability** or **workability** of the universal ESG standard and frameworks. There are **different levels** of development across different countries in the world. The advanced economies and the emerging economies have made different commitments based on the **principle of “Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities”**. An ESG framework negates the efforts made for equity and climate justice.

ESG investing is still relatively in the nascent stage in India. Many of them do not understand the nuances of ESG investing. They rely on **in-house research** due to absence of consistent and comparable ESG reporting standards and frameworks.

Way Forward

Global level

A number of international bodies are working on the idea to develop the ESG framework.

– For example, The **International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation** had announced the setting up of the **International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB)** at **Glasgow Summit** in 2021. This is an attempt to develop universally acceptable reporting standards and frameworks.

India

India has already developed and put in place our own **business responsibility and sustainability reporting standards (BRSR)**. This takes into account the viewpoint of stakeholders, domestic considerations and international best practices.

– For example, the **BRSR reporting framework** is **inter-operable** with international frameworks like GRI, TCFD and SASB.

Sebi regulations mandates top 1,000 listed companies to compulsory report in accordance with the BRSR standards from the year 2022-23 onwards. Other **listed** or **even unlisted companies** could **voluntarily** adopt these standards.

The **domestic ESG rating providers** industry is still at a stage of infancy in India. The demand is mostly met by the foreign ESG rating providers which are unregulated and following varying standards at present. Therefore, there is an urgent need that India put in place a **regulatory framework** to **accredit ERPs**.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

GYANVAPI MOSQUE ISSUE

70. **Gyanvapi and the principle of non-retrogression**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Gyanvapi and the principle of non-retrogression**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **27th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Provisions of the Constitution of India;

Relevance: Fundamental Rights, principle of Non-Retrogression

News: Recently, the Gyanvapi-Vishwanath dispute has come up in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah mosque has come up in Mathura in which the petitions are seeking the removal of the mosque and exclusive ownership of the property.

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What are the relevant legal statutes?

The **Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act** clearly prohibits altering its status quo.

– The **Section 3** of the Act bars the conversion of a place of worship of a religious denomination or any of its sections into a place of worship of a different section of the same denomination or of a different religious denomination.

– **Section 4** declares that the **religious character** of a place of worship existing on August 15, 1947 shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day. Any legal case pertaining to the conversion of the religious character of any place of worship pending as on August 15, 1947 shall abate.

Impact of the Babri Masji Judgment

The judgment may have been the beginning of unending demands for the handing over of hundreds of other “disputed” mosques in India.

What are the issues with the judiciary actions?

The Supreme Court has been reluctant to stay such judicial interventions under **the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991**.

The Court observed that ascertainment of the religious character of a place may not fall foul of Sections 3 and 4 of the Places of Worship Act.

What are the historical facts related to the issue?

There is no disagreement among historians on the fact that the emperor Aurangzeb destroyed the Vishwanath temple and built the Gyanvapi Mosque on its ruins.

Aurangzeb destroyed the temple when he suspected that its builder, **Jai Singh**, the great grandson of **Raja Man Singh**, had helped **Shivaji** escape from **imperial detention**.

How modern day regimes differ from the earlier ones in terms of deriving legitimacy from religious monuments?

(A) Early Time

According to Eaton, ruling dynasties in those days **derived legitimacy** from **state deities** (rashtra devta) installed in **royal temples**. It was common that conquerors used to **destroy** such temples and used to place their **own place of worship** on the ruins. It used to be a message that the king no longer enjoyed the protection of his deity.

(B) Medieval Period- More a show of power

The temple destruction was done more to show **brute power** than an act of religious bigotry.

(C) Modern Period

The present intellectual regime strongly disapproves of the violent **cold-bloodedness** and **acquisitive expansionism**.

In modern societies, the **principle of non-retrogression**, or the **doctrine of progressive realisation of rights**, has been adopted.

Way Forward

India is signatory to the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**. Its Article 2(1) seeks to “achieving **progressively** the full realisation of the rights by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures”.

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The Supreme Court has reiterated the **principle of non-retrogression** in a number of cases. For example, (a) in **Navtej Singh Johar judgment 2018**, the court held that there is no place for retreat in a progressive society. Therefore, the state should not take steps that deliberately lead to retrogression on the enjoyment of rights either under the Constitution or otherwise”, (b) in **Babri Masjid verdict 2019**, it was mentioned that **non-retrogression** “is a **foundational feature** of the **fundamental constitutional principles** of which secularism is a core component”. The Act is thus “**a legislative intervention** which preserves **non-retrogression** as an **essential feature** of our secular values”.

The Supreme Court of India must ensure the continuity of this doctrine of progressive realisation of rights

The historical wrongs cannot be remedied by people taking the law into their own hands. Through the Places of Worship Act, Parliament has mandated that historical wrongs shall not be used as instruments to oppress the present and the future”.

The Parliament must retain the Places of Worship Act without **amending** or **repealing** it.

71. **Gyanvapi: Court must follow law not faith**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Gyanvapi: Court must follow law not faith**” published in the **Indian Express** on **24th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Fundamental Rights:- Right to religious equality and minority rights

News: Recently, The Supreme Court has admitted petitions on the Gyanvapi mosque. At present, a controversy is raging over the Gyanvapi Mosque, which is a legacy of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1618-1707).

Nature of Indian Polity

India’s Constitution guarantees the **principle of religious equality** and **protection of minority rights**. As per B.R. Ambedkar, these principles will come to safeguard the interests of minorities in case India becomes a **Hindu-majority independent India**.

In India, the **parliamentary system** has been adopted. The **popular will** is represented by the legislature. However, the Constitution also provides some checks on the power of legislatures and the executives.

The **Judiciary** has an important role for **safeguarding the Constitution**. If elections give way to **majoritarian passions**, and can’t protect the minorities, the courts, following the Constitution, will.

Argument Against ongoing developments in the Gyanvapi Mosque Case

The atrocities of **Aurangzeb** were not limited to destruction of the Hindu temples. He also targeted Sikh gurus, destroyed mosques built by adversaries, killed his own brother Dara Shikoh and incarcerated his father Shahjehan.

Should Aurangzeb’s **17th century** misdeeds be avenged by inflicting harm on India’s Muslims today.

At present, the attempts to reclaim the mosque for **Hindu religious purposes** contradicts the **Constitution**.

What are the challenges at present?

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At present, we live in a **modern democracy** that is based on the key foundations of **popular will** and **constitutional settlement**.

At present, India's elections or popular will has been increasingly legitimating **Hindu nationalism**. For example, India's parliament has enacted **majoritarian laws** such as the abrogation of **Article 370** and the **Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)**; multiple state-level laws and/or executive decrees are banning beef-eating and inter-faith marriage, among various other measures.

The **Indian Judiciary** has also not been successful in implementing its **constitution-protecting role**. For example, it has not scheduled hearings of Hindu nationalist policies or legislation like Article 370 and the CAA; and It has even approved conversion of a contested site in Ayodhya into a Hindu temple.

Way Forward

The **Places of Worship Act, 1991**, made in accordance with the Constitution, clearly says that the status of a religious place cannot be altered beyond what it was at Independence.

The **religious equality** and **minority protections**, two of the fundamental principles of the Indian Constitution should be safeguarded. Therefore, Judicial interpretation must follow the law, not faith.

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

National Education policy and related issues

72. [Decolonising science in Indian education](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Decolonising science in Indian Education**” published in the **Indian Express** on **25th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector, Education Sector

Relevance: Indianization of Education System

Context: Education is central to the idea of **modernity** in independent India. In the Indian education system, a certain aspect of European modernity has lingered for a long time which has hampered the Indian intellectual discourse.

The true spirit of education refers to “**Shiksha vo hoti hai jisme baat se baat nikle**” (education should produce a tangible effect).

Measures Taken So Far

All Education Commissions have been headed by scientists to ensure advancement with **scientific** and **technological development**. For example, Daulat Singh Kothari, Yash Pal, and K Kasturirangan Commission.

What are the issues in the present education system?

The **post-colonial science** and **science education** is deeply mixed with the **colonial hangover** and practices.

In the current dispensation, the government is sceptical about all forms of **western intellectual enthusiasm**.

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The entire developing countries including India are bowing to the **western colonial thought** in the post-colonial world. Once upon a time, India was receptive as well as productive. India possessed a mind of our own in India. In reality, India thought, India felt and India expressed itself.

The western element thwarted creation of **thinkers** that can help us understand the structure and foundations of our **own scientific thought**.

Globalisation is also a form of **new-age intellectual colonialism** which restricts development of the **Indian intellectual**.

Role and Importance of NEP

The **New Education Policy 2020** has taken delightful steps forward in ensuring that we raise a generation of **scientists and scientific thinkers** through the education we provide to our students.

The policy has been designed to completely revamp **our systematic education**. It may help to decolonise by inculcating a sense of **nationalist commitment** and **Indian value-based education**.

The NEP is important to boost **indigenous creative thinking**. It is also an attempt to unify our active engagement with creative thinking. It can help promote the true nature of the **Indian mind**

The state has a commitment to work on **public policies** and **diplomatic discourses** that localise knowledge of science and enhance the character of **Indian scientific enterprise** to counter the **deleterious effects** of **globalisation** in the 21st century.

Education must be intimately associated with the **life of its people**. However, our modern education at present serves professions of the **English educated elite**. This English based education system does not reach the farmer, the grinder, or the potter etc.

The NEP would promote **Indianizing education** and emphasising learning in **regional languages**.

The NEP might be able to raise a generation of **Indian scientific thinkers**. They would help us make sense of our ideas of scientific modernity rooted in Indian scientific thought.

The NEP aims of schools practising agriculture, dairy keeping, weaving on the best modern techniques, roped to culminate into **Yatra Vishvam Bavatikanidam** (where the world meets in one nest).

Way Forward

Science should be made available locally. It will help its **acceptance** and **understanding** in the masses. It will **enrich** the **scientific temper** and the **spirit of inquiry** among the Indian masses.

The modern schools, colleges and universities should focus on Indianizing education instead of becoming part of western thoughts.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES

73. [A Harvard branch in India, prospects and challenges](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**A Harvard branch in India, prospects and challenges**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **24th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector; Education Sector

Relevance: Higher Education Reforms, Internationalisation of India’s Higher Education Sector

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News: In Budget 2022, Finance Minister announced that “**world-class foreign universities** and institutions would be allowed in the planned business district in **Gujarat’s GIFT City**”. These institutions would be free from domestic regulations to facilitate availability of high-end human resources.

And the **British Prime Minister** during his visit to India wished to strengthen **the United Kingdom-India academic collaboration**.

Background

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** promises higher education reforms in many areas, and internationalisation is prominent among them.

The NEP 2020 recommended allowing **foreign universities** ranked in the “top 100” category to operate in India.

Arguments in favour of establishment of the foreign branches in India

India is an **emerging higher education power**. It is the **world’s second largest “exporter”** of students and holder of the **world’s second largest higher education system**. Foreign countries and universities will be eager to establish a “beachhead” in India.

India’s **higher education collaboration** with other countries will augment India’s **soft power**, bringing **new ideas** and institutions from abroad and to show “best practice” in India.

International branch campuses could function as a **structurally different variant** of India’s private university sector. They would **encourage competition** mainly between **existing private universities** and **foreign branch institutions**.

The branches could bring new ideas about curriculum, pedagogy, and governance to Indian higher education.

What are the issues in India’s international higher education collaborations?

Indian Side

There are many **regulatory hurdles** with regard to international academic partnerships, which includes the operation of international branch campuses. Before NEP 2020, India did not allow the entry and the operation of foreign university branch campuses.

The FM budget speech marked **departure** from the NEP 2020 recommendations that allow only the “**top 100**” category to operate in India.

The **Minister of State for Education reply** in the Lok Sabha in March also marked **departure** from the NEP 2020 recommendations. For example, two foreign institutions, from France and Italy, which are not universities, had expressed interest in setting up campuses in India.

The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has formed a committee to draft regulations to allow foreign institutions in the “**top 500**” category to establish campuses in India.

Foreign Side

There are issues over practicality. The **overseas universities** are highly unlikely to invest significant funds up front.

The global branches would be aimed at making money for the sponsoring university which is not in India’s interests.

International collaborations have failed. For example, the Yale University and the National University of Singapore partnership (**the Yale-NUS**) **College** came to an end recently.

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Way Forward

The top universities that are already engaged overseas would require incentives to set up in India. For example, **building facilities** and providing necessary **infrastructure**.

There are smaller but **highly regarded universities** outside the **‘top 500’ category** that might be more interested.

Universities around the world that have **academic specialisations** focusing on India, or that have **NRI** in senior management positions etc. may be easier to attract for India.

India should prevent **profit-seekers** from entering the Indian market. Instead, the foreign institutions having **innovative educational ideas** and a **long-term commitment** should be encouraged.

The bureaucratic hurdles should be drastically cut to ensure success in attracting branch campuses.

A **new accreditation mechanism**, flexible **visa rules** for foreign students and faculty, and **financial incentives** to offer programmes should be considered as **priority areas**.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPINGS

QUAD AND RELATED ISSUES

74. [Opinion: How the Quad can become more than an anti-China grouping](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **“How the QUAD can become more than an anti-China grouping”** published in the **Indian Express** on **25th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations, Bilateral, Regional Grouping, multilateral relations etc.

Relevance: Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), QUAD, QUAD Plus

News; Recently, the United States launched **the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)** before the Quad leaders’ summit in Tokyo

About the IPEF

The US-led economic engagement which will promote **fair trade, supply chain resilience, infrastructure, clean energy**, and **decarbonisation**, among others.

It comprises a diverse group of **12 countries** initially — Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Importance of IPEF

This is a salient attempt to allow countries to decouple from **Chinese over-dependence** This is aimed to re-establish the US by strengthening the existing **free and open rules-based global order**, which is being threatened by China.

It complements the “Quad Plus” process. It brings together **seven critical countries** of the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, all **Quad states**, and **dialogue partners**, including **South Korea**. Thus, both QUAD and IPEF build a comprehensive and integrated approach to combat shared challenges arising out of Chinese.

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The US and India, two of the largest economies of the world, are not a part of the China-led or ASEAN-led **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** or the **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** in which China has applied.

The grouping potentially represents an amalgamation of the **eastern and western “like-minded” countries**. It comprises **developing and developed economies** as well as **middle and major powers** that are committed to maintaining an **inclusive, rules-based and liberal institutional order**.

It is a broad, all-embracing, and **comprehensive framework** that can stand as a pillar for **regional security and stability, multilateralism**, and defence of **global institutionalism** and the status quo.

A stronger **regional economic framework** promotes a resilient and secured supply-chain across the region and the world.

It is likely to complement the other **Indo-Pacific projects** like the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative**. The initiative also seeks to build resilient and secure trade linkages by reducing dependence on China.

What is the response of China?

The **inclusivity angle** is questioned by China because China calls the grouping a **US-led “anti-China” tool** and a reflection of a **broader democratic coalition**.

Way Forward

Chinese narratives about the Quad such as an “**anti-China tool**”, “**sea foam**” to “**Asian NATO**” have only served to coalesce the Quad states and inclusion of more states (plus format) and agenda (security).

The **Quad Plus** should take this **process forward** and **strengthen cooperation** on critical topics in the **Quad’s agenda** (for instance, security, critical technology, global health, climate

South Korea also embraced **the Indo-Pacific framework**. In fact, it is keen to participate in the Quad process for a long. For example, During the Covid-19 crisis, South Korea (along with New Zealand and Vietnam) had joined the so-called **Quad Plus** meetings to coordinate actions to stem the pandemic.

Taiwan plays a critical role in the **global semi-conductor supply chain network**. It is a major economy in the Indo-Pacific region and also an active member of the **Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)**. Therefore, Taiwan should be included in the grouping. Its inclusion would also be a **geopolitical statement** against **coercion tactics** by international actors.

A “**corridor of communication**” should be created which can lead to a “**continental connect**” to strengthen a **rules-based order**.

75. [Can India turn Quad into an instrument to realize its significant potential as technological power?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Can India turn Quad into an instrument to realise its significant potential as technological power?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **24th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations, Regional Groupings

Relevance: Minilaterals, Technological Advancement

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

News: The Prime Minister of India is going to participate in the Quadrilateral Forum that brings together Delhi, Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington.

The US President will visit **Samsung's semiconductor facility** in South Korea during the visit.

This underlines the role of critical technologies in his Indo-Pacific strategy.

Importance of critical technologies

They are key to propelling us into the next era of **humanity's technological development** — artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, 5G, and so very much more”.

What are the challenges in front of all the Quad members?

The technology supply chain has disrupted due to the **impact of Covid-19** and the **Russian invasion** of Ukraine on the global economy,

Russia's Ukraine invasion has shaken “**the very foundation of the international order**”.

Apart from the **Russian aggression** in Europe, there is an emerging issue of the Chinese challenge in Asia.

The **Ukraine crisis** has improved US prospects in the **Indo-Pacific** where China is aggressively asserting itself alarmingly.

For the first time since **the Second World War**, the US and the West are defending the sovereignty of states in Europe and Asia, while Russia and China are grabbing the territory of other states by force.

Japan and **South Korea** fear that China may resort to **Ukraine-like military aggression** against **Taiwan** and in the **disputed islands** of the Western Pacific. Therefore, they have started building national defence capabilities, strengthening the alliance with the US, and taking a larger regional role.

What are the indications that the US and other members can help India build its national technological capabilities?

The US and Western countries wish to reorient **technology supply chains** away from countries that don't share common values. They want more procurement from their allies and partners across the world.

The recently launched **new Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)** visualises **techno-economic cooperation** across the region on fair trade, digital commerce, resilient supply chains, and clean energy among other issues. Progress on many of these fronts depends on **technological collaboration** between **like-minded partners**.

The IPEF opens the door for **economic re-engagement** with Asia in place of **the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** of which India refused to become part.

Importance of QUAD

The **Quad's** having **techno-politik nature** is about boosting the national capabilities of its members.

The **greater technological collaboration** between the US and its northeast Asian allies is emerging as a major pillar of Indo-Pacific security. The US is eager to strengthen India's technological capabilities for the defence and security sector. For example, in the US-India 2+2 dialogue, **techno-military cooperation** figured prominently.

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Similar to AUKUS, and IPEF, the Quad has become the vehicle to shape the **techno-politics of the Indo-Pacific**. This can lead to advancement in **technological collaboration** in a wide range of areas. For example, vaccine production, clean energy, biotechnology, cybersecurity, and outer space

The QUAD provides a major opportunity to enhance **India's national technological capabilities**. This can be the source of India's robust security and economic policies.

Way Forward

The Indo-Pacific region requires a "**rules-based order**". Its principles may include respect for **territorial integrity, peaceful resolution of disputes, and no violent change** in national borders.

– For example, India strongly believes in the principles of **territorial sovereignty and peaceful resolution** of disputes.

In addition, the Quad partners can draw up **new rules** to govern **critical technologies** that are rapidly transforming the **global economic order** and **international security politics**.

The QUAD members can pool technological resources to promote **peace and prosperity** across the **Indo-Pacific region**.

– For example, there were reports that India may combine its **space and maritime resources** with those of the Quad partners which can help members to counter the growing problem of **illegal and unregulated fishing** in their vast **exclusive economic zones**.

India needs to create the right **internal environment** for **technological leapfrogging** and seize the **emerging external opportunities** for deeper technological partnerships with the US and the Quad.

76. [3 Ideas For 4 Countries Hunting for Chips](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article "**3 Ideas For 4 Countries Hunting for Chips**" published in **Times of India** on **24th May 2022**.

Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper 2, International groupings**

News: Quad Leaders' Summit meeting is being hosted today. One agenda item will be to announce a concrete action plan under the Semiconductor Supply Chain Initiative.

The goal of the Semiconductor Supply Chain Initiative is to strengthen the global semiconductor supply chain's productive capacity and resilience.

Why Quad is focusing on the semiconductor supply chain?

Through this initiative, the Quad officially recognizes that the semiconductor supply chain has geo-security consequences.

The nature of the supply chain of semiconductors is hyper-global. It means a single country cannot become self-sufficient in its production.

At present, a typical semiconductor production process spans 4+ countries, (3+ trips around the globe, 25,000 miles, and 12 days of travel.

All Quad members have unique capabilities to contribute to its supply chain.

1. The US is the undisputed leader in semiconductor design, with a substantial presence in semiconductor manufacturing.

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2. Japan is a powerhouse in specialised semiconductor manufacturing materials.
3. India has notable strength in semiconductor design.
4. Australia has material endowments and niche technology industries relying on rare earth elements, battery technology, and artificial intelligence (AI).

How can Semiconductor Supply Chain Initiative be strengthened?

First, build a Quad prototyping semiconductor foundry. Much of the work in the development of semiconductors depends upon the application-specific semiconductors prototypes. Which then can be sent for high-volume production.

Quad countries would contribute their relative GDP share and technological expertise. A joint R&D fab working on next-generation prototypes would be tangible, instead of building four different fabs in each country.

Second, Quad countries could sponsor Centres of Excellence (CoE) in each country focusing on their core strength. For example, Australia could host the CoE for new materials in electronics; Japan could host the CoE for silicon and semiconductor manufacturing equipment, and the US and India could host CoEs on fabless design architectures.

Third, create a Quad go-to-market program. One thing requires change, i.e., at present, international corporate and government joint development efforts continue only to the “pre-competitive” or R&D stage.

Fourth, With wider application of semiconductors, in IoT, 5G/6G communication, smart cities, etc. Quad countries can help each other to better compete in international markets. It would help them better compete against China-sponsored Belt and Road Initiative.

Fifth, Quad can expand this partnership to involve other countries like Taiwan, South Korea, and Canada

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

77. [Davos is so 1990s: The jamboree has lost shine, thanks to social media](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “[Davos is so 1990s: The jamboree has lost shine, thanks to social media](#)” published in **Times of India** on **24th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper – 2, Important International Institutions

Context: [World Economic Forum](#) has lost its relevance.

What are the factors that led to the decline of the World Economic Forum?

Communications revolution: WEF used to be a special place and a special gathering of global influencers and policymakers to catalyze dialogue and disagreement. However, the rise of social media has changed that now one tweet, from an influential personality like Elon Musk, can make or break the markets. For example, the recent case of cryptocurrencies.

Decline of Transatlantic economies: [G7](#) accounts for 31% of global GDP in 2022, compared to 44% in 2000. Whereas, non-G7 members of [G20](#) accounted for 42. 2% of global output. The share of G7 countries will further reduce to less than 29% by 2026 as per forecasts.

Furthermore, China is closing the gap with the US in terms of no. of Unicorns in the world out of total of 900 Unicorns. India has 100 unicorns.

Failure of global capitalism: global capitalism has failed to avert major crises in the past like the global financial crisis of 2007-09 or the euro crisis thereafter, Brexit, or Climate Change.

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WEF has failed to instill the responsibility for global warming among industrialized nations, instead, the platform has been used for preaching lower emissions to countries like India and Africa.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS

INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF)

78. Indo-Pacific economic bloc offers India a new opportunity

Source: The post is based on an article ‘**the Indo-Pacific economic bloc offers India a new opportunity**’ published in the **Live Mint** on **26th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations, Regional Grouping; and GS 3 Indian Economy

Relevance: Economic Grouping, External Sector, India’s Export, Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan,

News: Recently, the US launched **the Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)** at the Quad meeting in Tokyo.

Significance of IPEF

In General

Geopolitical: All its members (the US, India, Japan, Australia, South Korea and 8 other East Asian countries), share worries about **China’s muscular nationalism** and **expansionist ambitions**. Therefore, this gives the group a distinct **geo- political flavour**.

On the **economic front**, the group could become the foundation for **longer term economic integration** of **like-minded countries**. It would lead to **cooperation** in **investment** and **technology development** for **clean energy**.

The immediate focus is on **common standards** in areas of labour rights, environmental standards, protection of intellectual property rights and rules covering the digital economy.

For India

The world is dividing itself into **autocracies** and **democracies**. This division is reflected in **economic alignments**. India has a deep stake in aligning with the **democratic group**. Therefore, India leadership has already signalled India’s support of the new initiative.

Negotiations under the IPEF could be a mechanism for bringing our system in **line** with the **best practices** in the rest of the world.

It would make India an attractive **trading partner** and as a destination for **investment**, especially in new supply chains.

Digital trade and **e-commerce** are another critical area included under the IPEF. India has a **comparative advantage** in software development and application.

What are the challenges?

Economic integration must ultimately be reflected in **trade integration**. But the IPEF is not a conventional **free trade agreement (FTA)**.

Progress in some areas identified under the IPEF may run into problems from India’s side. It will involve **many departures** from its **traditional positions**.

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The new arrangements will not require a consensus. IPEF is not a **multilateral trade negotiation**, where any country could hold up progress of negotiations by not agreeing. India may simply be left out, if India does not accept terms.

In the past, India has resisted such **behind-the-border alignment** of **standards** because they reduce our policy space.

Taxes and anti-**bribery provisions** are another element of the IPEF that could pose problems. India takes taxation as a sovereign function. Therefore, it is not subject to negotiation. However, India's taxation system is often accused of being a form of "**tax terrorism**".

The US and Europe have differences on the issues of digital trade and e-commerce businesses.

Trade negotiations are too complex. It cannot be handled by individual ministries acting in silos.

There are many contentious issues in **digital trade** and **e-commerce**. For example, issues of **transparency**, the requirements of **fair competition** in a world dominated by a few players, and the ownership and localization of personal data.

Way Forward

Areas should be **identified** where the negotiations require a departure from past practice. India should consider whether these departures are in the **national interest** in the light of **changed circumstances**.

– For example, India adopted what advanced countries were demanding like **freedom for workers** to form **trade unions** because this was in our **national interest**.

If India decides to go ahead with **IPEF**, it should avoid **prolonged negotiations** as were done in the RCEP.

The '**atmanirbharta**' (**self-reliance**) does not mean **isolation** and **protectionism**. It involves attracting **foreign investment** and becoming part of **global supply chains**. Therefore, India should become part of IPEF as building reliable supply chains is part of its agenda.

The exceptions can be carved out for **specialty sensitive areas**. India can build in a suitable adjustment period to comply with these standards.

India should initiate an internal review of its **tax administration** with involvement of experts and not just the Department of Revenue.

Indian business should be mobilized in support of the new integration. **Indian businesses** that are potentially competitive globally and are often not heard.

Finally, negotiations involve **multiple ministries**. Therefore, there should be **inter-ministerial consultations**. We need an **empowered trade negotiator** to consult with concerned ministries and report to the Prime Minister and key ministers with an assessment of pros and cons.

The NITI Aayog should be mobilized to conduct **broad consultations** and elicit the opinions of stakeholders, including state governments.

The NITI Aayog should engage in the education of the Indian public on the benefits to India from greater integration.

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79. Explained: The new Indo-Pacific bloc

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“Explained: The new Indo-Pacific bloc” published in **Indian Express** on **25th May 2022**.

“Caution and clarity: On the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity” published in **The Hindu** on **25th May 2022**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, International groupings

Relevance: To understand the challenges surrounding Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.

News

Recently, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework was launched by United States President with 12 other countries, including India, as a member. The aim was to reclaim US’s economic leadership in East Asia and the ASEAN region without losing them to China.

What is Indo-Pacific Economic Framework?

Read here: [Explained: What is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework?](#)

The IPEF will **a)** set the rules of the road for the digital economy, **b)** ensure secure and resilient supply chains, **c)** make major investments necessary in clean energy infrastructure and the clean energy transition, **d)** raise standards for transparency, fair taxation, and anti-corruption, etc.

What is the stand of India on IPEF?

Read here: [India to join Biden’s new trade initiative for Indo-Pacific region](#)

The Issue of data localisation between India and the US

India has fought with the US over the last two or three years regarding data localisation. In 2019, the government has introduced a Bill in Lok Sabha that envisages a framework for localising Indian data and the establishment of a Data Protection Authority.

But the US, in its National Trade Estimate Report, said that the data localisation “will serve as significant barriers to digital trade” between the two countries, and will act as “market access barriers, especially for smaller firms”.

What are the issues surrounding IPEF?

Lack of clarity: The U.S. said that it is not a free trade agreement; nor will it discuss tariff reductions or increasing market access, raising questions about its utility. But the US did not explain what is the focus area of IPEF.

Question on common ground: The 13 countries are part of very different economic arrangements. This raises the question of whether there is enough common ground among the members or not.

Trade relations with members of IPEF and China: Each of the IPEF countries has considerable trade interests in China, with most having large trade deficits.

Credibility of US initiative: The U.S.’s previous initiatives (the Blue Dot Network and the Build Back Better Initiative) have made little improvements in changing the region’s infrastructural needs. Hence, the IPEF also faces a credibility challenge.

80. The IPEF could offer us a boat we must not miss

Source: This post is based on the article “**The IPEF could offer us a boat we must not miss**” published in **Livemint** on **24th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations – International agreements

Relevance: Indo-Pacific economic cooperation b/w the members of the QUAD

News: The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework may be an opportunity for India’s integration with global supply chains and trade flows. But the US must put global aims above its home politics.

Why India should join IPEF?

India should join IPEF as **trade relations with fellow democracies** has been its preference after it gave up on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) led by China.

Also, India is often blamed for its export pessimism. Joining IPEF would change that.

— *Export Pessimism indicates the pessimism about the demand for exports in developing nations in the markets of developing countries.*

Will boost QUAD’s influence: Currently just a forum to discuss common concerns rather than a defence alliance, the Quad’s agenda has steadily expanded over the years. For the group to acquire durable weight, however, talks on how best to help one another prosper must go simultaneously alongside keeping the Indo-Pacific open and free.

To position India as an **option to China for manufacturing networks** that span borders, we must join forces with a multilateral project aimed at frictionless commerce.

What does the IPEF entail?

Details around IPEF are sketchy at this point. Here’s what’s known so far:

– The IPEF aims to facilitate fair and shock-proof trade, with e-commerce and supply-chain resilience as major aspects of it

What are some concerns that India must consider?

Washington’s dismissal of free trade logic under the Trump administration has not yet been reversed by the White House. So long as electoral fortunes in the US depend on voters who blame globalization for their problems, its leaders will probably be reluctant to openly promote a barrier-free world of exchange.

– Any trade component of Biden’s Asian outreach is thus likely to be impacted by calculations of American jobs.

If the IPEF includes **US labour protection and non-tariff barriers** in the guise of “fair trade”, then India may hang back. However, if it promises to ease market access and enhance our export output overall, then we must not let item-wise shipment specifics stall our participation.

Way forward

While the IPEF will also cover cooperation on infrastructure and clean energy, apart from coordination over taxation, rule enforcement and the like, its **trade prospects should guide New Delhi’s approach**.

We need to **go beyond bilateral pacts and focus on broad competitiveness** instead of two-way particulars.

On its part, the US would do well not to insist on caveats that could blunt any Indian advantage.

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India must spell out its interests clearly right at the onset of IPEF talks. But then, just as the White House is seized of the need to keep Indo-Pacific sea-lanes free of a Chinese shadow, it must also be aware of how constraints on Indian export success could work against the Quad's geopolitical goals.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

DIGITIZATION IN INDIAN JUDICIARY

81. **Digitisation will ensure speedy, efficient delivery of justice**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Digitisation will ensure speedy, efficient delivery of justice**” published in the **Indian Express** on **28th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Functioning of the Indian Judiciary

Relevance: Digitisation in Indian Judiciary

News: In 2021, the **Gujarat HC** became the first court in the country to livestream its proceedings. Its example was followed by other HCs like Karnataka, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Patna.

Use of technology in the India's Judicial System

In India, e-governance in the field of **administration of justice** began in the late 1990s. However, the e-governance accelerated after the enactment **of the Information and Technology Act, 2000**.

Since then, the focus has been on **digitising** the court's records and **establishing e- courts** across the country. For example, **e-courts** were launched as a part of **the National e-Governance Plan (NEGP)** in the year of 2006.

The **e-Committee of the Supreme Court** has issued directions to ensure that e-filing of cases/petitions by state governments in all matters be made mandatory from January 1, 2022.

The Supreme Court has approved the hearing of a number of **matrimonial cases** through **video-conferencing** in a number of cases. For example, in **Krishna Veni Nagam v Harish Nagam Case (2017)**, and in **Anjali Brahmawar Chauhan vs Navin Chauhan Case**.

In 2018, the Supreme Court allowed the **live-streaming of cases** of constitutional and national importance on the basis of the judgment in **Swapnil Tripathi**.

What are the benefits of digitisation?

Digitisation **prevents the requirement of a large space** needed to store so many files and the decades-old documents.

Ensures that these files are traceable **electronically** as and when required. This prevents the consequences of **missing court records**.

– For example, the SC in **State of Uttar Pradesh v. Abhay Raj Singh Case** held that the courts are bound to set aside the conviction, if court records go missing and re-construction is not possible. Thus, convicts can go free for want of court records.

The **time** consumed in **summoning records** from the lower courts to the appellate courts cause a lot of delay in cases. It will take much less time to transmit the records as and when called for after digitisation.

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The cases are **adjourned** simply because **affidavits** filed several years ago were **not restored** with the record or were **not traceable**. The digitisation will not let the cases adjourned by the courts on this account.

The **lawyer** or a **litigant** can **check** the **status** of the filing, the status of applications and affidavits, date of the next hearing, orders passed by the courts etc. Thus, the lawyers or their staff are not required to visit the **reporting sections** or other sections of the court to know about the status of their cases.

Before the pandemic, **virtual hearings** were used only in a limited manner; for example, in criminal cases where it was not possible to produce the accused physically before the court.

The **live-streaming** of cases of national importance would lead to ensuring **transparency** and **openness**.

What are the issues?

There are **Internet connectivity issues**. In addition, it requires a **well-equipped space** where lawyers can conduct their cases.

Judges, court staff and lawyers are not well-versed with digital technology and its benefits.

Way Forward

Political will and the support of **judges** and **lawyers** are necessary. They should be made aware of the **technical know-how** and its **advantages**. They should also be given **adequate training** in the technologies.

The digital technology can be used in terms of **digitisation** of court records, **e-filing** of cases and their **virtual hearing**, live streaming of court proceedings.

Virtual hearings cannot be a substitute for physical court hearings in all cases. Cases related to **matrimonial issues** and **domestic violence**, **bounced cheques**, **motor accident compensation** referred to mediation centres and lok adalats could be included in the list of cases fit for disposal through the virtual hearing.

ISSUES WITH JUDICIAL SYSTEM

82. [How to solve crimes better](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**How to solve crimes better**” published in the **Indian Express** on **28th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity

Relevance: Criminal justice System

Context: Forensic sciences have gained great **cultural popularity** over the past two decades with the onset of crime shows on

television. For example, Series like Law and Order, Mare of Easttown, Shetland and Real Detective.

What is forensic science?

Forensic science is the application of **scientific perspectives** and **techniques** to the **legal process**, including **investigations** and **courtroom protocol**. In other words, “It is the use of scientific data and procedures specifically for the legal system.”

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There is rigorous procedure involved, including controlled conditions, reliable data collection and the attempt to disprove hypotheses.”

Forensic science involves **methodologies** like the autopsy procedures, fingerprinting, testing and matching for poisons, blood spatter analysis, matching guns to bullets fired (ballistics), voice sample matches, handwriting assessments and DNA analysis.

Forensic science laboratories (FSL) in India

At the Central level

There are **seven central forensic laboratories** in India at Hyderabad, Kolkata, Chandigarh, New Delhi, Guwahati, Bhopal and Pune. The CBI controls the laboratory in Delhi and **the Directorate of Forensic Science Services (DFSS)** controls other six laboratories, barring Delhi.

Their mission is to render high quality and credible forensic services to the justice delivery system

A **National Forensic Sciences University** was established in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat** in 2020.

At the State level

There are **32 state FSLs** and about **529 mobile FSL units**, of which Delhi has **one state FSL** and **six mobile units**.

Others

There are many **private forensic laboratories** in the country and their quality and standards of integrity vary.

What is the importance of forensic science?

The investigation is done for the collection of proof pointing to innocence or guilt. It also involves the deployment of **forensic science**.

The criminal cases are solved by **police conducting investigations** which are aided by **forensic science**. The **well-trained forensic staff** working in good quality laboratories aid the **criminal justice system**.

What are the issues?

India has amongst the **highest disparities** in **police-citizens** and **judge-citizens ratios**.

The DNA tests discovered in 1985 are used to identify individuals involved in alleged crimes. In 2017,

The United Kingdom completes DNA testing on over **60,000 crimes** annually. However, India completes such tests on less than 7,500 cases despite having over 13 times the population of the UK.

India has an inadequate number of **forensic science laboratories (FSL)**. In addition, there is a **lack of adequate qualified personnel**. For example, the Supreme Court observed **In Re: Speedy Trial of Undertrial Prisoners (2018)** that 97 posts of scientific officers and 67 administrative posts are unfilled in the Central Forensic Science Laboratories. Further, in all states, there were over 50% vacancies in personnel at their facilities.

The average pendency at each lab is huge.

The Court recognised that the **lack of personnel** meant that often trials were delayed to non-receipt of **FSL reports**.

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In India, the FSL reports take an **inordinate amount of time** to be prepared. This prevents conduct of **forensic analysis** and the criminal justice system relies principally on witness statements.

Way Forward

The Court had asked the central government to address the issue of non-filling of the personnel in FSL.

India needs more investment in the establishment of FSL laboratories, the training and appointment of personnel.

There is a requirement of reforms within our police to establish a **trained and skilled detective cadre** tasked with **solving complex** and **heinous crimes**.

There is a desperate need for good **quality training facilities**, standards of **accreditation** and continuous **education programmes** for our forensic experts.

As forensic science is ever-evolving, it is important to know which facets of the science are still credible and what methodologies must be discarded.

83. Judicial delays and the need for intervention at the district level

Source: The post is based on an article “**Judicial delays and the need for intervention at the district level**” published in the **Live Mint** on **22nd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Functioning of Indian Judiciary

Relevance: Judicial Efficiency and Effectiveness

News: Recently, Bihar’s Bhojpur district court was in the news. It delivered a judgement on a land dispute case filed in 1914 which is 108 years ago, making it one of the oldest cases in the country.

What are the findings about the pendency of cases in the lower judiciary?

According to some estimates, the district courts will take 324 years to dispose of all their pending cases at the current rate of disposal.

According to **the National Judicial Data Grid data** in 2021, out of the total pending cases in Indian courts, around 87% are present in district and subordinate courts. Some of the detailed findings:

First, **district-level pendency in criminal and civil matters** are highly correlated. Courts that have delays in one type of matter (Criminal or Civil matters) are likely to have it in the other type (Civil or Criminal Matters) as well.

Secondly, there are a **few concentrated pockets** of ‘high-pendency’ courts (see for instance Uttar Pradesh and Bihar).

Third, there is **no state-wide pattern** of high pendency courts. Some districts in the same state do very well, while adjoining ones perform poorly. It implies that Pendency is a district-level problem, and not state or national level.

What are the factors behind such judicial delays?

Supply Side Factors

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India has 20 judges per million people, which is extremely low as compared to other countries like the UK (51) and the US (107).

Judicial vacancies: Until two years ago, around 37% of judicial posts in high courts and 21% in subordinate courts were lying vacant.

Demand side factors:

Pendency rates will be closely related to **filing rates**, which may in turn depend on population, legal awareness, education, and income levels of the people.

Note 1: In accordance with some work done in **Western countries**, higher incomes increase litigation rates. For example, if more contracts are signed, more get broken.

Note 2: The answer is not so clear in **low-income regions**. In accordance to studies in Kenya and India, the congestion in court cases is lower in **higher-income regions**. This could be due to the better capacity of richer-area courts, money-driven case acceleration, or well-off people do not break any law.

Way Forward

The **PM** and **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**, in a **joint conference** of state chief ministers and chief justices of high courts (HC) emphasized the need for “**speedy**” justice.

The judiciary can increase **working days**, adopt **technology**, and on creating specialized **tribunals** (for instance, the government’s recent proposal to set up special courts to close 3.3 million cheque-bounce cases).

There is a need to **decentralize** both identification of policy problems and their solutions to Indian districts. For example, this random distribution of ‘high-pendency’ courts across the states require **district-level interventions** rather than **state- or national-level policies interventions** to address the problem of high pendency.

GS2 – POLITY – PARLIAMENT AND STATE LEGISLATURE

PARLIAMENTARY SUPERVISION OF TRADE PACTS

84. [India needs parliamentary supervision of trade pacts](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**India needs parliamentary supervision of trade pacts**” published in **The Indian Express** on **24th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity – Parliament

Relevance: Parliamentary supervision of international treaties

Context: India is negotiating and signing several free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries like Australia, the UK, Israel, and the EU. While the economic benefits of these FTAs have been studied, there is very little discussion on the lack of parliamentary scrutiny of these treaties.

This gives rise to arguments of **democratic deficit in India’s treaty-making process**.

Concerns over the lack of parliamentary oversight were also flagged by the **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution**, set up by the Vajpayee government more than two decades ago.

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So, should Parliament exercise some control over the executive's power to sign international treaties?

Can Parliament legislate on international treaties?

Yes.

In the Constitution, **entry 14 of the Union list** contains the following item — “*entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing of treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries*”.

According to **Article 246**, Parliament has the legislative competence on all matters given in the Union list.

Thus, Parliament has the power to legislate on treaties.

This power includes:

- deciding how India will ratify treaties and thus assume international law obligations.
- Parliament's competence to give effect to treaties within the domestic legal regime by enacting laws.

Article 253 elucidates that the power of Parliament to implement treaties by enacting domestic laws also extends to topics that are part of the state list.

What is the present situation wrt parliamentary oversight of international treaties?

Presently, the Parliament exercises control over the executive's treaty-making power at the stage of transforming a treaty into the domestic legal regime. However, this is a scenario of **ex-post parliamentary control over the executive**.

– In such a situation, Parliament only deliberates how the international law obligations, already accepted by the executive, should be implemented domestically. Even if Parliament does not amend or make domestic laws to transform the treaty, the treaty will continue to be binding on India.

No specific law laying down the processes: Parliament is yet to enact a law laying down the processes that India needs to follow before assuming international treaty obligations.

– Given this legislative void, and **under Article 73** (the powers of the Union executive are co-terminus with Parliament), the Centre has been negotiating, signing & also ratifying international treaties and assuming international law obligations without much parliamentary oversight.

What is the global best practice?

In the **US**, important treaties signed by the President have to be approved by the Senate.

In **Australia**, the executive is required to table a “national interest analysis” of the treaty it wishes to sign in parliament, and then this is examined by a joint standing committee on treaties – a body composed of Australian parliamentarians. In this way, the Australian parliament supervises the treaty-making process and acts as a check on the executive's power.

In **Canada**, too, the executive tables the treaties in parliament.

Way forward

Effective parliamentary supervision will increase the domestic acceptance and legitimacy of international treaties, especially economic agreements, which are often critiqued for imposing undue restraints on India's economic sovereignty.

DELIMITATION COMMISSION IN INDIA

85. A Rajya Sabha rebalance must go with Lok Sabha expansion

Source: This post is based on the article “A Rajya Sabha rebalance must go with Lok Sabha expansion” published in **Livemint** on **22nd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity – Parliament

Relevance: Federalism in India, allocation of seats to states in Rajya Sabha, domicile requirements for election to Rajya Sabha

Context: India is a federal structure with a unitary bias. The Constitution strikes a balance between popular will, exercised by the Lok Sabha, and the interests of states through the Rajya Sabha.

But, we have allowed popular fashions and political exigencies to undermine the federal structure.

What are the various states’ concerns?

Delimitation exercises have raised the deep anxieties, fears and grievances amongst the states. States in the south and the east are concerned about the prospect of the more populous north gaining Lok Sabha seats.

The fact that delimitation has been postponed twice since the 1970s suggests there are deep misgivings among states over their status and power within the federal structure. These fears are re-emerging now that delimitation is in the offing.

That is why it is crucial to take an enlightened national approach to the matter, not partisan or parochial ones.

What is the way forward?

The Lok Sabha must be expanded and constituted on the basis of population: This can mean that highly populated northern states get more seats, then that has to be accepted. However, the constitutional principles also demand that the standing of states not get diminished relative to each other, or to the Union.

Domicile requirements: The 2003 amendment to the **Representation of People’s Act** that did away with domicile requirements for Rajya Sabha candidates and the 2006 apex court verdict in **Kuldip Nayar vs Union of India** that upheld it have undermined the federal balance.

– Students have to prove they have lived in a state for seven years before they can get admission to professional courses under the state quota.

– A citizen must provide proof of residence to register as a voter in the local and state elections. Many states have domicile requirements for government jobs and welfare entitlements.

– Yet, the Rajya Sabha now does not. We thus have people who cannot vote in or stand for a local election in a state representing it in the Rajya Sabha.

Hence, domicile requirements must be brought back.

Equality among states: The Upper House must also be reformed in line with Ambedkar’s vision of equality among states.

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– In the US, tiny Rhode Island and giant California both have the same number of representatives in the federal Senate.

– Here, Manipur has a single Rajya Sabha member, who does not even have to be from the state, while Uttar Pradesh has 31.

Way forward

Design has consequences. Perhaps the Supreme Court was right to opine that the Rajya Sabha is not akin to the US Senate, but in the interests of national unity, we should make it so.

Let all states have the same number of seats in the Rajya Sabha.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – SEX WORKERS ISSUE

SEX WORKERS IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

86. **Supreme Court directions on sex workers: history of the case, and where it stands now**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Sex as work**” published in **The Hindu** on **28th May 22**, and on the article “**Supreme Court directions on sex workers: history of the case, and where it stands now**” published in **The Indian Express** on **28th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Social issues, Fundamental rights

Relevance: Sex workers in India and related issues

News: A long-standing demand of sex workers that their work be decriminalised has been partially fulfilled, with the Supreme Court observed that adult sex workers are entitled to dignity and equal protection under law.

With the **Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill** yet to see the light of day, the Court invoked powers under **Article 142** to issue guidelines till the legislation is in force.

What are the observations made by the court?

Court directed the police to respect the rights of consenting sex workers, and it further observed that –

– Notwithstanding the profession, every individual has a **right to a dignified life under Article 21** of the Constitution.

– It reiterated what the Court had ruled in **Budhadev Karmaskar (2011)**, that sex workers are also entitled to a “life of dignity”.

– Police should **treat all sex workers with dignity** and should not abuse them, verbally and physically, or subject them to violence or coerce them into any sexual activity.

What happened after the Budhadev Karmaskar judgement?

In 2011, the SC appointed a panel asking it to study and make “suitable suggestions” on “prevention of trafficking, rehabilitation of sex workers who wish to leave sex work.

Findings of the panel: In its final report submitted on September 14, 2016, the panel noted that

– Sex workers found it difficult to acquire proofs of identity such as ration cards or voter cards because they lacked a proof of residence.

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- District authorities did not recognise the identities of sex workers and their children, and sex workers did not have access to schemes meant for their rehabilitation.
- They also had no access to credit offered by states, because the lack of documents prevented them from opening bank accounts.

The committee recommended that amendments should be made to The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

On May 19, a Bench led by Justice L Nageswara Rao noted that despite its assurances, the Centre was still to bring a law on the subject. Therefore, the court used its **extraordinary powers under Article 142** (*which enables it to pass orders necessary to do “complete justice” in a pending matter*), and directed that some of the recommendations be implemented by states and UTs.

Which are the recommendations that the SC has directed to be implemented?

The May 19 order listed 10 recommendations of the panel, and directed that six of them should be implemented.

These include:

- a) provision for immediate medical assistance for any sex worker who is a victim of sexual assault;
- b) direction to states to do a survey of all Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act Protective Homes so that cases of adult women who are detained against their will can be reviewed and processed for release in a time-bound manner;
- c) sensitising police and other law enforcement agencies to the rights of sex workers and to ensure that police treat them with dignity and do not abuse them verbally or physically or coerce them into any sexual activity;
- d) ask The Press Council of India to issue appropriate guidelines for the media to take utmost care not to reveal the identities of sex workers; and
- e) direction that measures that sex workers employ for their health and safety (condoms, etc.) must neither be construed as offences nor seen as evidence of commission of an offence.

How has the Centre responded?

The Centre said it had “**certain reservations**” on **four recommendations** of the panel.

These are:

- a) no criminal action against a sex worker who is adult and participating with consent;
- b) arresting only the brothel owner and not sex workers during raid on brothels;
- c) role of sex workers in decision-making processes, including planning, designing and implementing policy relating to sex work;
- d) a recommendation with regard to children of sex workers.

The SC has asked the Centre to file its response to the recommendations of the panel within six weeks.

Way forward

The Court’s general observations should help sensitise the police, media and society toward sex workers, who have generally been invisible and voiceless.

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The ball is in the Government's court to draw up appropriate legislation to free consenting sex workers from stigma, and grant them workers' rights. In that, too, the Court suggested the Centre and States involve sex workers or their representatives to reform laws.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – COMMUNAL HARMONY

HINDU-MUSLIM DISPUTE OVER RELIGIOUS SHRINES

87. **Hindus and Muslims must give up rigid positions on contested places of worship**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Hindus and Muslims must give up rigid positions on contested places of worship**” published in the **Indian Express** on **28th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Indian Constitution

Relevance: The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991, Fundamental Rights

News: In the Ayodhya temple case decided in 2019 by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court. It was projected as a law falling within the parameters of the **inviolable basic structure of the Constitution**. In the present-day circumstances, other such disputes like Kashi-Mathura disputes have come to the picture.

What are the problems at present?

The masses remember only what a **medieval-age despotic Muslim ruler** had supposedly done to some ancient shrines in certain holy cities of India. They forgot the tributes paid by **India's spiritual figure** of one community to holy places of another community. For example, **Freedom-fighter Hasrat Mohani** once went to **Mathura** on **Janmashtami** and pleaded with Lord Krishna to accept his pilgrimage to Mathura.

The ongoing developments on the places of worship in India goes against the nation's professedly **secular Constitution**.

At present, the nationalists are reading the provisions of the statutes in accordance with their ideology. They do not go by **jurisprudential discourses** on interpretation of statutes. For example, the **Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991** has acquired an inferior status in present discourse.

Way Forward

We should go by the **Constitution's prefatory terminology** — “We the people of India” should join hands to preserve peace in our beloved nation, no matter what cost is to be paid for it. Both minority and majority community should **amicably settle** the disputes in the interest of peace in the country.

There is no solution in **obstinacy** and **fanaticism**. Each community whether minority or majority should respect the freedom of religion. Both have to find together a viable roadmap to nationwide peace. The **perennial fighting** over a few chosen shrines situated in each other's vicinity is irrational and indefensible.

The judiciary has a role to balancing competing claims in religious disputes of large magnitude. It forms part of the **judiciary's Constitutional obligations**. For example, the Ayodhya dispute Judgment 2019.

The nation's top court decisions in earlier disputes as mentioned above and in the future disputes like the **Kashi-Mathura disputes** have been/would be in the interest of peace and harmony. This should not raise eyebrows.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

88. **Disability and the barriers to feminine hygiene**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Disability and the barriers to feminine hygiene**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **28th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes;

Relevance: Person with Disabilities (PWD)

News: The **United Nations Population Fund** and **WaterAid India** are collaborating to understand the key **challenges** and **constraints** faced by persons with disability with regard to menstrual health and hygiene.

According to Census 2011, nearly 27 million persons (or 2.2% of the Indian population) are disabled.

Measures taken in India so far

The government and non-governmental actors have increased **awareness** about **menstrual health and hygiene management** (MHM), enhanced access to female friendly/gender appropriate sanitation facilities and availability of menstrual products (like sanitary pads).

What were the limitations?

A section including **girls** and **women** with disabilities have not been focussed so far. They face an exceptional burden on account of the intersections between gender and disability.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

The 2016 Act, stipulates the rights and entitlements of persons with disability. It also recognises that women and children are particularly vulnerable sections of the PWD Community.

It specifies that a person with disabilities has “long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment”. This impairment while interacting with other barriers, hinders [her]/his full and effective participation in society equally with others”.

What are the issues?

Persons with disabilities are unable to fully **participate** in many areas of daily life. They are excluded from doing so as a consequence of **impairments/societal barriers** or **socio-cultural attitudes**.

The **reproductive rights** are even more neglected or disregarded as compared to others.

The realisation of rights and entitlements of persons with disability has been very poor. It is poorer in case of **socially** and **economically vulnerable groups**. For example, girls and women with disabilities from poor households and marginalised communities.

According to the **National Family Health Survey 2019-20**, fewer than two-thirds of girls and women with disabilities aged between 15 to 24 years use hygienic menstrual protection methods.

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There are deeply embedded **prejudices** and **misconceptions** about the **reproductive anatomy** and abilities of persons with disability. For example, they are considered asexual, unsuitable for marriage, and incapable of having and raising children.

They are denied **information** about sexual and reproductive health as compared to those without disabilities. Their menstrual health is also found to be compromised. For them, menstruation is more than a mere physiological process due to preconceived notions.

They face **additional hurdles** to hygiene management, good health, and health-seeking behaviours due to **economic** and **structural constraints**; **mobility constraint**, among others.

Objectives of United Nations Population Fund and WaterAid India Collaboration

First, understand the key **challenges** and **constraints** faced by persons with disability with regard to menstrual health and hygiene.

Second, identify simple and potentially **scalable solutions** in critical areas like accessible and adapted Information, education and communication on menstrual health and hygiene based on their differential needs and capacities, and an enabling socio-cultural environment. For example, **Tactile models** accompanied by **audio explanations** can help people with visual impairment.

Third, appropriate and safe **menstrual products** and **hygiene promotion**. They should be provided with a diverse range of products to choose from the most appropriate product.

Fourth, responsive and inclusive **water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities**, including disposal solutions in different settings like schools, rural, and urban areas.

Fifth, **caregivers**, both from within the family and institutions should be included as **participants** and **partners**. They are vital to ensure success of disability focused interventions.

Way Forward

Every menstruating person has the right to menstrual health, irrespective of their gender identity, ability, or socio-economic status.

HEALTH REPORTS, SURVEYS – FINDINGS AND ISSUES

NFHS 5

89. [India is a nation of meat-eaters — they are mostly men](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**India is a nation of meat-eaters – they are mostly men**” published in the **Indian Express** on **26th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Health

Relevance: NFHS-5, Gender-based Discrimination, Dietary habit in India etc.

News: According to the **NFHS-5 data**, a staggering 83.4% of men and 70.6% of women in the 15-49 age group are non-vegetarian. Thus, the NFHS does not support a contention that India is primarily a **vegetarian nation**.

Statistics in the NFHS-5

(A) Consumption of non-vegetarian food

The percentage of the **vegetarian population** has declined by a **5 percentage-point** from the 21.6% recorded in the **NFHS-4** to 16.6% recorded in the **NFHS-5**. However, in the case of women, the reduction was almost insignificant. It was recorded 29.9% in NFHS-4 and 29.4% in NFHS-5

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Globally, the proportion of those who are vegetarian would, at best, be 8%. But the kind of gender skew found in India is an exclusive feature of the country. It is not replicated anywhere else.

(B) Consumption of alcohol

There has actually been a 7% decrease in the consumption of alcohol among men aged 15-49 between the NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 data.

Other Arguments which reject India being a vegetarian society

Archaeological and **anthropological data** do not give any credence to the claims and assertions that India is a vegetarian society.

The Vedas too do not support this narrative. In fact, it is unequivocally held that it was unviable to depend only on vegetarian food anywhere in the world even during the Vedic times.

Description about Vegetarianism and Non-vegetarianism

Firstly, it is wrong to say that people only consume **meat**. All such people who **consume non-vegetarian food** also consume pulses, grains, vegetables, fruits and the like. Such people should have to be categorised as **omnivorous** because their food is derived from both animals and plants.

Secondly, some sections/groups have deviated from an earlier **omnivorous form** of food intake. They refrained from animal food. They are defined as “**vegetarians**”. Vegetarianism has been projected, particularly and almost exclusively in India, as something **pious, saintly, virtuous** and **righteous**.

Why more men consume non-vegetarian food?

One, there are more opportunities to eat **animal food** outside of the home than at home. Men have **more opportunities** to go outside. They often eat in **restaurants**. It is rare to find single women (or even a group of women) dining by themselves in restaurants in most parts of India. Therefore, men have a lot of **autonomy** as well as **anonymity** at the same time to eat non-vegetarian food in restaurants than women.

Second, on the home front, women face **gender discrimination**, women often get deprived of certain kinds of food.

Third, there are many **religious** or **cultural reasons** for avoiding certain foods. It applies, at times loosely, and sometimes **exclusively**, to women.

Fourth, Indian society is primarily patriarchal. The **process of socialisation** is so biased in favour of men. Men exercise control over almost everything, including **women's piety** and related **dietary observances**.

PANDEMIC MORTALITY DATA

90. Inadequacies of the Civil Registration System

Source: The post is based on an article “**Inadequacies of the Civil Registration System**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **25th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Governance

Relevance: Public data, Civil Registration System (CRS), Sample Registration System (SRS)

News: Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)**'s estimated excess deaths due to COVID-19 in India which has triggered several responses.

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What has been the government's response against WHO estimates?

Various **State Health Ministers** slammed the WHO estimates. They asserted that India has a “robust, legal and transparent system for data collection and COVID mortality surveillance”, referred to as **the Civil Registration System (CRS)**.

System for registration in India

The Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, 1969 mandates the registration of births and deaths.

The State governments are responsible for the establishment and management of the registration system.

The Registrar General of India (RGI) coordinates and unifies the activities of registration.

The Sample Registration System (SRS) is used for further analysis of the birth and death registration in India.

A birth/death should be registered within 21 days. After 21 days, birth/death can be registered under the RBD Act with an order of a **First-Class Magistrate** issued after verifying the facts about the birth or death.

What are the issues with India's registration system?

The SRS figures are not available for the year 2020 in which Covid-19 hit India.

Further, Past studies on the SRS indicate that the vital rates are underestimated by 2-3%.

Further, **2020 annual reports** have shown that the number of births and deaths registered one year after occurrence is quite high. For example, more than **15% of** the births registered had occurred in earlier years in Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Assam. However, such a proportion of delayed registration was lower in case of deaths.

Many deaths like **female deaths** and child deaths have low level of registration because the family may not require **the death certificates** for settling inheritance, insurance claims, etc. For example, Female deaths formed only 39.8% of the total registered deaths in 2020.

Only about 20% of the deaths have a **Medically Certified Cause of Death (MCCD)** that conforms to the WHO standard. The State governments have not issued **statutory notifications** to increase the coverage of MCCD.

Impact of COVID-19 on registration

The Covid-19 lockdowns significantly affected the **efficiency** of the CRS in the following manner.

One, the **registrars** could not work during lockdowns in many areas.

Two, **people** could not travel to the **registrar's office** to report the births/deaths that had occurred at home within the prescribed time.

Three, in case of a delay in reporting, the procedure of getting an affidavit or a **Magistrate's order** as required under **Section 13 of the RBD Act** is a very cumbersome process.

Four, the functionaries handling registration were deployed on COVID-19-related duties and could not register the events.

It means a large number of births and deaths that had occurred in 2020 would have been reported for registration in 2021 or even later.

Way Forward

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A robust system should be instituted to ensure the registration of almost every birth and death within a short time after its occurrence.

COVID-19 may act as an **eye-opener** on the importance of the CRS. The CRS has **several shortcomings**. India does not have a robust system of registering births and deaths.

While the **law** and a **registration system** are in place. The State governments should put in more effort to ensure that all births and deaths are registered and more deaths have **medically certified causes**. This would require coordinated action by several state departments.

The data should be published in a timely manner so that it can aid in the formulation of **evidence-based policies** and **programs**.

SC's verdict on vaccination policy

91. **Why vaccine mandates are essential**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Why vaccine mandates are essential**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **24th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Indian Constitution

Relevance: Fundamental Rights – individual’s bodily integrity and personal autonomy under Article 21 of the Constitution

News: Recently, the **Supreme Court** has given its verdict on **the government’s ongoing vaccination policy**. The court held that restrictions imposed by States and Union Territories on **unvaccinated individuals** cannot be said to be **proportionate**.

Background

The governments have imposed partial or full vaccination of individuals as a precondition for accessing public spaces, services, or using public transportation, among others.

Past trends of safeguard community interest

In 1905, the U.S. Supreme Court in **Jacobson v. Massachusetts**, upheld the punishment of citizens who rejected smallpox vaccinations. Such a stand was taken in various judgments in the western world.

In India, the Supreme Court in **Asha Ranjan v. State of Bihar (2017)**, echoed the prioritization of **community interest** over **individual interests**. The court had observed that the community interest cannot be **sacrificed** at the **altar** of individual interests especially in a situation where a **fear of psychosis** is running through the **community**.

The Supreme Court’s observations in this case

The government’s policy seeks to invade an **individual’s bodily integrity** and **personal autonomy** under **Article 21** of the Constitution.

What is the basis of the Supreme Court’s observations?

In General

The proportionality test was used to check on the **infringement** of **bodily integrity, personal autonomy**, and **privacy** of an individual by the state. The test requires satisfaction of the following conditions:

(1) the state action should be sanctioned by law;

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- (2) the proposed action should have a legitimate state aim; and
- (3) the extent of interference by the proposed state action should be proportionate to the need for such interference. It means **less restrictive measures** are absent.

In particularly this case

(1) The State is empowered under **Entry 6** of the State List of Schedule VII of the Constitution, the **Disaster Management Act of 2005** and the **Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897** to take effective measures (including legislate) on issues concerning **'public health'**.

(2) The **state's aim** is legitimate. For example, the Indian Council of Medical Research said that 92% of COVID-19 deaths in India in 2021 occurred in unvaccinated individuals.

(3) The extent of **state's interference** with the privacy and bodily autonomy of an individual, like the vaccination is the **essential precondition** for availing certain services, is not disproportionate when the state faces the challenge of preventing the **transmission** of COVID-19 and the **number of deaths**. However, such a state's interference is **disproportionate** until the time infection rates remain low.

At present, the infection rates are low. Therefore, the court held that the state's interference are violative of an **individual's bodily integrity** and **personal autonomy** under **Article 21** of the Constitution.

Argument against the Supreme Court's decision

The decision will **impact India's ability to equip itself** and its citizens for further **mutations** of the virus, if any, in the times to come.

The vaccines have proved to be medically essential to prevent severe illness and reduce deaths among infected persons. Should the virus mutate further, the presence of a class of unvaccinated persons would have wide-ranging ramifications for an already **overburdened healthcare system**.

India is a signatory to **the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**. Thus, India is bound to take all possible measures to progressively realise the enjoyment of **"highest attainable standard of physical and mental health"** of its citizens under **Article 12**. Therefore, the state should **expedite inoculations** at a time when infection rates are relatively low.

The vaccination will alleviate the **burden** on the **healthcare system** during more difficult times. It will also ensure that the **state's healthcare policies** are proactive and not merely reactionary.

The state should first safeguard the life and health of its citizens before individuals' decisional autonomies.

ASHA WORKER PROGRAMME

92. [Serving those who serve: On WHO honour for ASHA workers](#)

Source: This post is based on the article **"Serving those who serve: On WHO honour for ASHA workers"** published in **The Hindu** on **25th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Health related issues

Relevance: Recognition to ASHA workers in India

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News: World Health Organization recognized the immense contribution of India's ASHA (accredited social health activists) workers by according them the Global Health Leader award.

This has given due recognition to the efforts of the workers at the very bottom of the hierarchy.

Why were ASHA workers awarded?

The **ASHAs were honoured for their crucial role in linking the community with the health system, to ensure those living in rural poverty can access primary health care services.**

These workers, all women, faced harassment and violence for their work during the pandemic, well documented in the media.

Way forward

Even as they contribute to better health outcomes, ASHA workers continue to protest across the country, for better remuneration, health benefits and permanent posts.

It is the duty of the governmental agencies that employ them to ensure their welfare, safety and security.

93. **ASHA: A successful public health experiment rooted in the village community**

Source: This post is based on the article "**ASHA: A successful public health experiment rooted in the village community**" published in **The Indian Express** on **24th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Health

Relevance: ASHA worker programme

News: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognized the contribution of India's 1 million Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) during the Covid-19 pandemic

ASHA workers have received the **Global Health Leaders Award-2022** in the backdrop of the ongoing 75th World Health Assembly.

Genesis of the ASHA worker programme

The ASHA programme was based on Chhattisgarh's successful **Mitanin programme**, in which a **Community Worker** looks after 50 households. The ASHA was to be a local resident, looking after 200 households.

The programme had a very robust thrust on the **stage-wise development of capacity** in selected areas of public health.

Many states tried to incrementally develop the ASHA from a Community Worker to a Community Health Worker, and even to an Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM)/ General Nurse and Midwife (GNM), or a Public Health Nurse.

In many states, ASHAs are involved in national health programmes, and in the response to a range of communicable and non-communicable diseases. They get **performance-based payments**, not a fixed salary like government servants.

– The idea behind this was to make her a **part of the village community rather than a government employee**, i.e. to prevent governmentalisation and promote communitisation.

Over 98% ASHAs **belong to the village where they reside**, and know every household. Their selection involved the community and key resource persons. Educational qualification was a consideration.

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With newly acquired skills in health care and the ability to connect households to health facilities, she was able to secure benefits for households. She was like a **demand-side functionary**, reaching patients to facilities, providing health services nearer home.

In a way, it became a programme that allowed a local woman to develop into a **skilled health worker**.

The ASHAs brought basic health services to the doorstep of households.

What were the challenges faced by ASHA workers, and how were they addressed?

The ASHAs faced a range of challenges: Where to stay in a hospital? How to manage mobility? How to tackle safety issues?

The solutions were found in a **partnership among frontline workers, panchayat functionaries, and community workers**.

– The **Community Worker added value to this process**. Incentives for institutional deliveries and the setting up of emergency ambulance services like 108, 102, etc. across most states built pressure on public institutions and improved the mobility of ASHAs.

There have been challenges with regard to the **performance-based compensation**. In many states, the payout is low, and often delayed.

What have been the public policy lessons from the ASHA worker programme?

The important public policy lessons are –

- the need to **incrementally develop a local worker** keeping accountability with the community,
- make **performance-based payments**, and
- provide a **demand-side push with simultaneous augmentation of services** in public systems. The system can sustain and grow only if the compensation is adequate, and the ASHA continues to enjoy the confidence of the community.

What is the way forward?

There is a strong argument to **grant permanence to some of these positions** with a reasonable compensation as sustaining motivation.

The **incremental development of a local resident woman** is an important factor in human resource engagement in community-linked sectors. This should apply to other field functionaries such as ANMs, GNMs, Public Health Nurses as well.

It is equally important to ensure that **compensation for performance is timely and adequate**.

– Ideally, an ASHA should be able to make **more than the salary of a government employee**, with opportunities for moving up the skill ladder in the formal primary health care system as an ANM/ GNM or a Public Health Nurse.

Upgrading skill sets and providing easy access to credit and finance will ensure a sustainable opportunity to earn a respectable living while serving the community.

Strengthening access to health insurance, credit for consumption and livelihood needs at reasonable rates, and coverage under pro-poor public welfare programmes will contribute to ASHAs emerging as even stronger agents of change.

ISSUES RELATED TO PUBLIC HEALTH

94. [Sighting the finishing line in measles-rubella elimination](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Sighting the finishing line in measles-rubella elimination**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **27th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector; Health Sector

Relevance: Universal Immunization Program, Measles-Rubella (MR) Vaccination Program

News: The COVID-19 pandemic stole two years from the MR Elimination programme. The MR elimination target has been re-set to 2023.

About measles-rubella (MR) Program

It is a program for providing **immunisation** to children from 5 to 15 years. It is being implemented as a **school-based vaccination programme** and is being conducted in all States.

Furthermore, it will lead to **vaccination-induced immunity** against both Measles and Rubella diseases.

To cover immunity gaps after one dose of measles vaccine, a second dose was necessary.

Why is MR Elimination important?

MR elimination is defined as **zero transmission** of measles and rubella viruses. It should have evidence of zero clinical disease, sustained over three years.

It can be achieved through **two methods: (a) surveillance:** identify places where either virus is still in transmission, and **(b) vaccination:** two doses of the MR vaccine — the first dose between nine and 11 months and second dose ideally in the second year of life

The MR vaccine is a **combined product** which targets **two diseases** in one shot. This is because fever and rash surveillance cover both diseases

How was the program implemented?

The district was chosen as the ideal **population-cum-administrative unit** for efficiently implementing all activities.

For epidemiological reasons, rubella vaccination had to cover children up to 15 years. **School registration and attendance** are high in all States and as a programme, therefore children were to be vaccinated in schools.

(A) Why should measles be eliminated?

In the **pre-vaccination era**, while polio paralysed about 1% of all children before the age of five, measles actually killed 1% of all under-five children. During measles outbreaks, the case-fatality rate may range from 10%- to 15%.

It leads to loss of **weight** as well as **cognitive development** and **scholastic performance**.

Measles affects the **immune system** rendering the child vulnerable to other infectious diseases.

(B) Why should rubella be eliminated?

The rubella virus is a **slower transmitter**. The risk of rubella extends from **childhood** through **adolescence** into the **reproductive age range**.

It can show no symptoms, or with a short fever and a skin rash that is less pronounced than that of measles.

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In case of an infected pregnant woman, the virus has a tendency to cross the **placenta**. Affected babies are born with severe birth defects such as cataracts, deafness, heart defects and developmental delay which is called as '**congenital rubella syndrome**' (CRS). This is preventable with vaccination if given prior to pregnancy.

What are the issues in the implementation of the MR Elimination program?

The stakeholders such as school managements, teachers, children themselves and parents **were not properly informed** about the basis and features of the new programme.

Due to a lack of information, there was **antipathy towards about the programme**, in the minds of parents and school authorities.

Lack of information has led to **shifting of goal posts**. For example, the Government first missed target of 2015, and second missed target of 2020

Way Forward

In order to achieve the MR Elimination in all 773 districts, the **Immunisation Division** of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare should support the **state governments**, and all the states should galvanise the **district administration** to carry out activities.

The District Magistrate should activate **the Task Force mechanism** overseeing the Universal Immunisation Program (UIP) that is managed by the District Immunisation Officer.

Clinical and laboratory surveillance and vaccination have to be sustained. Measles virus, could be imported from outside.

There are 19 months available to achieve the target before the finishing line b of **y July-August 2023**.

The cooperation of parents, health-care personnel at all levels, opinion leaders, influencers, the media, non-governmental organisations such as the Rotary and Lions, can play a role in making this **district-by-district programme** a story of success.

95. Diversifying plates for girls

Source: The post is based on an article "**Diversifying plates for girls**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **26th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Social Sector; Health Sector;

Relevance: Nutritional Security

News: The **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 data (2019-20)** has shown an increase in **anaemia** among **adolescent girls** by 5% when compared to **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4**.

About nutrition requirement

In the **adolescence** phase of life, both boys and girls demand a lot of **nutrition intake**. As girls face more **physiological demands**, thus they require a **higher intake** of macro and micro nutrients. Therefore, Adolescent girls are 40% and boys are 18% prone to anaemia.

The **adolescent's nutritional status** is related to the burden of **multiple micronutrient deficiencies**. Currently, 80% of adolescents suffer '**hidden hunger**' due to micro nutrient deficiencies.

Over 10% of adolescents are overweight in 12 States of India

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What are the causes of low nutrition?

As per the **Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey 2019**, the consumption of diverse food groups among adolescents was low even before the pandemic.

The COVID-19 has further worsened **dietary diversity**, especially of women, adolescents and children. For example, as per a study, women's dietary diversity in India declined by 42% during COVID-19 lockdowns as they consumed fewer fruits, vegetables, and eggs.

The lockdowns have led to the loss of **mid-day meals**, interruptions in **Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS)** and nutrition education in schools for adolescent girls. The **out-of-school adolescent girls** were even more vulnerable to poor nutrition outcomes.

Way Forward

During adolescence, **dietary diversity** can be promoted, when **dietary habits** are in the formative stage. The behaviour imbibed during adolescence has a higher chance of being continued in adult life. It can correct **nutritional deficiencies** and replenish the body with much-needed nutrients, especially for girls.

Appropriate nutrition should be ensured to the **adolescent girls**. This can be done in following ways:

First, the **WIFS services** should be continued, the **government's health and nutrition policies** should promote **diverse diets** (like inclusion of millets) and **physical activities**. This can be done with better **school ecosystem** (like Nutri-Smart schools having kitchen gardens in schools); and strengthen **nutrition counselling** through **community-based** events and Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Days.

Second, apart from schools, young girls having **adequate information** and **knowledge** about appropriate diets can act as **change agents** for their families, community, and peer groups.

Third, in addition, increasing the **legal age of marriage** for women from **18 years** to **21 years** was a good step. Further, it should be ensured that girls remain in school or formal education. This will provide opportunities to girls to improve their nutritional and health outcomes.

Fourth, to address hidden hunger, we need to strengthen our policy initiatives to **address deficiencies** of not just **iron** and **folic acid**, but also **vitamin B12**, **vitamin D**, and **zinc**.

Fifth, POSHAN 2.0 Mission strongly integrates the aspect of under-nutrition and anaemia among women, girls, and children. In addition, non-communicable diseases and obesity among adolescents should also be included.

96. India needs to keep an eye on its myopia prevalence

Source: This post is based on the article "**India needs to keep an eye on its myopia prevalence**" published in **The Hindu** on **23rd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Social Issues – Public health related issues

Relevance: Myopia prevalence in India

Context: Millions of young children are growing up short-sighted every year because of myopia. While East Asia and the Pacific have been reporting some of the highest numbers for a decade now, current estimates out of India do not yet reflect this trend.

It may mean India has time to act and save the sight of its children.

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Prevalence of Myopia in children

Myopia is commonly found in children.

As they grow and their bodies change, the **length of the eyeball** and its **power to refract light** do not always align, leading to vision that is blurry.

A pair of spectacles is enough to correct this mismatch. However, spectacles address the symptom and not the cause (eyeball length), so myopia can progress all through childhood.

Progressive myopia, after a point, leads to **'high' myopia**, increasing the risk of **retinal detachment, glaucoma** or **macular degeneration** that can cause permanent vision loss.

What are the reasons behind Myopia in children?

Many children, especially in urban environments, are **spending more time indoors** and **on near-work**. Be it at school or at home, the quantum of near-work — looking at books, television, phones or laptops — has increased over the decades. The **COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated this trend** by robbing children of outdoor playtime and exposure to sunlight.

This big shift to near-work seems to be triggering an increase in myopia prevalence.

Is Myopia turning out to be an epidemic?

Global estimates

The WHO is warning of a **global myopia epidemic**, where millions of children are at risk of vision impairment. Projections show **nearly 50% of the world's population** will be myopic by 2050.

There were nearly two billion people with myopia in 2010 — a quarter of the human population.

– Data from the **East Asian countries** have been particularly alarming. Even before the novel coronavirus pandemic, 80%-90% of high school children in East and Southeast Asia were presenting with myopia. Nearly 20% of them had high myopia.

India

Current studies in India are recording **low myopia prevalence** among schoolchildren when compared to East Asia. In a large study that surveyed 1.2 million schoolchildren in Telangana and parts of Andhra Pradesh, experts found myopia prevalence of a little over 5%.

Even including those already with glasses, the prevalence numbers are low.

Why Myopia prevalence is still low in India?

Majority of children still live in rural areas: As urbanisation increases, so does the burden of myopia. Myopia can be twice as high among urban children when compared to rural ones. One study found a higher prevalence among South Asian children in the United Kingdom compared to those living in rural India.

And, despite a demographic shift towards cities and towns, nearly 65% of India's population still lives in rural areas. Hence, Myopia prevalence is still low in children in India.

But, as urbanisation increases in the future, so will the Myopia prevalence.

For instance: Prediction models are pointing to a myopia prevalence of nearly 50% in India too by 2050 — similar to global projections.

What steps can be taken?

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Treatment strategies to constrain myopic progression include **pharmaceuticals** and **speciality spectacles** or **contact lens**.

But like all public health issues, **prevention strategies** are far more inexpensive and cost-effective. **For instance:**

- Encourage parents to take children out to parks and other outdoor spaces regularly.
- Schools must ensure adequate exposure to sunlight. Educational methodologies are needed at every school level that balance near-work with distance-work.

Make it easy to screen and provide spectacles for the many who will need them. **Basic, annual screening** can be performed by schoolteachers, who can then refer myopic children to eye-care professionals.

Tackling the social stigma around spectacle wear with tact and compassion.

It is critical that we **step up surveillance for myopia** so that India is not caught unawares by a runaway epidemic that will destroy its children's vision.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

INDIA – RUSSIA RELATIONS

97. Indigenous weapons will have to wean India off Russian arms

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Indigenous weapons will have to wean India off Russian arms**” published in **Live Mint** on **23rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper – 2, International Relations

News: According to Bloomberg News, the US is considering a \$500 million defense package for India to finance the purchase of US weapon systems.

According to Researchers at the Stimson Center, 85% of India's weapons are of Russian origin. Further, in the next 5 years, Russian arms export to India will increase.

India showed its unwillingness to condemn Russia, due to its dependency on Russian arms. After that, US is looking to reduce India's dependency on Russian arms.

What are the issues facing India in reducing its dependency on Russia?

Like all other developing nations, India is facing the situation of an **impossible trinity**, i.e., it cannot simultaneously achieve **autonomy, affordability and quality** in weapons development or purchase from US.

Shifting its dependency on western weapons would increase India's autonomy, but it would have to sacrifice affordability. It is because US weapons are much more costly compared to the Russian arms. For example, Russia's S-400 surface-to-air missile platform is costing India \$5.5 billion, whereas US-made Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system costs about six times that.

If India wants affordability and quality, its reliance on Russia is right. Some nations are getting that by close ties with the west and China. However, China is hostile toward India and the West is far away. Western countries can't help India in times of emergency. For example, during the 1971 war with Pakistan, India found itself short of artillery shells and had to secretly

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import mortars from an Israel it didn't even recognize at the time. **Insufficient weapons on hand represent a loss of autonomy.**

What are the issues with indigenous weapons in India?

India's efforts toward establishing a local defence industry have not been fruitful. **Indigenization offers affordability and autonomy at the cost of quality.**

For example, the indigenously built Arjun tank and the Tejas fighter jet are not preferred by the army and Air force.

Arjun tank is heavy (70 tonnes), compared to Russia's T-90 tank (50 tonnes). It could collapse most bridges in Punjab, making it unusable for a canal-heavy, militarized border with Pakistan.

Tejas's payload is smaller than the F-16's, and the plane takes too long to service.

What should be done?

India can take lessons from China, which invested for decades in the Shenyang J-8 fighter jet. It was able to finally build the Chengdu J-20 stealth jet, which may well be a "near-peer" of US fifth-generation fighters.

Similarly, India needs to invest in homegrown defence companies for a reliable and affordable pipeline of weapons of decent quality that arrive quickly enough to deter an aggressive China.

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

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

98. [Lessons from Russia for India](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article "[Lessons from Russia for India](#)" published in **The Hindu on 25th May 2022.**

Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 2 – International relations

Context: Russia's invasion of Ukraine is ongoing. Strategic failures and success of Russia is providing lessons for the Indian military as well.

What are the key lessons from Russian invasion for Indian military?

First, it has revealed the level of effectiveness of Russian tanks. American-built Javelin or Advanced Anti-Tank Weapon System have resulted into destruction of several of Russian T-90 tanks.

However, Germans used these tanks effectively during ring World War 2, but they were used along with the infantry. Russia has not used its tanks along with infantry, which is the main reason behind heavy destruction of its tanks.

Second, drones and anti-tank missiles have caused a great devastation among Russian forces.

Emerging technologies like cyber and digital technology, Artificial Intelligence, and UAVs should be used along with the legacy platforms such as fighter planes, warships, and artillery weapons. It will provide the best performance. Emerging tech can provide precision, whereas legacy platforms can launch firepower.

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Third, it is well known that Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses should be the foremost requirement for any invading force. However, Russia failed to neutralize Ukrainian air defenses, leading to Russia's revision of its plan by confining its military operations to Donbas and the Black Sea coast.

Fourth, Russia stretched its military lines thin. It resulted in long lines of communications and military columns that could not be supplied and reinforced.

All these strategic failures led to low morale among Russian forces.

Thus, India should start investing more in sensors, electronic warfare, greater digitization, satellite communications, and unmanned systems. It should be not just for reconnaissance and surveillance, but also for attack missions.

India should also develop greater missile forces to enhance its offensive capabilities.

99. **Unexpected, but also unacceptable – Shocks due to Russia-Ukraine war**

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Unexpected, but also unacceptable**” published in **Business Standard** on **23rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 2- Impact of policies of developed and developing countries in India

News: Russian invasion of Ukraine represents an unexpected and undesirable shock to global economies, including India's Economy.

Indian economy is facing some unexpected shocks due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Even the areas which were looking beneficial for India are turning out to be harmful.

Impacts on Indian economy

Both Russia and Ukraine have been major exporters of foodstuff, including food grain and cooking oil. Russia alone was a key supplier of energy, fertilizer, and metals. However, the following are some unexpected shocks to the Indian economy:

Food grains: India was expecting to take benefit from a sharp increase in global food grain prices by supplying its excess stocks stored with FCI. However, the government's recent decision to shut down the export of wheat has reversed the expectation.

Energy: India was expecting discounted supplies of Ural oil from Russia. However, the price is at the same level, as it was in 2021 i.e. around \$30 less than Brent Crude. Furthermore, India is facing logistical difficulties to India in accessing oil from Russia. The unavailability of tankers due to the unavailability of marine insurance and the threat of sanctions is a major hurdle.

Food Prices: Food supplies are under pressure due to increase in price in the global food market and increases in domestic input costs due to the unavailability of potash from Russia and Belarus.

Fiscal pressure: the government has increased fertilizer subsidy outlay for the year to insulate farmers from increased prices.

Monetary policy dilemma: RBI is facing a dilemma between supporting inflation targeting and supporting the growth recovery.

Present India is much more powerful and effective as compared to 1991 India. Thus, India should be more aggressive in speaking against the disruptions caused by global events like the Ukraine invasion.

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States must follow Centre's fuel tax cuts

Source: Published in Times of India on 23rd May 2022.

News: Government has announced lowering excise duties on petrol and diesel, as well as offering a subsidy for LPG cylinders.

States must also reduce the taxes on oil. The combined impact of tax cuts will provide much-needed relief to stressed household budgets and small business balance sheets.

Because, unlike previous inflationary pressure, that took place along with high economic growth, this time, it has arrived in the backdrop of five years of economic weakness and a pandemic shock.

How has increasing inflation helped the government?

A sharp rise in inflation has helped central governments in two ways:

1.) First, buoyant tax collections. GoI's net tax revenue between April 2021 and February 2022 was almost Rs 3.75 lakh crore higher than what was collected two years ago in a pre-pandemic year.

2.) Second, growth of nominal GDP has outpaced liability of interest on government borrowings.

Similarly, state governments have also benefitted from inflation. The ratio of fiscal deficit to state domestic product in 2022-23 is lower than the cap fixed by GoI for many states.

GS2 – POLITY – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

100. [The executive seems more fragile than hurt sentiment](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**The executive seems more fragile than hurt sentiment**” published in **The Hindu** on **25th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Govt policies and interventions

Relevance: increased use of Section 153A IPC and Section 295A IPC by the executive

Context: A Dalit academician, was recently arrested for an ‘objectionable’ post on the Gyanvapi mosque row. He is alleged to have promoted disharmony or enmity between religious groups (**Section 153A** in the Indian Penal Code) and intentionally and maliciously hurt religious sentiments (**Section 295A** in the IPC).

His arrest adds to the trend of increased use of the two provisions.

[Data indicates an increased use](#)

The latest annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) records more than four jumps (458%) of cases registered under Section 153A since 2014; it almost doubled in the last two years.

Conviction could only be secured in merely 20.4% of cases.

Though no separate data is available on Section 295A, anecdotal evidence suggests its increased use by the executive.

[What is the legislative history of these provisions?](#)

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In 1927, when Section 153A was already in existence, Section 295A was brought on the demand of a religious minority community which alleged that a pamphlet titled 'Rangeela Rasul' published objectionable content against its founder.

A more direct measure was incorporated through Section 295A, which would not require proving that the speech promoted enmity or hatred between classes; now, a **hurt sentiment would be enough**. It can be argued that it safeguarded the spirit of tolerance amidst religious diversity. But its enhanced misuse raises the question: safeguard for who and against what?

The Legislative Assembly debates at the introduction of Section 295A expressed concern about its subjectivity that could be misused.

– **Rationale behind Sec 295A:** The rationale behind the provision was to **deal with intentional insults to religion** or outraging religious feelings. At best, the Assembly members found it a temporary remedy for a temporary aberration, not one that would be in active use a century later.

Concerns expressed wrt Section 295A

The debates sensed and cautioned against a looming **threat over free speech**. It was anticipated that it **could be misused** to suppress honest, candid, and bona fide criticism, and hinder historical research towards social reform.

If individuals were allowed to register complaints about a hurt religious sentiment, the **courts would be flooded with frivolous cases**. Then there would be a sweeping class of offences, where it cannot be objectively adjudicated if a crime has been committed.

What are some safeguards to prevent misuse?

Statutory safeguards were incorporated that required **deliberate intention** and **malice**; and judicial rulings that needed looking at — words used, intent, and effect to ascertain criminality.

Only a **deliberate** and **aggravated form of religious insult** would attract the rigor of the provision.

The judiciary laid down two ways to measure the effect —

- one by establishing a link between speech and public disorder, and
- by measuring the effects from the standards of a reasonable man, and not from one who fears all hostile viewpoints.

What are the associated concerns?

No attempt was made to translate the statutory safeguards into practice.

Unlike bodily harm that can be verified, **sentimental hurt is subjective and cannot be tested against strict measures**.

Even the statutory safeguards of 'deliberate intention and malice' **cannot be objectively determined**. The police do not get into the legislative nuances before registering a criminal case or making an arrest. A hazy legal paradigm criminalising hurting religious sentiment facilitates the ruling dispensation's strategy to stifle all dissent and further divisive politics.

Way forward

A critical inquiry of orthodox practices and superstitious beliefs encourages social reforms.

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India's Constitution celebrates diversity with the guarantee of free speech. With that aspirational pledge, should not the answer to hurt religious sentiment be tolerance, and not rampant criminalisation?

SEDITION LAW IN INDIA

101. **Striking off sedition will have little impact if UAPA remains untouched**

Source: The post is based on an article "**Striking off sedition will have little impact if UAPA remains untouched**" published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – **Fundamental** rights – Important Provisions of the Indian Constitution

Relevance: Sedition Law and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act(UAPA)

News: Recently, the Union Government has shown its willingness to **reconsider** the colonial law in the spirit of **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav** and the Supreme Court order has ordered to keep the **152-year-old sedition law**, i.e., Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in abeyance.

What are the issues?

According to the **NCRB** and **Article 14 database**, more than 13,000 Indians have been trapped in Sedition law cases since 2010.

An accused is most likely to spend up to 50 days in prison until a trial court grants bail and up to 200 days until a high court does so.

Argument against the law

The sedition law has been used to **criminalise dissent**. For example, various citizens have been charged with sedition during the anti-CAA protests, farmers protests of 2021; etc.

What are the challenges in striking off of the sedition law?

The discussion and deliberations on removal of the sedition law has always been political in nature in India. There has been **election promises** for the removal of the dark laws like the AFSPA and sedition, but nothing has happened on the ground.

Is Sedition law removal enough?

The retired **Justice Manmohan Singh** has said that the removal of the sedition law makes a dent, but it will be **small** and **ineffective** measures if the UAPA remains untouched. The UAPA contains many aspects of the sedition law with a number of **far-reaching consequences**.

First, the sedition law involves a number of **safeguards** and **constitutional remedies**. For example, **anticipatory bail**, compulsion of filing a charge sheet within 90 days, failing which the accused arrested is entitled to bail, and so on. However, the UAPA is an anti-terror law having stringent provisions and far fewer safeguards. For example, detention is allowed without a charge sheet for up to 180 days, a presumption of guilt, burden of proof on the accused and creates a strong presumption against bail.

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For example, the **three Kashmiri students** who were charged with sedition for shouting pro-Pakistan slogans in a T-20 cricket match were easily granted bail. In contrast, especially after the **SC's Watali judgment (2019)**, bail has become a virtual impossibility for the UAPA accused. Second, in the sedition cases, the **charge sheet** is filed in fewer cases and **the conviction rate** is as low as 2.25%. Thus, the sedition law is not a **very effective tool** for incarceration. However, as per the NCRB data between 2014-2020, 27.5 per cent of the UAPA cases saw convictions. In addition, such cases have taken a long time for trial to reach the stage of completion.

Way Forward

Those imprisoned under the sedition law should get immediate bail as the SC has issued interim order.

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General

Studies

Paper – 3

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DAM SAFETY IN INDIA

1. **How safe are India's dams?**

Source: This post is based on the article “**How safe are India's dams?**” published in **Business Standard** on **4th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Infrastructure

Relevance: Dam failures in India

Context: Jal Shakti Minister recently told the Rajya Sabha that since 1979, there were 42 instances of dam failures, the latest being the Annamayya reservoir in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh that led to the death of at least 20 people in November 2021.

India has the 3rd largest number of dams in the world at 5,745, following China with 23,842 and the US with 9,261.

What are the issues with the dam infrastructure in India?

80% of the dams are more than 25 years old, and with the accumulated burden of deferred maintenance, many have huge associated risks.

– 6% are more than 100 years old and 18% are 50-100 years old.

What are the factors on which long-term safety of a dam depends?

The long-term safety of a dam depends on:

- the extent of degradation of its materials,
- weakening of the foundations
- seismological threats.

What efforts have been taken at ensuring dam safety in India?

The **Dam Safety Organisation (DSO)** was established in the **Central Water Commission (CWC)** in May 1979 to convince the states about dam safety. Issues related to dam safety have often been cited in reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The efficacy of the DSO has also been questioned in such reports.

The first major programme initiated was the **Dam Safety Assurance and Rehabilitation Project** implemented with support from the World Bank from 1991 to 1999 in four states (Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu).

The second programme was the World Bank funded **Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)**, from April 2012 to March 2021 with a much larger budget outlay.

– This scheme has rehabilitated 223 dams located in seven states — Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand.

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Based on the success of DRIP, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has **initiated DRIP Phase II and Phase III**. These new schemes have 19 states, and three central agencies (Bhakra Beas Management Board, CWC and Damodar Valley Corporation) on board.

The **Dam Safety Bill, 2019**, was passed by the Lok Sabha on August 2, 2019. This legislation provides for surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of specified dams by the establishment of a **National Committee on Dam Safety, National Dam Safety Authority, State Committee on Dam Safety, and the State Dam Safety Organization**.

This new Act and associated rehabilitation programmes thus usher in a new era of professional management of India's dams and related safety issues.

[What needs to be done?](#)

The **physical rehabilitation of dams** involves two clear streams of activity:

- The first is “de-siltation” — to restore the original reservoir capacity.
- The second is “safety” — encompassing, structural safety, hydrologic safety and operational safety

The **issue of dam decommissioning** also needs to be brought into the action-agenda. Demands for decommissioning have already been raised for the Mullaperiyar dam in Kerala, Dumbur dam over the Gumti river in Tripura and Jayakwadi dam in Maharashtra.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – INDIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

ENERGY SECURITY AND RELATED ISSUES

2. [The supply bottlenecks causing power shortages](#)

Source: This post is based on the article **“The supply bottlenecks causing power shortages”** published in **The Indian Express on 3rd May 22**

Syllabus: GS3 – Energy and Infrastructure

Relevance: Power crisis in India, shortage of coal

Context: The power sector in India is going through a crisis. **Peak shortages** in some states have reached double digits. Coal stocks available at thermal plants are at abysmal levels, and about 106 plants out of 173 plants have reached a critical stage.

In some plants, the stocks available are just about enough to run the plant for a day or two more. Part of the problem of poor coal stock is also rumoured to be on account of the non-payment of dues of coal companies.

But this is not the major cause of the shortage.

[What is the chronology of power crisis?](#)

Firstly, with summer approaching before time, **power demand has shot up to record levels**.

Delhi's power demand crossed 6,000 MW on April 28 which is a record.

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The second reason for the rise in power demand is that the **economy is recovering, and demand from the industrial sector is going up.**

All things put together, power demand crossed 207 GW on April 29, which is about 14% higher than what it was a year ago.

[Is the increased power demand the actual reason for power crisis?](#)

No.

The increase in demand should have posed no problem since there was **enough spare capacity available** with coal-based stations operating at less than 60% capacity.

The **real problem is the availability of coal**, as many plants have less than two days worth of stock.

Moreover, **generation from gas-based plants has also fallen** due to high gas prices in the world market.

Reservoirs, too, are drying up due to intense heat which will **adversely affect hydro generation.**

[What are the reasons behind the coal shortage?](#)

Firstly, it's important to note that **this coal crisis is not because of any deficit in the supply of coal** from domestic sources.

– Coal dispatches from Coal India during 2021-22 were 23% higher than in the previous year.

There are two main reasons for coal shortage:

a) The first is that due to a **rise in the international price of coal** on account of the Ukraine crisis, all plants that were importing coal have either stopped generating completely or are generating at much lower levels. We have a sizeable generating capacity based on imported coal, estimated at about 16 GW to 17 GW. All these plants after stopping imports are now looking for domestic coal, creating pressure on domestic coal.

b) The second reason for low coal stocks is the **non-availability of rakes with Indian railways** for transporting coal.

– There is also the **issue of availability of tracks** since they are being used on a back-to-back basis.

[What is the way forward?](#)

With efforts now being made to sort out the transportation problems, stocks will begin depleting faster. Thus **production has to be enhanced** so that the replenishment rate is higher than consumption.

This is the right time to **enhance coal production and build adequate stocks** because once the monsoon sets in, production will fall.

Anticipating this, the government has asked the **power companies to import coal for blending purposes** to reduce the pressure on domestic coal.

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- The problem is that there may be no takers for this, given the high price of coal in international markets. Besides, these imports will again put pressure on the availability of rakes for domestic coal.

Hence, unless the weather relents, dark days are ahead.

3. [A silicon waste alert for our creaky power sector](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**A silicon waste alert for our creaky power sector**” published in **Livemint** on **2nd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Energy and Infrastructure

Relevance: Power scarcity in India, coal shortage

Context: India’s power crisis is best described by a disconnect between installed capacity and availability that must be sorted out.

What are the major reasons behind the power shortage in the country?

India has an installed capacity to generate almost 400 gigawatts of electricity, and about 40% of it cleanly. But a **surge in peak demand** to nearly 205 gigawatts, amid the blistering heatwave in the April, led to frequent power outages in various parts of the country.

Shortage of coal: Coal shortage can be attributed to following two reasons: – **a)** a rise in demand from pre-covid peaks that traced a revival in the Indian economy, even as extra power was guzzled by an early AC season amid record temperatures, **b)** the Ukraine war made prices of coal spike. – As Indian coal importers looked to domestic sources, local stuff fell short.

– **Problems with the discom sector:** Most discoms in India are state-run entities that are strapped for cash and stretched out of shape by a status quo at the usage end of the market, where theft and freebies are rampant and subsidy-transfer delays from state coffers are routine.

Way forward

India needs to go for **end-to-end reforms** that could link demand and supply efficiently.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECH – RESEARCH AND DEV IN INDIA

SCIENTIFIC R&D IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

4. [Funding woes haunts Indian Science](#)

Source: The post is based on article “**Funding woes haunts Indian Science**” published in **The Hindu** on **2nd May 2022**

Syllabus: GS3 Development in Science and Technology, Intellectual Property Rights etc.

Relevance: Research and Development (R&D)

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News: The Union Ministry of Science and Technology budgetary allocation in the **current financial year (2022-23)** has seen a drop from the last year. The 2022-2023 Union Budget has seen a drop of 3.9% from last year.

What is the significance of science and tech?

The purpose is to understand the world better. It is a highly competitive field among the nations. The funding of science and technology has often been touted as a marker of social advancement.

Status of India's R&D expenditure

The research in India is primarily sustained by **direct funding** from the government. There is little participation from the private sector.

India's share in the global R&D expenditure is at 1-3% of the global total. However, the share of the U.S. and China is around 25% and 23% respectively.

The proportion of **qualified researchers** is very low in India. In 2017, there were 255 researchers per million people in India in contrast to 8,342 per million in Israel, 7,597 in Sweden and 7,498 in South Korea.

The **budgetary allocations** have shown a consistent downward trend over a last few years. It varied between 0.6 to 0.8% of GDP over a decade. It is way below the United States, China, Japan, the European Union countries and South Korea.

There is a **skewed distribution of funds**. Most funding goes to DRDO, Department of Space and Atomic Energy. However, ICAT, CSIR, DST, DBT, MoES and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) received the rest of the 30 to 40% of the public funds.

Despite, jump in the number of universities from 752 to 1,016, and the number of students doing doctoral degrees, the funding remained frozen between 2011 and 2018.

Most of the country's scientific research is being conducted by government laboratories and a few premier institutes. The agency will lead to democratisation of the knowledge base.

Some of the measures taken to boost scientific research funding in India

In pursuance to the **National Education Policy 2020**, the government announced to establish a new funding agency called the **National Research Foundation (NRF)**. It is expected to bring thousands of colleges and universities under its ambit, therefore to boost **university science research** and work in social sciences. The 2021-22 budget announced to offer ₹10,000 crore every year to this agency starting from 2021, over the next five years,

The 2021 budget speech also expressed the intention of investing about **₹4,000 crore** over five years for **deep-ocean research** and **biodiversity conservation**.

The government has shown commitment to set up four centres for virological research and development of hydrogen energy. .

Way Forward

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The **scientific institutions** need more **autonomous**, more participatory, and less bureaucratic functioning as well as a **vibrant** and **responsive financial system** to unleash the fullest potential of Indian science.

India must choose to break the **bureaucratic barriers** that exist in the government departments and develop innovative ways to help basic research flourish.

The government should release enough funds for scientific research. The R&D spending can be raised to at least 1% of the GDP.

It is also important for the private sector to chip in. The government should **incentivise** the private players like tax breaks, etc.

Further, the **NRF** should be set up. It should be independent of political interference, and the related financial commitment. In addition, the **SERB (Science Engineering Research Board)** can be upgraded.

India can learn a lot from China as it has become a world leader in scientific research in a short span of time.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

EMISSION REDUCTION AND TRANSITION TOWARDS CLEAN ENERGY

5. **Faster, cheaper and cleaner power**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Faster, cheaper and cleaner power**” published in **Business Standard** on **2nd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment – Renewable energy

Relevance: Transition to cleaner energy

Context: The State-owned NTPC said it plans to begin work on the construction of a new coal power plant, despite it being faster, cheaper and cleaner to build solar or wind.

Why India should transition to solar and wind energy?

Record low tariffs: India has seen record low renewable energy tariffs of Rs 1.99 (2.6 US cents) per kilowatt-hour for solar power, and Rs 2.43 per kilowatt-hour for wind power. These are quite favourable as compared to tariff of electricity produced from non-renewable sources or new hydropower projects.

Solar generation is highest during summer months, which **coincides with high power demand in India**.

Power from the sun could **also help meet the rising midday demand** as the use of air conditioning increases in India.

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Moreover, unlike coal based generation, solar plants **offer a sustainable pathway** to bridge the gap between electricity demand and supply.

Coal power generation dominates India's power supply, followed by hydropower. Solar emerged as the third-largest source last year, with wind power close behind.

Why the coal consumption has increased?

Presently, the world is using a lot more coal due to the following reasons:

- Supply shock resulting from the war in Ukraine, and
- the World is speeding up its response to the energy crunch

Way forward

The \$8.5 billion commitment finalised by the governments of France, Germany, the UK, the US and the European Union for a “**Just Energy Transition Partnership**” in South Africa — aimed at accelerating the move away from coal — could be a model for other countries.

Direct Air Capture (DAC) could comprise a large share of the investment in the broader carbon capture and storage sector, if companies can bring down costs.

6. **Climate arbitrage: Cost of carbon versus capital**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Climate arbitrage: Cost of carbon versus capital**” published in the **Live Mint** on **05th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy and Environment and Ecology

Relevance: Carbon market and Climate Arbitrage

News: Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has hiked the main policy rate like the central bank of the western economies. Further, Holcim, MNC of cement making is rearranging its portfolio (sell in India) to fit its climate adaptation plan for 2025.

Why was the policy rate hiked?

The inflation has been at a higher **level**. Therefore, the central bank decided to tighten credit for the sake of price stability.

Therefore, **big investors** like Indian cement-makers like Aditya Birla group etc. would find it difficult to invest in the **Holcim's assets** due to **dearer debt**.

Impact of the policy hike

The cost of capital is going to increase. The local banks will have to pay 4.4% on funds taken from its repo window. Further, the lenders are expected to raise their own rates in response. Therefore, the cost of borrowings will increase in India.

About the Climate arbitrage

There is an ongoing global reshuffle of **carbon-heavy assets**. Till now it was visible coal mining and oil and gas sector. But, **Holcim's rearrangement** of its asset is a step in this direction in

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the field of cement industry. The cement making business involves **dirty processes** that cause carbon emissions and pollution. Therefore, corporations are setting emission caps to go green.

What are the issues in climate arbitrage?

This would worsen the **planet's crisis**. This system will not bring emissions down. There are many buyers for **high-exhaust** and **high-return assets**. The polluting technologies remain in daily use by those companies which are under less climate pressure.

Way Forward

The basic problem behind climate arbitrage stems from **green plans** running **ahead of usage reality**.

Therefore, the **game theory** calls for collective action with a cap-and-trade system based on **carbon pricing**. A global framework should be created which stop a reshuffle of assets.

7. [The world is short of time and not minerals for climate action](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**The world is short of time and not minerals for climate action**" published in Livemint on **2nd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment – Climate Change

Relevance: Transition to a green economy

Context: The overlapping effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, covid-related supply chain disruptions and high inflation have all led to narratives that the clean-energy transition will be highly inflationary—or that it will stall.

The worries usually centre on the implications of soaring demand for commodities such as cobalt, lithium, nickel and copper that are used for electric vehicles (EV), solar cells, wind turbines and electrical grids.

The pitfalls of emission cuts must be seen in a broader context. A rush for minerals to build the new energy infrastructure is only a temporary problem.

What are the problems cited?

The International Energy Agency (IEA), highlights that an EV uses six times as much metals as a fossil fuel car and that wind farms use nine times as much as a gas-fired plant.

Some mines for the metals and minerals used in zero emissions energy systems will take years to come online. The IEA estimates **four to seven years for lithium**, depending on whether it is in Australia or South America. Copper mines can take well over a decade. It's easy to see that this could be a problem if demand ramps up unexpectedly fast.

What is the issue with this type of analysis?

The shock value of that analysis doesn't entirely withstand scrutiny.

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Firstly, it fails to acknowledge the absence of fuel from the equation. For eg: an internal combustion pickup truck will use \$25,000 of fuel in a decade, under a low gasoline price scenario.

Secondly, it fails to consider the economics of demand and supply. More demand and higher prices will engender more supply.

Thirdly, running out of commodities is a popular fear, but the past couple of hundred years have seen **humans develop ever more efficient ways of finding things** they want under the ground and pulling them out. Examples: Consider the US shale oil boom of the past decade: the country's oil output more than doubled between 2008 and 2018. Both the 'resources' and the economically recoverable 'reserves' of transition minerals have tended to grow over time, even as production continues.

Fourthly, innovation also helps on the demand side. Electric car batteries today use far less cobalt than they did a decade ago, and researchers are confident in the prospects for doing without that scarce mineral altogether.

8. [India must use markets to decarbonise](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "India must use markets to decarbonise" published in the Indian Express on 02nd May 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 Infrastructure (Energy Sector) and Environment and Ecology

Relevance: Market based Interventions for climate change

News: Recently, in the **Conference of Parties (CoP-26)** of the UNFCCC held at Glasgow in November 2021 several partner countries were seen committed to concrete action plans to contain global warming under the threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Why should India decarbonize?

Climate change is bound to impact human lives and the global economy. This is going to be at an exceptionally **high scale** in the coming future.

After China and the United States, India is the **third-largest emitter** of the Carbon dioxide. Thus is a key player in emissions reduction.

As per the **IEA's India Energy Outlook 2021 Report**, India's energy system is highly dependent on fossil fuels i.e., coal, oil and bioenergy. Thus, Indian energy ecosystem is highly carbon-intensive.

India is a **growing economy** which would demand more **energy consumption** with time. As per the IEA's World Energy Outlook Report 2017, India will account for nearly one-fourth of the global energy demand by 2040. Therefore, **India's economic growth** should be **sustainable**. It requires carbon emissions reductions.

What are the reasons behind high Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions and the climate change?

It is a feature of **market failure**. The **consumer's economic activities** like driving or air-conditioning and the **producer's economic activities** such as electricity generation and manufacturing are **inefficient** in nature.

They cause emissions, leading to pollution and global warming. These **negative externalities** are not reflected in the costs of production and consumption. This leads to an **uncontrolled rise in emissions** and also breeds apathy towards mitigation efforts.

Way Forward

There is a need to address the problem of market failure. Government intervention is required in a number of ways.

(A) The government can adopt the **command-and-control** strategy. This involves regulations for reducing emissions like setting emission levels and **fixing limits of emissions**. However, it would be good only during the initial phase of the mitigation strategy.

Further, the **Nationally Determined Contribution targets** or emission levels set by the country under the **Paris Agreement** should not be wrongly set. It could lead to **cost-inefficient outcomes**.

(B) The **carbon tax** is a better option. It would work well for regulating the **pre-fixed levels of emissions**. This option will lead to **near-efficient outcomes**. **Initially**, the firm reduces the emissions, the marginal cost of abatement rises. However, the firm will stop reducing emissions and choose to pay tax at the point when the cost of abatement becomes higher than the rate of tax.

The government can introduce an **auction-based carbon trading scheme**. It will spur higher efficiency. The price of certificates will be determined in the free market between the firms facing low and high abatement costs. It will determine the **optimal** and **cost-efficient levels** of emissions reduction. The firms will have choice to either mitigate or trade. The firms having low abatement-cost will keep reducing emissions as they would profit by trading the certificates. They will adopt **green-tech, renewable energy, electrification** and **energy efficiency measures**.

India should adopt an **effective policy framework for emissions reduction**. It should take into account the reasons for market failure.

The **market-based instruments** are the most efficient tools for the transition to a green energy economy.

The government should ensure equity in energy access. It should channel the revenues generated from **carbon pricing** to households and firms impacted by the **carbon trading** and **carbon tax**.

FUEL PRICING AND RELATED ISSUES

9. **Reforming fuel taxes**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Reforming fuel taxes**” published in **Business Standard** on 2nd May 22.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Increasing fuel prices

Context: Addressing the chief ministers of the states recently, Prime Minister said that the Union government had reduced excise duty on fuel last November, but pointed out that some states had not followed this lead.

States raised **several objections** to his statement. They pointed out that the Union government has earned windfall gains on fuel production and taxation in recent years. Moreover, even without a VAT cut, fuel taxes were lower in several of the states mentioned by the PM.

What are the issues associated with the taxation of fuel?

Failure to incorporate fuel into the goods and services tax (GST) regime. Petrol and diesel have been kept out of the GST net, which means that consumers are not given the advantage of being able to set off their costs as input credits.

Further, there is **no uniformity in the tax system**. The GST has a pre-determined sharing formula built in, and therefore such disagreement about relative tax rates will no longer occur.

What is the way forward?

Bringing fuel under the GST will mean that overall taxes on petrol and diesel will have to be reduced to conform to the GST slabs. But in order to maintain revenue neutrality, an **additional levy** can be charged to the extent that current collections are higher than what they would be under the lower GST rates. This additional levy can be a **special excise duty**. It can also be defined as a carbon tax in keeping with international norms.

This will also allow India to make an even stronger case internationally that it is meeting its commitments on climate change. This may not be the best solution, but it is certainly better than the present situation.

Ideally, **revenue from the carbon tax should be directed towards decarbonisation** or sustainability projects, and shared to this end with the states. A major point of contention between the Centre and states would thus be removed.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND RELATED ISSUES

10. **No short circuits: On electric vehicles catching fire**

Source: The post is based on an article “**No short circuits: On electric vehicles catching fire**” published in **The Hindu** on **03rd Mar 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Infrastructure, Transport Sector, Science and Technology

Relevance: Electric Vehicle and Li-Ion Battery Technologies

News: Recently, the Union government announced the constitution of an expert panel to investigate the causes of the **Li-ion battery explosions** in a number of incidents of burning of the electric vehicle (EV). Further, a few manufacturers have recalled batches of electric scooters after some caught fire.

Status of EV Sector in India

EVs have increasingly become a viable transportation device. According to Vahan database, there are 11 lakh electric/battery-operated vehicles registered in India.

What are the factors that have led to increased utilisation of EVs?

The significant reduction in costs of **lithium-ion batteries**. The costs have fallen by an estimated 89% since 2010.

The governments have incentivised the shift to EVs in wake of the climate change concerns.

The manufacture of electric vehicle (EV) for **commercial use** has undergone an acceleration. In addition, a number of **indigenous companies** manufacturing EV have mushroomed in the Indian market.

What are the causes of fire in the EV?

The **Li-ion battery** in the electric vehicles (EV) may catch fire due to the **convergence of heat, oxygen and fuel**.

Way Forward

The **Li-ion battery packs** that form the **core of the technology**, are sophisticated devices and there should be no compromise on the inbuilt safeguards. The **controlled manufacturing** of batteries is specifically required to prevent such incidents.

There should be absence of “**shoddy engineering**” and “**cutting corner approaches**” in the manufacturing of Li-ion batteries and the electric vehicles.

The manufacturers can go for **long-term changes** in Li-ion batteries such as the use of **solid-state electrolytes, special safety switches, thermal management solutions** that prevent accidental shorting of the cells, etc.

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The manufacturers and regulators must ensure that **testing** and **certification standards** related to **battery management systems** are met in existing Electric Vehicle (EV) systems and supply chains.

The Union Ministry of Transport has announced to issue guidelines for EVs **which** would include **tests** for compliance with **specific safety norms**.

GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – VARIOUS SECURITY FORCES AND AGENCIES AND THEIR MANDATE

ARMED FORCES REFORMS

11. **A New CDS Is Urgently Need**

Source: The post is based on an article “**A New CDS Is Urgently Needed**” published in **The Times of India** on **3rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian security; Mandate of various forces

Relevance: Indian Armed Forces Reforms

News: Recently, the **first chief of defence staff** General Bipin Rawat died in a helicopter crash almost five months ago. The post remained in cold storage after the **1999 Kargil conflict**. The first-ever CDS was appointed in 2019. The post of the chief of defence staff is significant for reforms in the Indian Armed forces.

Armed Forces Reforms Across the World

Around 70 countries, including the US, UK, France and Germany, have a CDS-like post for integration in military planning and operations.

The US has **11 unified combatant commands**, which include **six ‘geographical’ theatre** commands to handle different parts of the globe and **five ‘functional’ commands** that handle nuclear arsenal, special operations, space, cyberspace and transport.

In 2016, China re-organised its People’s Liberation Army into **five theatre commands**. **It improves the PLA’s command-and-control structures** and boosts **offensive capabilities** against the enemy. For example, **China’s Western Theatre Command** handles the entire Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Issues in front of the Indian Military Forces

India is the world’s third-largest military spender. However, it is plagued with **haphazard planning, ineffectual policies, piecemeal reforms** and the poor **domestic defence-industrial base**. Therefore, India is the world’s largest arms importer, accounting for 11% of global imports. Indian armed forces grapple with shortages of fighters, submarines, helicopters or different kinds of ammunition.

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India is facing border disputes. For example, there is an ongoing border crisis with China in eastern Ladakh.

There are challenges of military modernisation due to pressure of the ballooning salary and pension bills.

There are the **new warfare domains** of **space** and **cyberspace** as well as **clandestine operations**. For example, China has developed **cyberweapons** to destroy an adversary's military assets, strategic networks, energy, banking, transport and communication grids even before the actual **kinetic war** kicks off.

What is the status of services/theatre commands in India?

At present, there are existing **17 single-service commands** (army 7, IAF 7 and navy 3). In addition, India currently has only two unified commands, the '**geographical**' **Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)** and the '**functional**' **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)** to handle the nuclear arsenal.

It is proposed to subsume **17 single-service commands** under 4 **integrated commands**. This would ensure avoiding wastage of manpower, infrastructure and resources. The commands will prepare the forces for **integrated land-air-sea operations**.

Functions and Importance of the newly created position of the chief of defence staff (CDS)

The CDS is important to accomplish the task of building a **lean, mean, integrated warfighting machine** within **budgetary constraints**. The **annual defence budget** is unlikely to see a dramatic hike due to competing demands from other sectors in a developing country like India. The position is the **prime driver** behind the **far-reaching restructuring** of the Indian armed forces.

He can build **military capabilities of India** with proper **inter-service prioritisation** in tune with **India's geopolitical objectives**. Therefore, the first CDS has proposed the creation of the **four integrated commands** in India. These commands would have the assets and manpower of army, navy and IAF under a **single operational commander** in each theatre.

He can promote **synergy** among the army, navy and IAF in planning, procurements, logistics, doctrines and operations.

Recently, the CDS has been responsible for creation of the **small tri-service Defence Space Agency, Defence Cyber Agency, and the Armed Forces Special Operations Division**.

Way Forward

There is also the urgent need to **right-size the armed forces** by slashing the **non-operational flab** and **infusing cutting-edge military technologies**.

Various government initiatives are facing criticism. For example, the '**Tour of Duty**' scheme, proposal to make **Short Service Commission (SSC)** more attractive like grant of paid study leave to a golden handshake at the end of their tenures of 10-14 years etc.

INDIA'S TRADE POLICY

12. They're locked down, we aren't: Indian manufacturing has a huge China-made opportunity but it's open for only a brief period

Source: This news is based on the article “**They're locked down, we aren't: Indian manufacturing has a huge China-made opportunity but it's open for only a brief period**” published in **the Times of India** on **6th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Industrial policy and growth

Context: India and China are currently facing very different scenarios wrt the COVID pandemic. Google Mobility Data, a special mobility trends dataset created for the pandemic, shows that most Indian public spaces are now just as busy as pre-Covid, if not more.

China, on the other hand, faces a very different situation. Covid cases are rising there dramatically, and severe lockdowns are back. A large city like Shanghai (population: 2.6 crore) has been locked down with people confined to their buildings for weeks.

How is China's situation impacting the world?

The situation in China is impacting business.

It has also led to a worsening of a problem the world was already suffering – **supply chain issues**. – Chinese lockdowns have meant workers can't reach factories, which means factory outputs drop, which means the world doesn't get goods. People in the US currently complain about long waits for several items – beds, closets, automobiles and appliances to name a few.

Is there an opportunity for India?

Yes. The **solution to global supply chain issues is India**.

China, with unmatched efficiency, affordability, productivity and infrastructure became the manufacturing king of the world. However, today, that same dependence on China is causing problems. Today, companies worldwide are finally willing to listen to something we have been trying to say for years – **Make in India**.

Make no mistake, the current Chinese supply chain issues are a **once-in-a-lifetime limited opportunity for India** to shine and present itself as an alternative, **diversified manufacturing hub**.

What should India do presently?

India must act and announce a **mega-plan to attract more companies** here as soon as possible. Several schemes have been announced to attract manufacturing here. Apple now makes in India. Tesla is being courted as well.

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Just as we have inspectors and bureaucrats who are ready to stop operations if something is going wrong, we can have senior government officials incentivized to do the opposite.

India can have **bureaucrats who are relationship managers**, whose performance is evaluated based on how many new companies they help get up and running in India.

Attracting investments isn't always about offering monetary incentives and tax breaks (Indian corporate tax rates are already moderate). India can attract investors by offering **predictability, efficiency and peace of mind**.

Way forward

This opportunity is, however, for a limited time only. For Covid and its lockdowns will eventually leave China as well. Then the world will simply forget the Chinese manufacturing problems of the past.

13. [India must seize the trade opportunity opening now](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "India must seize the trade opportunity opening now" published in the Indian Express on 06th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Trade opportunities, Export Sector

News: The year 2021 was a record one for trade despite the pandemic. The world merchandise trade volume grew at twice the rate of world GDP at market exchange rates in the two decades before the global financial crisis.

According to the WTO, the World merchandise trade volume is expected to grow at 3% in 2022 and 3.4% in 2023.

Status of India's exports

India has had a good export run in line with global trends. India witnessed record goods exports of \$419 billion, while touching \$250 billion in services exports.

What are the new opportunities?

The exporters (including Indian) look to tap into **newer agricultural commodity export opportunities**. Ukraine and Sri Lanka which are major exporters of agricultural products are having limited presence in global trade.

The new opportunities will **spur overall exports** and will also help to support the **recovery** of the **agrarian economy** through higher realisations.

The food security in Europe and Africa depends on wheat supplies from Russia and Ukraine. Therefore, India has new opportunities for **wheat export** in these **new markets** and supplies have been disrupted.

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Sri Lanka (the largest producer of tea) is a major player in the **global tea market**. Almost 98 per cent of its annual production is exported. Sri Lanka is a major player in **textile export**. However prolonged power cuts in the island nation will hurt its production and export capacity.

India has **newer export opportunities** in **tea** and **textile export**.

In addition, major **global garments brands** such as Zara and H&M have been reportedly looking towards India. Chinese factories are locked up due to a Covid surge and the Asian exporters like Bangladesh, Vietnam and Cambodia lack the capacity to fill the void. Therefore, India can seize this opportunity.

What are the challenges?

The **ratio** between trade and GDP growth may fall to **1.1:1** in 2022 and 2023 due to slower **global growth**, an **adverse geopolitical environment**, the shadow of **recurring waves** of the pandemic and prolonged **supply chain issues**.

Measures to tap export opportunities in developed markets

One, the government should work on **non-tariff barriers** for agricultural trade with a special focus on harmonising the **sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS)** requirements. The government should implement **sector-specific measures** and strengthen the **traceability system** in supply chains.

Two, to support tea exports, **traditional tea boards** should be given greater role and autonomy for optimising the **development, promotion, and research** in the sector. The proposed **Tea Promotion and Development Act** should be implemented.

Three, India must **integrate** with **global supply chains**. A slew of **trade deals**, and a **new pro-trade policy** should work in this direction.

Four, **tariff rates** for **intermediate inputs** should be reduced to either **zero** or should be negligible for India. It will make India an attractive location for **assembly activities**.

Five, India should create an **enabling ecosystem** that realigns its **specialisation patterns** towards **labour-intensive processes** and **product lines**. The **labour market reforms** must be taken.

Six, a continuous and pro-active **FDI policy** is critical. The **foreign capital and technology transfer** enables entry of local firms into **global production networks**. The local firms play a role as subcontractors and suppliers of intermediate inputs to MNEs.

Seventh, the issue of **logistical bottlenecks** should be taken care of by the government. **The Economic Survey 2019** had recommended that low **levels of service link costs** (costs related to transportation, communication, etc) are prerequisites to strengthen their participation in GVCs.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

14. The workers hit the hardest

Source: The post is based on an article “**The workers hit the hardest**” published in **The Hindu** on **05th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Issues in planning, mobilization of resources, employment, growth and development.

Relevance: Employment

News: Recently, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) released the **Consumer Pyramids Household Survey**. According to the survey, employment in India fell from 408.9 million in 2019-20 to 387.2 million in 2020-21 and then recovered to 401.8 million in 2021-22.

General trends of employment in India

Firstly, employment was declining at the rate of about 0.31% per annum before the pandemic. This led to loss of **7 million** (1.7%) jobs in the pre-pandemic year of 2019-20.

Second, the declining trend continued during the pandemic. A lot of job were lost. However, most of the jobs lost during lockdowns came back when the restrictions on mobility are lifted. However, despite of recovery, **4.5 million jobs** remained lost in the **long-term** due to the shock of the pandemic.

Therefore, in 2021-22, the unemployed who were actively seeking work but were unable to find any were estimated at **33 million**. This was higher than the pre-pandemic levels.

What is the category-wise employment trends in India since the pandemic?

Women

The women suffered job losses disproportionately during economic shocks and the pandemic. For example, they accounted for less than 11% of all jobs in 2019-20, but nearly 52% of the 7 million job loser were women. It was more predominant in Urban India.

The small traders/vendors and daily wage workers

They could **enter** and **exit** the labour markets with **ease** during a crisis. For example, during the first lockdown, 79 million small traders and daily wage labourers lost employment. But most of them were back to work after the end of the first lockdown.

Entrepreneurs

The pandemic has **reversed a trend** of rising entrepreneurs. There was a fall of about 1% in sharp contrast to the 13% per annum growth in entrepreneurs before the pandemic.

Salaried employees Category

They witnessed the **biggest relative fall** in employment (6.8%). They cannot go back to work unlike daily wage labourers, small traders and entrepreneurs. Except for a few high-skill jobs, finding a new salaried job is difficult.

What were the challenges for women wrt work from home (WFH) situation?

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Working from home with the rest of the **family** at home was not easy for women. It increased their hardship.

The WFH does not help **small traders/vendors** and **daily wage labourers** who are required to go out for work for a living. Their earnings depend upon their ability to reach markets and trade their goods or services for daily earnings. In fact, they account for the largest share of employment in India.

What are going to be the challenges?

The **7 million jobs** lost over the two years since the COVID-19 outbreak is unevenly distributed. It would be difficult to recover all of them anytime soon.

Employing **women** and providing **salaried jobs** are the **two big challenges** that will be difficult to tackle soon.

In addition to generating jobs for those who have lost jobs during the pandemic, more job creations will be needed to employ those people who will enter the labour force in the coming year.

Future outlook

It is expected that entrepreneurship can rise again principally because of a lack of salaried jobs. If the Indian economy expands by about 7.5% in 2022-23, 6 million jobs can come back. However, despite this, more jobs need to be created to employ new entrants in the working age population and the labour force.

POVERTY AND RELATED ISSUES

15. Let us not underestimate deprivation in the country

Source: This post is based on the article “**Let us not underestimate deprivation in the country**” published in **Livemint** on **3rd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to poverty

Relevance: Poverty in India

Context: Status of extreme poverty in India prior to the pandemic is unclear. The most recent survey data (2017-18) was not officially released, but leaked reports showed a fall in real consumption and an unprecedented rise in poverty.

In the absence of recent official data, two studies have attempted to estimate the numbers:

- An **IMF working paper** by Bhalla, Bhasin and Virmani (BBV) uses the growth rate of private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) from the National Accounts Statistics.
- A **World Bank paper** by Sinha Roy and Van der Weide (SRW) uses consumption data from the CMIE Consumer Pyramids Household Survey.

Also, the National Sample Survey Office is planning to conduct the next round soon.

What are the key findings of the studies?

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IMF working paper	World Bank paper
Extreme poverty rate declined to 3.4% in 2019	Extreme poverty rate (\$1.9 a day or Tendulkar line) fell from 22% in 2011 to 10% in 2019. This is a healthy decline, though not as rapid as what occurred between 2004-05 (40%) and 2011-12.
The large decline in India's poverty rate is due to strong consumption growth and a moderation of inflation.	

Way forward

It is important to keep sight of the human element and bigger picture.

The **\$1.9 poverty line is too low**. It is time India moves to a **higher line, such as \$3.2 a day** or a line derived from the recommended National Floor Minimum Wage.

The covid outbreak has undoubtedly slowed down progress, but India is moving towards eliminating extreme poverty. Timely data and pro-poor policies will help it get there sooner.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES

16. Inflation and what to do about it: Secure cheap Russian oil at least

Source: This post is based on the article “**Inflation and what to do about it: Secure cheap Russian oil at least**” published in Livemint on **5th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Inflation

Relevance: Monetary policy and Inflation management

Context: The current price rise in Indian economy is largely driven by the non-core elements in the retail consumption basket. The food element in the non-core is being driven up both by primary global supply shortages and the rise in the fuel cost of transporting food. The key, therefore, is the cost of fuel.

Core inflation = Headline inflation – Non-core elements (food and fuel)

India secured Russian crude oil in the face of sanctions, reportedly on offer at a discount of \$20-30 per barrel. This raised hopes of inflation control without having to resort to monetary contraction.

But, the impact of discounts will take time to take effect.

Why cheap Russian crude oil is not helping bring down cost of fuel?

A Bloomberg article authored by Serene Cheong and Debjit Chakraborty identifies the problem as the following:

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– **The way Indian oil refineries source crude oil**—by a call for tenders from trader intermediaries, few enough in number to form oligarchies which collude on prices.

The deep discounts on Russian crude are reportedly **being pocketed by those traders**, while refineries continue to pay what might at best be a marginally discounted price.

There exists an oligarchic hold of intermediaries in the global market for oil. Global markets for primary commodities are characterized by **powerful price-maker intermediaries**.

Way forward

Both headline and core will benefit enormously if India can manage to secure those large discounts on Russian crude.

17. Inflation control needs another model

Source: The post is based on an article “**Inflation control needs another model**” published in **the Hindu** on **05th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy

Relevance: Inflation Targeting

News: Recently, **the Monetary Policy Committee** has announced its primary focus on inflation or the “**inflation targeting**”. Keeping the high inflationary pressure into consideration, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has raised the policy repo rate in order to ensure price stability.

Status of inflation in India

The wholesale price inflation has been in the double digits for over 12 months. The consumer price index (CPI) has breached the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)’s upper target of 6%.

What is Inflation targeting?

Inflation targeting is based on the idea that inflation is the result of “**overheating**” of the economy. It reflects an **excess of output** over its ‘**natural**’ level.

Therefore, the central bank raised the **interest rate** or ‘**repo rate**’ to control inflation. It is the rate at which the central bank lends to commercial banks. It induces firms to stay their **investment plans**, and focus on **reducing inventories**, and lowering production. This ensures the contraction of the output takes to the natural level of output (i.e., optimal level). This may lead to a decline in inflation. It ensures full employment and freely functioning labour market.

What are the issues in inflation targeting in India?

India’s **official model of inflation control** is based on **unscientific** a foundation. The Indian model is based on the idea to achieve “**natural level of output**”. However, it is a **theoretical** and unobservable phenomenon. The **RBI report of 2014** did not mention any empirical validity of this model of inflation.

India’s model is based on the idea that inflation is driven by **agricultural goods prices**. Therefore, the production and supply of agricultural goods should be increased. This would

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cause the Indian economy to expand without inflation. However, whenever there is **surplus agricultural production**, the government procures food grains at the highest price. This leads to inflation.

The growing per capita income in India has shifted the **average consumption basket** towards foods rich in minerals, such as fruits and vegetables, and protein, such as milk and meat. But the expansion of the supply of these foods has been lower than the growth in demand for them. Therefore, the RBI's present move of increasing the repo rate is not an efficient solution for an **agricultural price-driven inflation**.

Way Forward

Monetary policy can control inflation by curbing the growth of **non-agricultural output**. This would in turn lower the growth of demand for agricultural goods. As the demand for agricultural goods slows, so will inflation.

There should be a focus to increase the **supply** of food other than rice and wheat like **fruits, vegetables, milk** and **meat**.

The government should work hard towards increasing **agricultural productivity** and thereby increasing agricultural production and supply.

18. Rising inflation cannot be fought well without global coordination

Source: This post is created based on the article "**Rising inflation cannot be fought well without global coordination**" published in Live Mint on 4th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy – Inflation

Context: Inflation has suddenly become a major global problem. However, inflation is one of the least understood phenomena within economics and requires much more research.

Many major and small countries of the world, like the US, Turkey, South Korea, EU, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka are facing the problem of inflation. However, fine-tuned management of inflation is a missing aspect of economics.

What are the reasons behind rising inflation across the world?

Supply-chain disruptions triggered initially by the covid pandemic and now by the Ukraine war are the major reasons.

The **price rise of Food and energy products** is a major reason behind eurozone inflation.

The **rise in aggregate demand** was caused by the largest government spending packages in American history.

In the case of **emerging economies**, mainly demand-driven inflation is the major cause. Furthermore, due to unevenly skewed inflation across goods and services, a mere exchange-rate correction cannot work.

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Due to globalization, central banks seem relatively ineffective in tackling today's inflation. It is because of the easy flow of goods, services, and capital from one country to another country. Thus, If one country tries to control inflation by raising interest rates, money will flow into that country, causing its exchange rate to appreciate and dampen exports.

What should be done to manage inflation effectively?

We have enough **examples of preventing major hyperinflationary episodes**, like the record-breaking cases in Germany in 1923 and Hungary in 1946, and in parts of Latin America and Africa in more recent times. This knowledge can be used cautiously. Better global coordination of monetary policy is essential.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

HEATWAVES IN INDIA

19. **In rising heat, the cry of the wilting outdoor worker**

Source: This news is based on the article "In rising heat, the cry of the wilting outdoor worker" published in **The Hindu** on **7th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment

Relevance: Protecting the vulnerable sections from the impact of extreme heatwaves

Context: The intensity and frequency of heatwaves have soared in South Asia and they are set to worsen in the years ahead. The consequences for health and livelihoods are catastrophic, as a third of South Asia's population depends on outdoor work.

India must initiate safety nets — a combination of targeted transfers and insurance schemes — to improve the resilience of outdoor workers.

What is the situation wrt extreme heat in India and across the world?

Situation in India

Extreme heat conditions have hit swathes of India, not only in the northern States of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and New Delhi, but now increasingly also in the south.

– Delhi this month suffered its second warmest April in 72 years, temperatures averaging 40.2°C, and Gurgaon in neighbouring Haryana crossed 45°C for the first time.

Global situation

Over the last 100 years, global temperatures have risen by 1.5°C and, at the current rate, could reach 4°C by 2100.

So far in the year, **2022 has been the fifth-warmest year on record**.

What are the reasons behind extreme heat in India?

India's warming is the result not only of local factors but also global warming.

The culprit in the current plight from intense weather is the **anthropogenic GHG emissions**.

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What are the various impacts of the heatwaves?

Heatwaves are proving to be Europe's **deadliest climate disaster**. India faces the largest heat exposure impacts in South Asia.

Loss of life: One study finds that 1,41,308 lives were claimed by acute weather in India during 1971-2019, of which the loss of 17,362 lives (12%) was due to unrelenting heat.

Economic loss: Worldwide economic losses, by one estimate, could reach **U.S.\$1.6 trillion (₹1.6 lakh crore)** annually if global warming exceeds 2°C. India, China, Pakistan, and Indonesia, where large numbers of people work outdoors, are among the most vulnerable.

– India's outdoor workers, reeling under daily temperatures of more than 40°C, are on the frontlines of the climate catastrophe.

What needs to be done?

The optimal approach

Adaptation is essential: Climate mitigation or decarbonization of economies especially of the big emitters, such as the USA, the EU, China, and India remains important. But **temperatures are set to rise regardless of mitigation**, based on the emission damage already done. That means climate adaptation is as big a priority as mitigation.

– **Better environmental care:** A crucial aspect of adaptation is better environmental care that can contribute to cooling. **For instance:** Agriculture, being water-intensive, does not do well in heat wave-prone areas. A solution is to **promote better agricultural practices** which are not water-intensive and to **support afforestation** that has a positive effect wrt warming.

Protecting the outdoor workers

Response to the current plight of outdoor workers can be linked to climate adaptation.

– **Financial transfers** can be targeted to help farmers plant trees and buy equipment better suited for the extreme weather. For example, support for drip irrigation can reduce heavy water usage.

– **Averting slash and burn agriculture and stubble burning** is not only key to cutting air pollution but also cooling temperatures.

– **Urban green** such as street trees, urban forests and green roofs can help cool urban areas.

– Workers in cities and villages can benefit from **early warning systems and better preparedness** as well as **community outreach programmes** during an episode.

Insurance for workers: Insurance against natural hazards is minimal not only in India but also Asia where less than 10% of the losses are typically covered. Government and insurers need to collaborate in providing greater coverage of losses from extreme weather events, including for calamities from brutal heat.

– For greater effectiveness, **transfers and insurance payments can be tied to investments in resilience** made at the local levels, such as restoring the urban environment that has a cooling

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effect. Delhi's Aravali Biodiversity Park is a stand-out example that transformed a barren landscape into forest communities protecting greenery and biodiversity.

- **Transfers could also be linked with mapping of the incidence of heatwaves across locations.** The most severely affected areas are also likely to be the most poverty-prone and need stronger insurance packages, including guarantees for crop losses.
- Incentive schemes could also be tailored to annual changes in the intensity of the hazard.
- The **projections of the IMD can guide future scenarios**, which the Central government can use to develop subsidies and insurance schemes linked to State and district-level actions for building resilience to climate change

Way forward

Tying cash transfers and insurance schemes to State and local green investments will not only provide some financial cover for outdoor workers but also motivate small-scale investments in much-needed resilience to heatwaves.

INDIA AND THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

20. [Like Nero, we fiddle as the world burns](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "[Like Nero, we fiddle as the world burns](#)" published in the **Indian Express** on **04th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment and Ecology – Climate Change

Relevance: Tackling Climate Change, mitigation efforts

News: Recently, the temperature level of four to eight degrees above normal have been recorded in South Asia. Such intense heat waves have not been seen in more than a century.

Pattern of extreme weather events due to climate change

(1) Spatial Pattern: India is uniquely vulnerable to heat waves. The vulnerability will increase with climate change. But **larger heat waves** are now a possibility everywhere: From Chicago to California, from Australia to Europe.

(2) Temporal Pattern In 2019, the **global heat waves** took a toll of about 3,50,000 excess deaths world-wide. Weather events like these validate the worldwide arguments of climate catastrophism.

The recently released IPCC Synthesis Report mentions that the future is already here. The world has bypassed the point where we could have limited global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees.

Measures already taken to mitigate the climate change

India has taken various measures to mitigate climate change. For example, India has ramped up renewable energy capacity and kept fuel taxes high.

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Globally, **private investment** in “**green technologies**” is accelerating. For example, the growth of the **green bonds market**. The financial help is available for countries that want to get off the fossil fuel path.

What are the challenges wrt mounting an effective response against climate change?

(A) Global Level

The world has to counter the challenge of a number of climate deniers and peddlers of fake news across the world.

Further, those who do acknowledge that climate change is the reality are imprisoned by a sense of unreality. These countries **do not** take **collective action** in relation to **climate change**. They think only in terms of its **national interest**.

Further, the **targets announced by the countries are not in terms of measures that will actually mitigate climate change**. They are actually announced only to show the upper hand in global discourse.

In reality, the developed world has failed to accept its **historical responsibility**. They put **disproportionate blame** on developing countries. For example, the US has been blaming other countries.

The will of the countries to live up to **modest Paris climate targets** has diminished. For example, (1) the Ukraine war has revived the focus on fossil fuels on a massive scale, and (2) the US has not released many funds, despite big announcements for the **climate related development finance** of developing countries.

In turn, **developing countries** like India are seeing the **global climate debate** and the IPCC's alarmism as another ruse to trap developing countries. The **climate debates** are being used as a wedge to **pressure developing countries**.

The developing countries are accusing the developed countries of **climate colonialism** instead of finding creative solutions for combating climate change.

Climate change mitigation measures like private investment are more about business opportunities.

The IPCC Synthesis Report points out that the countries are making it harder not easier to reach the 1.5-degree Celsius global warming target.

India

– Although India claims to have increased forest cover, its commitment to renewables, and electric vehicles, however, India is facing various issues. **For instance:** Indian **cities** are hotter, **water** is more precarious, health is subject to the vagaries of climate, and dependence on fossil fuels is higher than necessary.

Way Forward

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India needs to ask whether its actions and initiatives are achieving the objective of making India more habitable.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

SAVING KASHMIR'S LAKES

21. **Paradise polluted: Can we save Kashmir's lakes?**

Source: The post is based on an article “Paradise polluted: Can we save Kashmir's lakes?” published in the **Live Mint** on **06th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Environment and Conservation

Relevance: Kashmir's Lake Ecology

Context: Normalcy is gradually returning to Jammu and Kashmir after the upheaval caused by the abrogation of **Article 370** of the Constitution. Tourism has been rapidly growing.

For example, 100% hotel occupancy was seen in popular resorts of Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam in the winter months of 2021-22.

What are the problems being faced by the locals?

Almost every Kashmir Lake has been facing **degradation**, like Dal Lake, Nigeen, Khushal Sar, Gilsar and Anchar.

These lakes are the **source of livelihood** for local people. 500,000 people of Kashmir are directly and indirectly associated with tourism. But these lakes have been polluted (For example, Dal Lake). They are full of plastic bags, empty bottles and overgrown weeds. The lake's ecology has been destroyed. The dead birds floating on the water has become a common phenomenon.

What are the factors behind environmental degradation?

It is human interventions, particularly encroachments, which have ruined **water quality**. The lakes are shrinking

The lakes are being polluted by **weeds** and **ferns** like **Azolla**, increasing **silt** and **encroachments** of various kinds.

The most important cause of pollution is release of the **untreated sewage**, according to the UT's pollution control board, Srinagar generates around **201 million litres** of sewage daily, but its **sewage treatment plants** can handle only 53.8 million litres. The rest flows into Dal Lake and other lakes and the Jhelum River.

The pollution is also caused by release of **effluents** from the houseboats. The registration of new houseboats was banned in 1982. Further, the repair and renovation of registered houseboats was also banned by the Jammu and Kashmir High Court in 2009.

Rehabilitation Efforts Made So Far

(A) The Government efforts

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(1) The **Srinagar Master Plan of 1971** has never been seriously adhered to. In 1997, the ministry of environment and forests launched a **'Save Dal' project**.

(2) In 2018, the **Indian Army** launched a 21-day **'clean Dal' mission**– uprooting weeds and removing plastic and other waste.

(3) In 2019, the Union home minister announced a package for the Dal Lake's preservation. In 2002, **'Swachha Pakhwada' drive** was launched for the lake, as part of **the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**. But even today, little evidence of all this effort is visible.

(4) In 2007, the **J&K's Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA)** launched a project to shift families living around Dal Lake to Bemina, 12 km away. But the project has failed. The land acquisition is still incomplete, and those shifted complained about joblessness and lack of basic facilities.

(B) Efforts by the Judiciary

(1) The **Jammu & Kashmir High Court** observed, "Despite public money being pumped in by the government, the authorities have proved helpless and unable to effectively ensure some meaningful outcome."

(2) In 2002, following a **public interest litigation** claiming that **the Srinagar Master Plan** was being blatantly violated, the court took over monitoring of the **Dal Lake's water quality** and directed its immediate clean up. **Later judgments** ordered all encroachments within **200 metres** of the lake be demolished.

(C) Citizens' Initiative

A social activist Manzoor Wangnoo, launched a plan to clean up **Khushal Sar** (one of the smaller lakes) following the **Article 370 abrogation** and the dissolution of the assembly, **civil society** in the spring of 2021.

A **door-to-door campaign** was launched in the catchment area to raise awareness about the socio-economic importance of the lake as a revenue earner.

Way Forward

The problem demands a **community approach** for a **comprehensive restoration of the lakes**. The houseboats are an important tourist attraction, and their dwindling number would affect tourism income. Therefore, the government is promoting **sustainable houseboats** through a **houseboat policy** in 2021.

– A new houseboat could be built on the lakes if they are equipped with a **bio-digester-a mechanised toilet system**.

– Similarly, repair of damaged houseboats would be allowed on case-by-case basis,

In addition to **sustainable houseboats**, the government should look into Kashmir's **unsustainable urbanisation**, rapid rise in the tourist's inflow since 1960 and 1970s, the **choked canals**, and **deforestation** along the streams that has caused inflow of more silt in the lake.

SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE AND RELATED ISSUES

22. What severe disruptions taught us about supply chain resilience

Source: This post is created based on the article “What severe disruptions taught us about supply chain resilience” published in **Live Mint** on **5th May 2022**.

Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 3 – Industries and industrial policies

Context: Events like Covid Pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war have highlighted the importance of global supply chains for economic resilience.

The global events of the last 2 years have proved that intermediate goods procurement is really important. For example, the shortage of semiconductors has upset the production schedules of automobile companies across the world.

How have companies responded to global supply Chain disruptions?

The April edition of World Economic Outlook has listed some examples:

First, General Motors has decided to reduce the use of unique semiconductor chips down to just three types of microcontrollers.

Second, Tesla rewrote the software used by its cars so that they could use available semiconductors, rather than stopping its assembly lines.

Third, following the 2011 earthquake in Japan, Toyota standardized components across models so that different units could share inventory across various factories. It regionalized its supply chain to reduce dependence on any one location and told its single-source suppliers to either produce in several locations or hold excess inventory.

How have Indian policymakers responded?

The Indian government has started holding excess stocks to deal with unexpected shocks after Food shortages in the early decades after independence and the Balance of Payments crises before 1991.

What should be done?

Protectionism or the aim to produce everything within the country are impractical ideas. For that, a country would require to reinvest everything. The International Monetary Fund has provided two useful principles for making supply chains more resilient.

First, supply chains must be diversified geographically.

Second, there should be greater ease of substitution so that a company can quickly switch input sourcing from one country to another.

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GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – GST AND RELATED ISSUES

GST AND RELATED ISSUES

23. [Let's make GST a good and simple tax](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “Let's make GST a good and simple tax” published in Indian Express on 6th May 2022.

Syllabus topic: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy – Mobilization of resources

Context: Existing GST rate structure needs to be rationalized.

The introduction of GST might be the most important tax reform. It was a unique experiment in cooperative federalism, where both the Union and the state governments gave up their tax autonomy in favor of harmonizing domestic trade taxes. However, **some negative features** have been inserted into the tax to make it acceptable.

Why single rate structure of GST is favorable?

The single rate structure has been more acceptable and beneficial globally, because,

Firstly, it **simplifies** the tax structure.

Secondly, it prevents **misclassifications and litigations** due to multiple rates.

Third, it avoids an **inverted duty structure** of taxes on inputs. India has this structure on items like electrical transformers, railway wagons, some textile products, plastic bags, and solar modules.

An inverted duty structure comes up in a situation where import duties on input goods are higher than on finished goods.

Fourth, the main argument in favor of rate differentiation is **equity**. However, it is an inefficient way of targeting benefits for the poor. Poor consume more exempted and low-rated items. Furthermore, the ideal way of targeting the benefits to the poor is on the expenditure side, through targeted cash transfers.

Fifth, it will **end the lobbying** by manufacturers for placing their products in the low tax rate category.

How the present tax collections have improved then?

GST revenues have increased significantly, with collections of over Rs 1 lakh crore in the last 10 months and touching a record of Rs 1.68 lakh crore in April 2022.

However, economic recovery or tax structure is not the reason. The **GSTN has been able to stabilize the technology platform**. Making e-invoicing mandatory for all businesses above Rs 100 crore has made the detection of fake invoices easy that were used to claim the input tax credit.

This has helped to improve tax compliance and has also enabled better enforcement.

What should be done?

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It would be desirable to have a single rate of tax, besides exemptions on unprocessed food items, in the long run. However, in the short run, 12 percent and 18 percent categories should be merged into a 15-16 percent slab. 28 percent category should be removed altogether.

GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – THREATS TO INTERNAL SECURITY

NAGA PEACE TALKS

24. The status of the Naga peace talks

Source: This post is based on the article “**The status of the Naga peace talks**” published in **The Hindu** on **6th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Internal Security

Relevance: Naga insurgency issue

News: The annual report of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) released recently said that the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) was involved in 44% of insurgency-related incidents in Nagaland in 2020.

The Union government had, in 2015, signed a framework agreement with the NSCN-IM to find a solution to the Naga political issue.

The negotiations are yet to be concluded.

Why did Naga insurgency begin?

The term ‘Naga’ was **created by the British for administrative convenience** to refer to a group of tribes with similar origins but distinct cultures, dialects, and customs.

- The Naga tribes are accumulated in **Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Myanmar**.

Residing in the Naga hills of Assam during the advent of the British and the annexation of Assam in 1820, the Nagas **did not consider themselves a part of British India**.

The British adopted a way of governance over the Nagas that involved **keeping in place their traditional ways of life**, customs, and laws while putting British administrators at the top.

At the time of the withdrawal of the British, **insecurity grew among the Naga tribes** about the future of their cultural autonomy after India’s independence, which was accompanied by the **fear of the entry of “plains people” or “outsiders”** into their territory.

- These gave rise to the formation of the **Naga Hills District Tribal Council** in 1945, which was renamed the **Naga National Council (NNC)** in 1946.

Amid uncertainties over the post-independence future of the Nagas, a section of the NNC, led by **Naga leader A.Z. Phizo declared the independence** of the Nagas on August 14, 1947, a day before India’s declaration.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

– The **underground insurgency began** in the early 1950s when Mr. Phizo founded the **Naga Federal Government (NFG)** and its armed wing, the Naga Federal Army (NFA).

The Central Government sent the insurgency and imposed the contentious **Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)**, which is still in place in parts of Nagaland.

Unlike other groups in the northeast which were accepting some form of autonomy under the Constitution, Nagas rejected this in favour of sovereignty.

Some leaders among the NNC formed their own group to hold discussions with the government, leading to the **formation of the State of Nagaland in 1963**. This, however, did not satisfy many in the NNC and NFG, who, following years of negotiations with the government, eventually signed the **Shillong Accord of 1975**, agreeing to surrender arms and accept the Constitution.

When did the NSCN come into the picture?

This **signing of the Shillong Accord was not agreeable** with many top leaders of the NNC and those operating from Myanmar as the agreement did not address the issue of Naga sovereignty and coerced them to accept the Constitution.

Three NNC leaders — Thuingaleng Muivah of the Tangkhul Naga tribe of Manipur's Ukhrul district, Isak Chishi Swu of the Sema tribe, and S. S. Khaplang from Myanmar's Hemis tribe, **formed the National Socialist Council Of Nagaland (NSCN)** to continue the armed movement. The motto of the NSCN was to **create a People's Republic of Nagaland** free of Indian rule.

In 1988, after years of infighting and violent clashes, the NSC split into two groups – **a) One**, led by Mr. Muivah and Swu called the **NSCN-IM** and the other, **b) Second**, led by Mr. Khaplang called the **NSCN-K**.

The NSCN-IM demanded and continues to demand **'Greater Nagaland' or Nagalim** — it wants to extend Nagaland's borders by including Naga-dominated areas in the neighbouring States of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

The NSCN-IM has now grown to become the most powerful insurgent group, also playing a role in the creation of smaller groups in other States.

Where do peace talks stand now?

In 1997, the Government of India got the NSCN-IM to sign a **ceasefire agreement** to begin the holding of talks with the aim of signing a Naga Peace Accord. After this ceasefire, there have been over a hundred rounds of talks.

In 2015, it signed a Framework Agreement with the NSCN (IM), the first step towards an actual Peace Accord.

In 2020, the NSCN-IM accused the Centre's interlocutor, Mr Ravi, of tweaking the agreement to mislead other Naga groups. The NSCN-IM continued to demand a **separate flag and constitution for the Nagas and the creation of Nagalim**, which it claimed was agreed upon in the Agreement.

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On 19th April 2022, AK Mishra, the newly appointed interlocutor, visited the NSCN-IM's camp in Dimapur to hold closed-door talks but **issues over the Naga flag and constitution remain to be ironed out.**

GS3 - SCIENCE AND TECH – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORK (VPN)

25. [How India's new VPN rules change the status quo](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**How India's new VPN rules change the status quo**” published in **Livemint** on **6th May 22.**

Syllabus: GS3 – Science and Tech – Information Technology

Relevance: Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and related issues

News: On 28 April 2022, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (Cert-In) issued new directives that require Virtual Private Network (VPN) providers to store user data for five years.

What does the directive say?

Under the new directions,

Storage of user data:

- VPN providers will need to store validated customer names, their physical addresses, email ids, phone numbers, and the reason they are using the service, along with the dates they use it and their “ownership pattern”.
- In addition, Cert is also asking VPN providers to keep a **record of the IP and email addresses** that the customer uses to register the service, along with the timestamp of registration.
- Most importantly, however, VPN providers will have to **store all IP addresses issued to a customer** and a list of IP addresses that its customers generally use.

What does this mean for VPN providers?

VPNs basically **obscure a person's internet usage** by jumping the signal off multiple servers. A log of these servers can easily **lead law enforcement agencies back to the original user.**

That is why most top VPN operators provide a “no logging” service—at least for paying users. This means they do not keep logs of the user's usage history or the IP addresses of servers involved. Such services could be in violation of Cert's rules by simply operating in India.

However, ‘no logs’ does not mean zero logs. VPN services still need to maintain some logs to run their service efficiently.

The Indian government has not banned VPNs yet, so **they can still be used to access content** that is blocked in an area, which is the most common usage of these services. However, journalists, activists, and others who use such services to hide their internet footprint will have to think twice about them.

What does it mean for users?

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For law enforcement agencies, a move like this will make it **easier to track criminals who use VPNs** to hide their internet footprint.

Potential misuse

– Experts have pointed out that governments and their agencies can **easily misuse such a rule**, and it may actually **drive such users towards the dark and deep web, which are much tougher to police than VPN services.**

It is also unclear whether the Centre will use this to take action against users accessing content that is blocked in India using VPNs, such as the game PUBG Mobile.

GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – VARIOUS SECURITY FORCES AND THEIR MANDATE

ARMED FORCES REFORMS

26. **The missing CDS**

Source: The post is based on an article “**The Missing CDS**” published in the **Business Standard** on **06th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Security

Relevance: Indian Armed Services Reform; Jointness and the Chief of Defence Staff

News: Recently, the **first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** of India died in a helicopter crash. The second CDS of India has not been appointed so far.

The Indian military continues to remain headless and directionless with no successor to Rawat.

Importance of the CDS

The elevation of the tri-service chief is expected to improve **interservice coordination**, cooperation and operational integration.

The CDS was responsible for creating the structures of the **geographical integrated theatre commands**, enabling cohesive and effective operations.

History of Tri-Service Command in India

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) or apex structure of **tri-service command** was first proposed by the **Kargil Review Committee in 1999**.

Thereafter, a tri-service commander was also recommended in the report furnished by a Group of Ministers (GOM). The **Naresh Chandra Committee** also recommended for a “**permanent chairman, chiefs of staff**”.

PM Modi desired for the **jointness** of the **tri-services**. On this line, the **Combined Commander’s Conference (CCC)** organized in 2017 opened up discussions about **tri-service jointness** and **theaterisation**. After the conference, the **three service chiefs** were directed to talk amongst themselves and present **six actionable points towards jointness** within one month.

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In 2019, the prime minister created the post of the CDS who was also supposed to be head of the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)**. General Bipin Rawat was appointed as the first CDS of India.

What are the reasons for non-appointment of the 2nd CDS?

Unlike the post of the **army chief** which is an **operational post** that cannot be kept empty, the post of **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** is not an operational appointment.

Where is theaterisation going?

It has been proposed that a **Pakistan Land Theatre** with an air force commander; a **China Land Theatre** with an army commander; a **Maritime Theatre** with a navy commander; a **Northern Command** to deal with the insurgency-roiled areas of Kashmir; and an **Air Defence Theatre command** should be created.

Way Forward

The PM should make efforts to resolve the infighting of the three chiefs. The three chiefs should take the ownership of the CDS project. Each one of them should be given a theatre, and they should be given a **four-star appointment**.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

JUTE INDUSTRY AND RELATED ISSUES

27. West Bengal's jute industry barely hanging by a thread

Source: The post is based on an article “**West Bengal's jute industry barely hanging by a thread**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **14th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS1 Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India); and GS3 Indian Economy & issues and challenges in growth and development

Relevance: Jute Industry and Jute Industry in Crisis

News: Recently, the **West Bengal's jute industry** is facing a severe crisis. **Several mills** (like Reliance Jute Mill, the Gondolpara Jute Mill etc.) have announced the temporary suspension of operations this year.

Status of jute industry in the West Bengal

According to the **Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA)**, there are about 93 jute mills in India, of which 70 are in West Bengal. Of the 70, 54 mills are located in the three districts of North 24 Parganas (25), Howrah (15) and Hooghly (14).

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There are around **3.5 lakh workers** associated with the entire supply chain of the industry ranging from the production and trade of the golden fibre, production of the finished product among others.

What are the factors behind the current crisis?

The **recent crisis** began when the heavy increase in **maximum price of raw jute** by **the Office of the Jute Commissioner**. This led to a fall in procurement and mills decided to suspend work. There have hardly been any protests by **trade unions** in a State. There have been no demands that the mills open, nor have there been strikes. In fact, it is argued that there is no trade union left in the state.

At present, the jute mill owners in the West Bengal jute industry are already incurring **heavy losses**.

Non-implementation of **the Tariff Commission's report** for a fair price of B. Twill jute bags. It has caused a huge loss to the industry.

The jute mills are legally bound to supply jute bags to the government, for which they are reimbursed at the notified rate. Therefore, the jute industry has no other alternative but to sell the finished products at a loss.

According to a report of **the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**, 2022-2023, India's jute production has been declining during the last decade. There has been a decrease in **acreage** due to **shift in cropping pattern** to crops such as paddy, maize, groundnut, and sesame.

The demand for jute products is declining due to increasing demand for various types of synthetic substitutes.

The farmers also expressed concern about **extreme climate conditions**. This is impacting jute cultivation.

What are the impacts of the jute industry crisis?

It is leading to the loss of **livelihood** of workers, owners and farmers. The Mill worker's family are facing **hunger** and **are** forced to take credit for their survival.

The century-old jute mills on both banks of the river Hooghly has become totally dysfunctional. The people of this region are witnessing **terrible riots** and **intense political battles**.

Mill workers living in the mill quarters have been facing the issue of **irregular power supply** ever since the mill closed.

Several retired employees have not received their **PF** dues because the management did not deposit its share.

The closed jute mills are witnessing **reverse migration**, with workers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh going back to their homes after the mills closed.

The Way Forward

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The notified rate at which jute is purchased should be increased. If the government does not agree to pay more for the jute bags, the idea of switching over to **cheaper alternatives** may be a viable option.

The Government of India (GOI) has been considering continuing **anti-dumping duties** against imports of jute products from Bangladesh.

COAL SHORTAGE IN INDIA

28. **Powering up after the power crisis shock**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Powering up after the power crisis shock**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **10th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Infrastructure (Energy Sector)

Relevance: Power Crisis and Power Sector Reforms

News: India is currently going through a **power crisis**. Consequentially, the government has cancelled **passenger trains** to allow the Indian Railways to transport more coal to power plants. In addition, the directives have been issued to use more imported coal to tide over the supply shortfall.

Structure of India’s power sector

Under the **Electricity Act**, the **Distribution Company (Discom)** is responsible to provide **electricity** reliably **round-the-clock** to all consumers to meet full demand. These Discoms work under the oversight of the **State Electricity Regulatory Commissions**.

The Discom enters into contracts with a number of generating companies in order to ensure adequate supply.

How did the crisis take place?

Supply Side

A number of **coal-** and **gas-based power plants** were stranded in nature. They could be called as **non-performing assets**.

India has been witnessing slower and lesser **energy-intensive economic growth**. This led to **lower electricity demand** growth than expected.

The Discoms have failed to update the **demand growth projections** and **scenarios** over the **medium term**. Thus, they failed to enter into **adequate supply arrangements** in a robust manner with reserve margins.

Probably, the State Regulatory Commissions have failed to scrutinise them transparently.

Demand Side

The nature of electricity demand is undergoing a **qualitative transformation** with rising **daily** and **seasonal peaks**, and spikes on very hot or cold days. This has been due to higher incomes and the consequent increase in the use of air-conditioners and other electrical appliances.

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India has been undergoing **robust economic recovery** after two waves of COVID-19. Further, India faced an unexpected heat wave.

Way Forward

The **consumer**, the **political class** and the **Regulatory Commissions** have the **collective responsibility** for reliable supply.

Tariff Related

There should be **meaningful political discussion** on the relative benefits from subsidies. In fact, the subsidies should be **restricted** to a specified level as provided in the Act.

The **Regulatory Commissions** should not act from a political point of view. It should determine **cost-reflective tariffs**.

Demand Side

There should be **peak demand moderation** through flattening of the **demand curve**. This can be done through a change in **consumer behaviour** with **smart meters**. In addition, there should be a **large differential** in **peak** and **off-peak rates**. Thus, consumers will resort to using cheap electricity during off-peak hours for geysers and washing machines.

Supply Side

The Coal India needs to create capacities to rapidly ramp up production; and should increase coal production.

The Railways should ramp up its capabilities to carry larger quantities of coal when demand surges.

There is idle but **expensive generating capacity available** in India. The idle **gas-based power plants** can run on imported LNG, and the idle **thermal plants** can run on **imported coal**.

The consumers who are willing to pay more could be kept **free of power cuts** with purchase and supply of **more expensive electricity** generated from imported coal and gas. This would be shown as a **peak demand surcharge** in the bills.

The Regulatory Commissions should allow the Discoms to go in for bids for power storage (also, **large-scale grid storage**). This can help India achieve the goals of creating 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity including 450 GW of renewables by 2030.

The Discoms should ensure that they do not delay payment to the power generation companies. It is also time to move towards separate **peaking power procurement contracts** in addition to the present system of **long-term thermal power contracts**.

There is a need to look whether **Coal India** or **the Indian Railways** have defaulted or **power generators** have defaulted contractually in supplying power to Discoms. The contractual terms may be **tightened** with **enforceable financial penalties**.

India needs to transition to **demand-based time of day rates** of electricity for generators as well as consumers.

INDIA'S TRADE POLICY

29. It is time for our corporate sector to work on export performance

Source: This post is based on the article “**It is time for our corporate sector to work on export performance**” published in **Livemint** on **09th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: India’s export sector

Context: In fiscal year 2021-22, India’s exports did rather well. They were nearly \$420 billion, raising hopes that India was putting behind it a decade of export under-performance.

For India to be a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25, we need to export at least \$1 trillion worth of goods and services, as exports contribute around 20% to overall gross domestic product (GDP).

What would it take to sustain India’s export growth?

Boost export competitiveness: To export \$1 trillion by 2024-25, it is necessary to boost export competitiveness.

– Do exchange rate devaluations affect export competitiveness?: A country may mask its underlying competitive weakness by manipulating exchange rates—through devaluations, for example, or by maintaining a weak currency. In the case of India too, studies have pointed to the exchange rate as an important determinant of exports and our trade balance. However, it is not the key determinant.

Between 2011 and 2021, while the Chinese yuan appreciated by around 57% relative to the Indian rupee, our merchandise trade deficit increased by around 78% with China.

So there was **no improvement in our trade balance with China despite rupee depreciation** versus the yuan, implying there are other forces at work affecting export performance.

Other than the exchange rate, the following factors play a critical role in determining export competitiveness –

– tariffs and quotas

– non-tariff factors like infrastructure, research & development (R&D) expenditure, innovation, the ease of doing business and efficiency of logistics.

Indian industry needs to urgently invest in technology, corporate R&D and product innovations to be competitive and make India a global technology and innovation leader.

To reduce logistics cost and make supply chains efficient, the country must **digitize supply chain operations**, leverage disruptive technologies such as blockchain and Internet of Things, and move towards green supply chains.

What are some associated issues?

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Lack of R&D investment remains a concern for India, as the share of gross domestic expenditure on R&D in GDP stood at a low 0.65% in 2018, as against 2% in China, and that too driven mainly by the government with a share of 56%.

Research suggests that **weak protection of intellectual property (IP) rights leads to low returns on innovation**, thereby disincentivizing companies to innovate. India ranked 43rd out of 55 nations in recent IP rankings.

India holds a comparative advantage in mainly labour-intensive commodities such as cotton, carpets and other textiles, etc, while Indian exports more capital-intensive products such as transport equipment, machinery and mechanical appliances. This is reflected in our declining share of labour-intensive exports over time, raising concerns for a country that is labour abundant.

In services sector, **export competitiveness does not exist for sectors like health and education**, despite India's inherent potential in providing cost-effective, high quality services in these areas. This is reflected in the negligible share of these services in total service exports.

Way forward

India's private sector needs to **acquire specialization in products** in which it is competitive. India needs to **climb the rankings of the Economic Complexity Index**. The higher this score, the better the export performance. In the Harvard Growth Lab's 'Atlas of Economic Complexity', India's score in 2019 was 0.46. It was 0.32 in 2000. The country's global ranking has remained unchanged.

DIGITAL DIVIDE IN INDIA

30. [Double down on efforts to end internet poverty](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**Double down on efforts to end internet poverty**" published in **Livemint** on **9th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Information Tech

Relevance: Digital divide in India

Context: Lack of digital access today is no small measure of deprivation. The internet is not just a basic necessity, but has become fundamental to civic and economic life.

What is the situation wrt digital connectivity in India?

As per studies, little under half the country's population are active on the internet, but users in rural India rose 45% from 2019, outdoing the urban count on growth.

Hand-held telecom devices remain the primary mode by which 99% of users get on the digital highway.

By Nielsen data, 60% of rural and 41% of urban residents remain offline.

Budget smartphones and dirt-cheap data.

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What are the upcoming challenges?

Global supply chain issues due to Ukraine crisis and COVID freeze in Shanghai.

High-speed data had tariff hikes in 2021

Hence, India's digital divide may deepen just as the state's embrace of the net for service delivery tightens.

Way forward

Internet poverty can have severe consequences.

The longer we have digital have-nots, the harder it will become for our worst-off to come up. Unmitigated inequality would put India's economy at risk of middle-income stagnancy. Let no citizen get left offline who'd rather not be.

FOOD INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES

31. **The Problem on Our Plate**

Source: This post is created based on the article "The Problem on Our Plate" published in The Times of India on 11th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3- Indian Agriculture- Crops and cropping patterns in India

News: Commodity prices are increasing globally.

Prices of grains, feed and meat, and edible oils, in particular, are surging.

Russia and Ukraine together contributed roughly one-fourth (or 52 million metric tonnes [MMT]) of global wheat exports of 203 MMT in 2021-22.

What can be done to control inflation?

The main reason behind the upward cycle in commodities was massive liquidity injections by G20 countries through loose monetary and fiscal policies. Thus, the following approach can be adapted to control inflation:

Tightening the monetary and fiscal policies to suck in the excess liquidity from the system.

All **exporting countries need to step up their production and exports** to fill in the shortfall caused by the Russia-Ukraine war. For example, Europe, Australia, the US, Canada, and Argentina can fill the gap for the shortfall in wheat. Whereas, India can surely play a critical role in Rice supplies till the storm of inflation is over.

In India, the **government can procure large wheat stocks** from farmers and incentivize them to plant more area under wheat in the next season.

32. How to tackle food inflation – and how not to

Source: The post is based on articles “**How to tackle the food inflation and how not to?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **09th May 2022**, and “**Food inflation has not started to hurt India yet. Stepping up production can help country duck global trend?**” published in the **Indian Express** on **09th May 2022**.

News: Recently, The RBI raised the repo rate by 40 basis points (bps) and the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 bps aimed to control inflation.

Why has the repo rate and CRR rate been increased in India?

Domestic Food Inflation

India is seeing high food inflation in wheat, edible oils, maize etc.

Global Food Inflation

The **Food and Agriculture Organisation’s food price index** has recorded **high inflation globally** among all commodity group due to **supply disruptions** from the war, **dry weather** in South America, **high crude prices** inducing greater diversion of corn, sugar, palm and soyabean oil for bio-fuel, and so on.

- Therefore, it can be said that the **global food inflation** is getting “generalised”.

India’s vulnerability to global inflation: The transmission of the above global inflation to **domestic food prices** basically depends on how much of a **country’s consumption/production** is imported/exported. Therefore, India is vulnerable to prices of **edible oils** and **cotton**. Their inflation can be transmitted to **India’s domestic food prices**. For example, **two-thirds** of India’s edible oil consumption is imported and a fifth of Cotton’s production is exported.

Will the measures control inflation, especially food inflation?

Probably not yet. The RBI has been behind the curve by at least 4-to 5 months. It may be difficult to rein in **food inflation**, which is surging faster than the overall **consumer price index (CPI)**. India cannot remain insulated from the phenomenon of **global food inflation**. India is vulnerable to import prices of **edible oils** and **fertilisers**.

What are the opportunities from global food inflation?

There has been **record breaking cereal export** in FY22. Among cereals, wheat exports and rice exports (crossed 20 MMT in FY22 in a global market of 50 MMT) have witnessed an unprecedented growth in FY22.

Therefore, the government has set a target of 10 MMT for wheat exports in FY23 and it has been expected to go even up to 15 MMT.

Way Forward

(A) Monetary Policy

If the RBI has to make up for lost time, it will have to repeat the raising repo rates and CRR by at least three more times in this fiscal year (FY23) to mop up excess liquidity in the system.

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(B) The government's side

Global food inflation is a reality. In order to contain its import of the inflation into domestic market, the **domestic production** should be stepped up. For this, the government should announce the **kharif MSPs** with **credible procurement plans** for oilseeds and pulses. The government should ensure timely availability of seed, fertiliser, crop protection chemicals and credit.

The government should not resort to **knee-jerk export bans** or stocking controls. This will only disincentivise producers.

The public distribution system and PMGKAY should be rationalized. The government can effectively target the **massive food subsidy** and save resources for the higher import bill on edible oils and fertilisers.

In the wake of **lower production** and **procurement** of wheat, rice can be used as a substitute for wheat in the NFSA and PMGKAY. The beneficiaries can be given option to receive cash in their Jan Dhan accounts in lieu of grains. This is permitted under NFSA. This can also save on the **burgeoning food subsidy bill**.

The **policymakers should not suppress prices** by intervening in the markets through stock limits on traders, putting minimum export prices or outright bans on exports etc.

Indian farmers should be allowed to **access global markets** to augment their incomes. The government must facilitate minimising marketing costs and investing in efficient logistics for exports to develop more efficient **export value chains**.

(C) Climate Change Adaptation

The **massive Agri-R&D investment** is needed to find **heat-resistant varieties** of wheat and also create models for **"climate-smart" agriculture**.

POVERTY AND RELATED ISSUES

33. [This is how poverty in rural India came down](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **"This is how poverty in rural India came down"** published in the **Indian Express** on **09th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Hunger and Poverty in India

Relevance: Rural Poverty

News: A recent World Bank Report has shown that extreme poverty in India has come down from 22.5% in 2011 to 10.2%. Further, the reduction was in rural areas from 26.3% to 11.6% which was higher than urban areas.

How poverty in rural areas was reduced at a faster pace.?

First, the **identification** of deprived households on the basis of the Socioeconomic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 across welfare programmes. The SECC used key **deprivation criterion**.

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This led to **greater coverage** of SC and ST communities and the backward regions in Bihar, MP, Rajasthan, UP, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Rajasthan and rural areas of Maharashtra.

Second, the **PRI-SHG partnership** catalysed changes. This increased the pace of poverty reduction. Further, Aadhar enabled an ecosystem for curbing corruption at several levels. This partnership increased **coverage of women** under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana** etc.

Third, **Finance** Commission transfers were made directly to gram panchayats. This helped in creation of **basic infrastructure** like pucca village roads and drains etc. at a much faster pace in rural areas. The **infrastructure creation programme** created greater opportunities for employment in rural areas.

Fourth, the focus on **livelihood diversification** (both farm and non-farm livelihoods) and **availability of credit** increased in the rural areas under the NRLM. The **social capital of SHGs** was leveraged. The credits were provided by banks, micro-finance institutions and MUDRA loans.

Fifth, the schemes for gas and electricity connections, LED bulbs, accident insurance, life insurance, bank accounts and immunisation were very well implemented due to **community-led action** under **the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan in 2018**.

Sixth, there was also thrust on **universal coverage** for individual **household latrines, LPG connections** and **pucca houses**.

Seventh, during this period, huge amounts of **public funds** were transferred to rural areas for development efforts.

Eighth, there was thrust on a “**people’s plan campaign**”, “**Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas**” for preparing the Gram Panchayat Development Plans from 2017-18 onwards. This laid the foundation for robust community participation involving panchayats and SHGs, especially in ensuring accountability.

Ninth, social and concurrent audits were organized to ensure full utilization of the funds and resources.

Tenth: The programmes like the MGNREGS were upgraded to create durable and productive assets. This helped marginal and small farmers in improving their homesteads, and diversifying livelihoods.

Tenth, this was an era of **competitive federalism**. Nearly all states and UTs focussed on improving livelihood diversification in rural areas and on improving infrastructure significantly. All these factors contributed to **improved ease of living** of deprived households and improved their **asset base**.

What are the challenges ahead?

The **pandemic** and **the Ukraine crisis** are posing challenges to the gains made in poverty reduction up to 2019.

SPACE BASED AUGMENTED SYSTEM (SBAS)

34. **In Business & Security, Sky Isn't The Limit For GAGAN**

Source: This post is based on the article “**In Business & Security, Sky Isn't The Limit For GAGAN**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Science and Tech

Relevance: India's Space-Based Augmented System (SBAS)

Context: Recently, an IndiGo ATR aircraft landed at Kishangarh Airport in Rajasthan using GAGAN, India's own Space-Based Augmented System (SBAS).

Why this is a significant achievement for India?

Though only a trial, the landing was a significant achievement that could **allow aircraft to operate in poor weather conditions at smaller airports** that lack expensive instrumentation.

The landing was also a **rare demonstration of how the US Global Positioning System (GPS) could be augmented for use in critical 'safety of life' applications** like aviation.

More significantly, GAGAN shows the **profound effects that satellite navigation has had on both commercial and military undertakings**. As satellite navigation matures, these effects are only likely to deepen and thus influence India's own relative power in the world.

What is GAGAN?

GAGAN is an acronym for **GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation**, and its infrastructure reaches from earth to space.

On earth, reference stations receive American GPS signals that are then collated and corrected for ionospheric distortions and other errors.

The corrected signal is then broadcast from three Indian geostationary satellites, providing a more accurate and reliable service for aircraft.

What are the augmented systems already in place around the world?

Utility of augmented systems

– Besides guiding aircraft, these augmented systems could help ships navigate narrow waterways, assist the coordination of train routes, and manage traffic jams on highways.

Augmented systems around the world

GAGAN is only one of many augmented systems already in place or being developed around the world.

The **WAAS system** covers North America, while **EGNOS covers Europe**.

China is developing its own system based on the **BeiDou constellation of navigation satellites**.

As China's reliance on BeiDou indicates, spacefaring states are setting up their own

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constellations. BeiDou is the most ambitious of these, with a constellation of 45 satellites providing global coverage. Europe's Galileo has 24 satellites and Russia's GLONASS, 23.

The **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)**, also known as NavIC, consists of just seven satellites and provides services in India and its neighbourhood. Together, these satellite services **complement GPS**, providing better coverage in some regions. However, they also **compete with GPS**, providing users with viable alternatives and eroding what was effectively an American monopoly.

[Why India has struggled with NavIC?](#)

India has struggled to **get civilian users on NavIC**. A major reason for this was the lack of chipsets that could receive NavIC signals on mobile phones or vehicles.

– This prompted ISRO to **reach out to chipmakers like Broadcom and Qualcomm**. Mobile phone manufacturers have also begun to provide NavIC support.

– The government has even made it **mandatory for public and commercial vehicles in India to carry NavIC-based trackers**.

[Why indigenous navigation systems are a necessity?](#)

National security: In times of crisis, other states could choose to deny such services, wreaking havoc on both businesses and military operations. Indeed, satellite navigation cannot be separated from its military utility.

– In 1999, the US denied India the use of GPS to help fight Pakistani intruders in Kargil, a decision that sparked India's efforts to build its own navigation system.

Way forward

In the coming decades, competition over satellite navigation is likely to intensify as states improve their own capabilities and try to deny them to adversaries.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

OFF-BUDGET BORROWINGS

35. [Equating states' off-budget borrowings with their debt will clarify extent of indebtedness](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article "**Equating states' off-budget borrowings with their debt will clarify extent of indebtedness**" published in **Indian Express** on **11th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3- Fiscal policies

News: This year, off-budget borrowings by the states will be equated with the states' own debt.

What are off-budget borrowings?

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Off-budget borrowings refer to loans taken by state govt. entities, special purpose vehicles, etc. These loans are serviced through the state government's own budget, instead of revenues generated by the borrowing entity.

As per the Department of Expenditure, using off-budget borrowings, states are effectively breaching the ceiling set by the Centre. Thus, states are surpassing the fiscal deficit limits set under state Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Acts,

What are the changes?

Under Article 293 (3) of the Constitution, if the state government has taken loan from the central government, it needs to take the Centre's permission for fresh borrowing.

The central government decides fiscal deficit target for state governments for 5 years, after considering the finance commission's recommendations. Thus, the net borrowing ceiling of states is defined by the central government.

The borrowing ceiling set in this manner acts as a soft constraint to that year's state-wise fiscal deficit.

However, earlier, off-budget borrowings were not considered in this calculation. But, from now on, all incremental off-budget borrowings from 2020-21 will be adjusted from this year's ceiling.

Implications of changes

It will lead to large downward adjustments in some States' effective borrowing room.

It will bring in much-needed fiscal transparency in an area that has been cloaked in opacity.

States will find it difficult to fund their expenditures.

DISINVESTMENT AND RELATED ISSUES

36. The reasons behind the slow disinvestment pace

Source: This post is based on the article "**The reasons behind the slow disinvestment pace**" published in **Livemint** on **10th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Mobilization of Resources

Relevance: Disinvestment and related issues

Context: The government aims to earn ₹65,000 crore through the sale of its stakes in various central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) in FY23. However, privatization is still on the slow track.

What is the Centre's disinvestment plan?

Under its Public Sector Enterprise (PSE) policy, the government plans to:

- open all public sector units (PSUs) for private investment,
- fully exit sectors it considers non-strategic, and
- keep at least one PSU in sectors it considers strategic.

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The government also sells equity through **initial public offerings (IPOs), follow-on public offerings (FPOs), or offer for sale of listed entities.**

What is responsible for these delays?

The **covid-19 pandemic posed several hurdles to the government's disinvestment plans.** Strategic sales stalled over FY21 and FY22 when India saw three waves of the pandemic, largely because potential investors were unable to physically inspect the assets, conduct due diligence and submit bids.

Disinvestment has also faced **opposition from employees** fearful of job losses.

Several **state governments have opposed privatization** as well.

How important is disinvestment?

Disinvestment is a strategy for the government to **reduce its fiscal burden** and raise money to meet the needs of investments towards creating value for the public, which can be in the form of **creating infrastructure or towards welfare schemes.**

Disinvestment is also seen as a **way to unlock the value of under-performing assets.**

Thus, through the privatization of some PSEs, the Centre can seek **private sector investments** to turn around loss-making or under-performing units. This, in turn, helps in creating further **employment creation.**

Has the Govt met its disinvestment targets?

The government has rarely met targets set for disinvestment over the past several years, putting pressure on the government's plans to balance out the fiscal deficit.

For the pandemic-hit fiscal years—FY21 and FY22—the government fell far behind achieving its targets with ₹32,845 crore achieved in FY21 against target of ₹2.1 trillion, and ₹13,530 crore achieved against a target of ₹1.75 trillion, which was later revised downwards to ₹78,000 crore. For FY23, it has rationalized the disinvestment target to ₹65,000 crore.

37. The government is business

Source: This post is based on the article “**The government is business**” published in **The Hindu** on **9th May 22.**

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Mobilization of resources

Relevance: Generating revenue from the market

Context: In case of India, the only avenue for revenue generation seems to be taxes. However, like other countries, for instance, Singapore and China, markets, wealth management and dividends are not explored.

If markets create wealth, why can't the government create it and use it for creating prosperity for the public?

How are Singapore and China generating wealth via markets?

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Singapore

The **Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC)** invests internationally in equities. It owned shares worth about **₹1.09 lakh crore** at the end of March 2022 in India alone. Around the world, GIC investments amount to about ₹55 lakh crore. GIC is the **eight largest wealth management fund** in the world. This money is **also used by the government for public welfare**.

Another arm of the Singapore government, **Temasek Holdings**, has investments worth **₹22 lakh crore**.

To get a perspective of things: the Indian government's budget expenditure for 2022-23 is **₹39.45 lakh crore**.

China

By 2017, Chinese government-owned companies had invested **₹67.5 lakh crore in overseas companies**. This is about **27%** of India's GDP.

[What is the situation of govt holdings in Indian companies?](#)

The total market value of Indian government holdings is **only ₹13 lakh crore**, far less than China or even Singapore.

Overseas holdings through these companies is **negligible**.

The Navratna PSUs are performing well, but are being sold.

[Why PSUs are being disinvested, and what should be the policy approach by India?](#)

The prevailing ideology that the government has no business to be in business is used to justify disinvestment. The real reason is the **growing government deficit**. India uses a western ideology about government-owned companies, but forgets that what the West preaches is for others and what it practices is in national self-interest. The world's list of top asset-holding PSUs includes the U.S., Israel and the European Union countries. But there are none from India.

Policy approach

Instead of being disinvested, the Navratna PSUs should **invest overseas, increase their wealth, and create greater economic influence** as China is doing.

The smaller and loss-making need to be disinvested, the **profitable ones can be reformed** by altering archaic rules and removing political interference.

There is **excellent talent in the PSUs**. Other talent from the private sector can also be brought in. **Salaries for key top personnel should be in line with worldwide best practices**, along with real accountability.

The success of enterprises and startups shows that there is **abundant managerial talent**, which needs to be harnessed in national interest.

[Why India should learn from other countries, like Singapore?](#)

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National and public interest: The source of wealth has shifted from land to natural resources, to the industrial sector and now to the **knowledge economy**. Assets are largely in the financial markets today.

If the Indian government invests like Singapore, that will give it much more funds than disinvestment ever can. Meanwhile, ownership remains intact. A few caveats are required.

– Singapore **invests in long-term assets**, and does not take risky decisions.

Another powerful reason is **managing government finances**. Other avenues of wealth generation, like markets, wealth management and dividends need to be explored.

– India needs to **look for talent from our financial markets** rather than from the government only. There are well-known **entrepreneurs and wealth managers** in the stock markets. The government can surely use their talent for the greater public good.

– The example from the 1980s in telecom, recent examples of Aadhaar, and the creation now of a government platform called ONDC to increase marketing power of ordinary kirana stores shows how private sector talent can be harnessed for public good.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONEY AND BANKING

BANKING IN INDIA

38. **How Indian banking has changed over the last decade**

Source: The post is based on an article “**How Indian Banking has changed over the last decade**” published in the **Live Mint** on **09th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Banking Sector

Context: Over the last decade, the nature of commercial banking in India has changed a lot. This has taken new form in various ways.

What changes have taken place in commercial banking in India?

(1) **Industry vs Retail lending:** Commercial banks in India broadly carry out four different kinds of lending: agricultural, industrial, services and retail.

Between 2007 and 2014, the banks gave more and more loans to industry as a proportion of **non-food credit**. From mid-2014 onwards, the **industrial lending** started to slow down and **retail lending** (housing loans, vehicle loans, personal loans, consumer durables loans, education loans, etc.) started to go up.

(2) The **private banks** have become important lending players in addition to the public sector banks (PSBs).

How did this happen?

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How did industrial loan increase between 2004 to 2013? At that time, the **Indian economy** was growing at a higher rate. India was deemed to be the next China. Therefore, corporates started investing in big infrastructure projects from power plants to steel plants. Therefore, the banks disbursed a lot of industrial loans as a proportion of non-food credit.

How did industrial loan decline? The industrial loans were disbursed without **due-diligence**. Many projects faced delays due to a lack of environmental clearances, non-environmental clearances, land acquisition, roadblock on policy issues, etc. These projects did not take off. The corporates could not repay the loan. Therefore, more fresh loans were disbursed to prevent any default. These loans turned out to be bad loans.

Since 2014, the **industrial loans** could not be extended because the banks were reluctant to lend more to industries, many companies were unable to borrow loans and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) placed many public sector banks under the **prompt corrective action (PCA)** framework.

How has the retail lending increased? The balance sheets of banks have gradually improved because the banks have **written off** the bad loans, the **PSBs have been recapitalized**, the **recovery** of a few bad loans took place, and the **prompt corrective action (PCA)** framework was imposed by the RBI. Therefore, the bank's lending improved and the bank's preferred retail lending to industrial lending. However, this rise was largely driven by the rise of **housing loans** as a proportion of non-food credit.

How privatization of banking took place? PSBs could not lend, operate and compete well due to **accumulated bad loans**. Therefore, the new generation private sector banks found an opportunity to grow their share in the **overall bank lending** in India. They disbursed more loans than public sector banks (PSBs). The private banks have managed to lend around 85% of the deposits raised by them. Whereas, the public sector banks managed to lend around 64% of the deposits raised by them. This means the PSBs have been losing market share and **privatization** by stealth is quietly on.

How does the future look?

More chances of decline in Industrial lending? In 2021-22, new projects worth ₹14.3 trillion were announced. This is around 40% lower than new projects announced in 2014-15 and 47% lower than new projects announced in 2008-09. This fall has been on account of the **weak capacity utilization** of the existing infrastructure to make things. In this scenario, banks will get **fewer opportunities** to give out **industrial loans**. In fact, now, corporates have more ways to finance their projects.

New areas of lending: There have been a rise of **intangible intensive firms**. Earlier, Banks could lend against the **tangible physical assets** (like machines, buildings, vehicles, computers

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etc.) which could be sold in case of default. But now, demands are for **intangible assets** like research and development, branding, organisational development, and software etc.

Rise of Fintech in banking: Many unicorns in India are in the **fintech space**. These firms are looking to break the **conventional banking business model** of having a physical presence through branches and personal visits to raise deposits, carry out lending and offer wealth management services.

GS3 – AGRICULTURE – MAJOR CROPS: WHEAT

FALL IN THE PROCUREMENT OF WHEAT

39. **Explained: Behind low wheat procurement**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Explained: Behind low wheat procurement**” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy, Agriculture

Relevance: Procurement of wheat

News: From an all-time high last year, procurement of wheat is set to hit a 15-year low this season, falling below existing stocks for the first time. What has led to this, and will it impact availability?

What are the reasons for the fall in procurement?

There are two main reasons:

1) Rise in Export demand: Supply disruptions from the Russia-Ukraine war – the two countries account for over 28% of global wheat exports – have led to skyrocketing prices and a further **increase in demand for Indian grain**.

2) Lower production: A sudden spike in temperatures from the second half of March — when the crop was in grain-filling stage, with the kernels still accumulating starch, protein and other dry matter — has taken a toll on yields.

In most wheat-growing areas — barring Madhya Pradesh, where the crop is harvest-ready by mid-March — farmers have reported a **15-20% decline in per-acre yields**.

Thus, a smaller crop, in combination with export demand, has resulted in open market prices of wheat crossing the MSP in many parts of India.

What are the key requirement areas for procured wheat?

Requirements:

- A minimum operational stock-cum-strategic reserve has to be maintained
- Annual wheat requirement for the public distribution system, midday meals and other regular welfare schemes, is around 26 mt.

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– The last two years have also witnessed substantial offtake under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana scheme (10.3 mt in 2020-21 and 19.9 mt in 2021-22) and open market sales to flour mills (2.5 mt and 7.1 mt, respectively).

- There's clearly not enough wheat for these, which explains the Centre's recent decision to slash allocation under the PMGKAY.

What is likely to happen now?

Simply put, one can expect a rerun of what happened in 2006-07 and 2007-08. That period, too, saw a **worldwide agri-commodity price boom and production shortfalls**, causing reduced procurement and depletion of stocks.

However, the relatively tight supplies in wheat this time is **compensated for by the comfortable public stocks of rice**. At over 55 mt as on April 1, these were more than four times the required buffer of 13.6 mt.

And a **good monsoon should further augment availability** from the ensuing kharif crop and tide over the shortages in wheat.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

STATE OF WORLD'S BIRDS REPORT

40. **The grim forewarnings of a global study on birds**

Source: This post is based on the article **“The grim forewarnings of a global study on birds”** published in **The Hindu** on **11th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment and Ecology

Relevance: State of the World's Birds report

Context: The State of the World's Birds, an annual review of environmental resources, has revealed that the population of 48% of the 10,994 surviving species of birds is declining.

The report led by the Manchester Metropolitan University gives an overview of the changes in the knowledge of avian biodiversity and the extent to which it is imperilled.

What are the key findings of the study?

5,245 or about 48% of the existing bird species worldwide are known or suspected to be undergoing population declines. While 4,295 or 39% of the species have stable trends, about 7% or 778 species have increasing population trends. The trend of 37 species was unknown.

1,481 or 13.5% species are currently threatened with global extinction. These include 798 species classified as vulnerable, 460 as endangered and 223 as critically endangered while 52 species were considered to be data deficient.

For more findings: Click [here](#)

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What is the importance of birds to ecosystems and culture?

Birds **contribute toward many ecosystem services** that either directly or indirectly benefit humanity. These include provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting services.

The **functional role of birds within ecosystems** as pollinators, seed-dispersers, ecosystem engineers, scavengers and predators facilitates accrual and maintenance of biodiversity. It also supports human endeavours such as **sustainable agriculture via pest control**, besides aiding other animals to multiply. For instance, coral reef fish productivity has been shown to increase as seabird colonies recovered following rat eradication in the Chagos archipelago.

Wild birds and **products derived from them are also economically important** as food (meat, eggs). Approximately 45% of all extant bird species are used in some way by people, primarily as pets (37%) and for food (14%).

The **cultural role of birds** is perhaps more important than any other taxonomic group, the study says. Beyond its symbolic and artistic values, **birdwatching is a global pastime** practised by millions of people.

- **Garden bird-feeding** is valued at \$5-6 billion per year and growing by four per cent annually.

What are the threats contributing to avian biodiversity loss?

The study lists eight factors, topped by land cover and land-use change.

The **continued growth of human populations and of per capita rates of consumption** lead directly to conversion and degradation of primary natural habitats and consequent loss of biodiversity. Although global tree cover increased between 1982 and 2016, this has been driven by afforestation with plantations (often of non-native species) plus land abandonment in parts of the global North, with net loss in the tropics.

The other factors are **habitat fragmentation and degradation**, especially in the tropics; **hunting and trapping** with 11 to 36 million birds estimated to be killed or taken illegally in the Mediterranean region alone; the **impact of invasive alien species** and **disease**; **infrastructure, energy demands and pollution**; **agrochemical and pharmaceutical usage** (pesticide ingestion kills an estimated 2.7 million birds annually in Canada alone); **global trade teleconnections**; and **climate change**.

Can the avian biodiversity loss be stemmed?

Yes.

The growing footprint of the human population represents the ultimate driver of most threats to avian biodiversity. So the success of solutions will depend on the degree to which they account for the social context in which they are implemented, and **our ability to effect changes in individual and societal attitudes and behaviours**.

Emerging concepts of **conservation social science** can inform efforts to address biodiversity loss and to achieve more effective and sustainable conservation outcomes.

- Conservation social science links birds to human well-being, sustainability, climate resilience, and environmental justice.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

41. Shallow and deep ecologism

Source: The post is based on an article “**Shallow and deep ecologism**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **12th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Environment and Ecology

Relevance: Environmental Philosophy

News: India continues to face with the unrelenting heatwave. Although, heat waves are known to have been a reality for hundreds of years. But more extreme, frequent and prolonged heat waves in recent has exposed the long-term effects of climate change which have exacerbated them.

Concept of Ecologism

The **concepts** emerged in the 1970s, when Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss sought to look beyond the popular pollution and conservation movements of his milieu to address environmental degradation.

In his study, he viewed nature and themselves as two competing entities, therefore, established **a master-slave dynamic**. There are two strands of environmental philosophy that reinvent the relationship between nature and humans

Two styles of ecologism

(1) **Shallow ecologism:** Also referred to as **weak ecologism**, refers to the philosophy wherein the present **lifestyle** is continued, but with specific tweaks to minimise the damage to the environment. He termed this powerful and fashionable fight against pollution and resource depletion as shallow ecologism or environmentalism.

– For example, using vehicles that cause **less pollution** or **air conditioners** that do not release **chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)**.

(2) **Deep ecologism:** It refers to the philosophy wherein the exponents believe that humans should **radically change** their relationship with nature. It rejects **shallow ecologism** as it prioritises humans above nature. It aims to **preserve nature** subsequent to **environmental destruction**.

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– For instance, the wealthier countries are responsible for a majority of carbon emissions. For instance, the US constitutes only 5% of the world's population, but consumes 17% of the world's energy consumption. In addition,

Objectives of deep ecologism

It aspires to **sustain nature** by making large-scale changes to our lifestyle. For example, limiting the **commercial farming**, reducing the artificial fattening of animals, or the reshaping of transport systems.

In addition, it **shifts the attention from pollution and conservation narratives** to robust policy formulation and implementation. The policies must include technical skills and inventions which are **ecologically responsible**.

In addition, deep ecologism advocates for a re-evaluation of the **'survival of the fittest' doctrine**. It advocates that doctrine should be understood through the perspective of **cooperation** and **coexistence** with nature, as opposed to **competition, exploitation** or **domination**.

The deep ecologists prioritise a principle called the **'live and let live'** attitude over an **'either you or me'** approach.

What are the issues in Shallow ecologism?

A narrow focus on pollution and conservation movements is counterproductive.

- For example, projects implemented only to solve pollution generates evils of a different kind, like the installation of pollution control devices may increase the cost of living, leading to an increase in class difference.

The environment becomes more **vulnerable** when decisions are strongly influenced by **majority rule** without taking local interests into consideration

Way Forward

We should adopt **ethically responsible ecologism** which operates in the interest of all economic classes.

There should be **decentralisation** of the decision-making process. This can be done by strengthening **local autonomy**.

A **holistic approach** is needed to solve the **environmental crisis**. It demands avoiding adoption of a **'vague, global' approach**. It should acknowledge **regional differences** and the disparities between **under** and **over-developed nations**.

The responsibility of solving the climate crisis falls on both **policy-makers**; and **scientists** and **ecologists**. Therefore, the political class or those who are in positions of power should be held accountable.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND RELATED ISSUES

42. **We require dependable ways to recycle lithium batteries**

Source: This post is based on the article “**We require dependable ways to recycle lithium batteries**” published in **Livemint** on **11th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment, Industrial policy and growth

Relevance: Reuse and recycling of lithium batteries

News: In March 2022, the Indian government announced four recipients for its Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for advanced cell chemistry batteries, which aims to establish 50 gigawatt hours (GWh) of domestic cell manufacturing capacity by 2030.

The establishment of a domestic manufacturing capacity will be essential for ensuring supply chain and energy security.

However, scarce materials that are used in lithium-ion battery chemistries, such as cobalt, nickel and graphite, pose a significant risk for India, which has extremely limited domestic reserves of these materials. The industry’s upstream supply chain is largely dominated by China, and markets have been volatile.

Hence, **a robust reuse-and-recycling programme for batteries** will enable India to reduce raw material risk and help the country establish sunrise industries that are climate-friendly.

What steps are being taken globally and by India wrt building recycling capacity?

Globally

Several international actors are taking steps to build necessary recycling capacity as a response to growing battery demand.

- In **China**, a suite of policies introduced in 2018 was aimed at the growth of recycling centres in proximity to electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing hubs.
- In the **West**, the EU has begun the process of establishing policies requiring collection targets, coupled with minimum local content requirements.
- In the **US**, the country’s department of energy has awarded grants to innovative recycling companies.

India

India has also taken steps to establish a **domestic market for battery recycling**.

In February 2020, the ministry of environment introduced **draft rules on battery-waste management**. These rules would establish an extended producer responsibility (EPR) programme.

- Under an EPR framework, stakeholders in the domestic battery industry (including manufacturers, producers and importers) would be responsible for **establishing a collection**

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plan to be approved by regulators. The plan must enable the collection of 30% of end-of-life batteries by weight two years after implementation, and gradually escalate this to 70% by the seventh year.

What are the potential benefits of setting up a recycling ecosystem in India?

Under the EPR programme, materials recovered from recycled EV lithium batteries could **provide 5% of India's domestic manufacturing needs** for minerals such as lithium, nickel, cobalt, and graphite by 2030. The quantity of recoverable material will only increase with time as the volume of EV batteries due for retirement increases.

Utilization of recovered minerals to meet lithium battery demand within India would **reduce greenhouse gas emissions** by avoiding upstream emissions associated with extraction, processing and transportation.

Further, as the Indian power grid gets decarbonized, the lithium battery manufacturing process will also become less carbon intensive. Battery recycling would therefore **reduce risks to the domestic battery-making industry** while complementing the national emissions reduction targets announced by India at the CoP-26 summit held in Glasgow last November.

How the draft rules on battery waste mgmt can be improved?

Currently, they have only set a battery collection target, but the policy can be used to bolster the market for second-life batteries.

The draft rules should also look to **include specific language on hazardous material transport and handling guidance** for lithium batteries, formalize second-life performance standards and warranties, and also establish a transparent methodology for identifying issues and stages for remediation and penalties.

In the meanwhile, the plans of battery industry stakeholders must take into consideration how costs will impact EV market parity vis-a-vis conventional vehicles, and what mechanisms are used to incentivize consumer adoption.

Way forward

The implementation of a reuse-and-recycling programme would not only enhance the resource security of the country's vehicle electrification and energy transition ambitions, but could also deliver **economic development and job growth**, while ensuring improved public health and environmental safety.

CYBERSECURITY AND RELATED ISSUES

43. **A regulatory overload could weaken our cyber security**

Source: This post is based on the article “**A regulatory overload could weaken our cybersecurity**” published in **Livemint** on **10th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Information Technology

Relevance: Cybersecurity and related issues

Context: Most countries have comprehensive rules setting out the various steps that companies must follow from the moment they learn of a breach. These rules are designed to mitigate the privacy harms from a breach of personal data.

But, there is an absence of a full-fledged privacy law in India.

What is CERT-In?

In 2013, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) was established under **rules issued under the Information Technology Act, 2000**, to serve as a “trusted referral agency” that users could turn to in the event of a cyberattack.

The role of CERT-In was to provide **technical assistance in the event of a breach**, and as such it had no mandate to assess the privacy implications of such breaches.

What are the rules wrt reporting of cybersecurity incidents in India?

The 2013 Rules, issued under the IT Act 2000, largely **left it up to individual users to decide whether or not they wanted to report a cybersecurity incident** to CERT-In. However, in an annex at the end, it listed **ten types of incidents** that mandatorily had to be reported.

- Most incidents described in the annex had to do with attacks on critical infrastructure: the SCADA systems central to our national energy grid, the DNS servers that route internet traffic, and other such systems.
- However, the annex also required relatively benign incidents—“unauthorised access to IT systems/ data”, “defacement of websites” and “spoofing and phishing attacks”—to be reported to CERT-In.

Recently, the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) extended the 2013 Rules by **issuing a new set of Directions under the Information Technology Act, 2000**. The new directions considerably **expanded the list of mandatorily reportable incidents**, doubling it to 20.

- It introduced new reporting requirements in relation to attacks on Internet-of-Things devices, unauthorized access to social media accounts, and for suspicious activities that could affect systems relating to big data, blockchain, virtual assets, robotics, 3D and 4D printing etc.

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- Companies are now **required to report cyber incidents to CERT-In within six hours** of becoming aware of them, and in a form that has to be downloaded from the CERT-In website as a non-editable PDF. Firms are required to maintain (within the territory of India), logs of their ICT systems for a period of 180 days and ensure that their system clocks are synchronized with Network Time Protocol Servers of either the National Informatics Centre or the National Physical Laboratory. It even presumes to regulate virtual asset service providers, requiring them to maintain KYC information and records of their financial transactions for a period of five years.

Issues associated with the rules

Excessive burden on CERT-In: Requiring users to mandatorily report all such incidents, like — every phishing attempt, every attempt to gain unauthorized access to a computer — is excessive. It places an onerous **reporting burden on companies** that is unwarranted, considering that their IT departments are eminently capable of dealing with them. More importantly, it risks so thoroughly **inundating CERT-In with trivial incidents** that the agency may be left incapable of responding to serious incidents when they actually occur.

Classification of all “suspicious activity” relating to drones, blockchain and artificial intelligence as cybersecurity incidents under the new reporting requirements by MEITY, regardless of their likely consequences, does **seems excessive**.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES

44. [An inflation focus that neglects growth could lead to stagflation](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**An inflation focus that neglects growth could lead to stagflation**” published in the **Live Mint** on **12th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy, Issues and Challenges in growth and development

Relevance: Macroeconomic Policy, Fiscal Policy and Monetary Policy

News: Recently, the International Monetary Fund published statistics on **actual inflation rates** and **growth rates** in the world in economy group-wise which also include corresponding figures for India, for the period 2015-2019, 2020, 2021 and projections for 2022.

What are the findings?

The global economy is confronted with a daunting prospect, as **accelerating inflation** and **decelerating growth**.

In **advanced economies**, consumer price inflation which was a mere 1% per annum during 2015-20 is projected to reach about 6% in 2022. These projected inflation levels in rich countries,

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for 2022, are unprecedented and have not been witnessed since the **oil crises** of the 1970s fifty years ago.

In **developing economies**, where consumer price inflation was on average 5% per annum during 2015-2020 is projected to reach about 9% in 2022. For Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Middle East & Central Asia, the inflation reached double-digit levels in 2021 (Except Asia where inflation is moderate).

In **Developing Europe** (non-EU transition economies), the corresponding rates are 10% and 27% per annum for 2021 and 2022.

What are the factors underlying inflation?

After the **financial crisis of 2008**, the global growth had not returned to its boom levels seen until 2008. The recovery was slow and uneven. There was a **sharp contraction** in output and **employment** everywhere during the pandemic period.

In response to covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown during **2020-2021**, most central banks adopted **easy monetary policies** while governments adopted **expansionary fiscal policies**. Thereafter, significant proportions of cheap money went into **financial assets**. This led to **stock market booms** while there was **an economic slump**. This led to **crashing prices** of primary commodities.

The **Russia-Ukraine war** has accentuated inflation. This has led to contraction in world supplies of fuels (oil and gas from Russia) and food (wheat from Ukraine), while the sanctions and the war disrupted supply chains.

In addition, there is a **sharp slowdown** in growth worldwide. The slowdown is being experienced by **advanced economies**, and the **developing economies**.

The consequences of such high inflation and dampened growth are bound to be hurt poorer people and countries far more

What are the macroeconomic policy responses worldwide?

In response to high inflation, the **orthodox macroeconomic policies** (monetary policy and fiscal policy) are being adopted across the world. The worldwide central banks are **hiking interest rates** while the governments are working upon the **fiscal consolidation** to restrain and manage inflation.

What are the issues in the adopted macroeconomic policies?

The **contractionary macroeconomic policies** might accentuate rather than solve the problem of inflation. This is because the present inflation is driven by **supply-demand imbalances**, particularly in fuels and food. The imbalances have been caused by war-induced disruptions.

The raising of interest rates will not curb such **supply-side inflation**. This might stifle growth further. The higher interest rates will **dampen investment** while **fiscal consolidation** will

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squeeze consumption expenditure, which are the main sources of **aggregate domestic demand**.

If the government policies do not strike a balance between **managing inflation** and **stimulating growth**, it would lead to **stagflation**.

Way Forward

Monetary policy should be used for **stimulating investment**, while **fiscal policy** should be used for **stimulating consumption expenditure** to revive growth.

The well-being of people should be the primary concern of governments. Further, the well-being of people and economic progress of countries requires stability with growth. Therefore, **price stability** and **economic growth** must not be posed as an either-or choice.

45. [Explained: What's causing high inflation and where?](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Explained: What's causing high inflation and where?**” published in **The Indian Express** on **13th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Monetary policy

Relevance: Inflation and related issues

News: India's retail inflation rose by 7.79% in April, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Inflation in food items rose by even higher — 8.38% in April — according to the MoSPI's Consumer Food Price Index.

However, the biggest jump was registered in fuel prices, which rose by almost 11 per cent in April. This is a **direct impact of the higher crude oil prices** being passed through to the consumers in the wake of the war in Ukraine.

[What is retail inflation and why it's significant?](#)

Retail inflation essentially refers to the rate at which the general price level went up in a particular month (April in the current instance) over what it was in the same month a year ago.

- The change is expressed as a percentage.

Retail inflation also refers to the **prices faced by consumers**, and not the ones prevailing in the wholesale market.

Significance: The retail inflation level is the most important measure of inflation in India because **it is this inflation rate that India's central Bank, the RBI, targets to maintain price stability**. According to the law, the RBI is supposed to keep overall retail inflation between 2% and 6%.

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However, since the start of 2022, retail inflation has been **trending above the 6% mark** and there is a good chance that it may stay above the 6% mark for the first 9 months of the year. If that happens, the RBI will have to explain the slippage to the Parliament.

46. [The good side of inflation: Accelerating prices make govt debt management easier. Higher food prices mean bigger farmer income](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**The good side of inflation**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Monetary policy

Relevance: Inflation and related issues

Context: Some positive effects of inflation.

[How is inflation beneficial in some respects?](#)

A higher inflation (consumer price index or wholesale price index) helps in the lowering of the estimated fiscal deficit. The fiscal deficit, is calculated as a percentage of the nominal GDP. The nominal GDP because of the way it is calculated on current prices includes the inflation component. To estimate the real rate of GDP growth, statisticians net out inflation using a GDP deflator, a weighted average of CPI and WPI. A higher inflation would therefore shrink the deficit just as a higher subsidy reduces the nominal GDP.

– This is how India managed to maintain an elevated level of fiscal deficit (including off-budget public spends like oil subsidies) for 5-6 years post the Global Financial Crisis, without blowing out on debt to-GDP ratios. It was made possible because of high single-digit, near double-digit inflation for most of that period.

Partial reversal of Terms of Trade in agriculture: A somewhat less straightforward, but perhaps more high-impact consequence of inflation is a partial reversal of the terms of trade (ToT) in agriculture. It's well-known that ToT in farming has been on a decline in India.

The phrase ‘terms of trade’ for agriculture broadly refers to the gap between the price paid for inputs used in growing agricultural crops, and the prices received from the sale of those crops.

Even when the retail inflation went up, the farmgate prices lagged behind, but this trend has been reversed now. A synchronised inflation in the last one year – substantial increase in MSP last year and a global uptick in food prices as a result of the war in Ukraine – means. Farmgate food price inflation is trending significantly above retail price inflation.

The price increases are not restricted to cereals like wheat. Milk, cotton, edible oils – the anecdotal evidence of higher farmgate prices is adding up. Perhaps it's temporary, but ToT is shifting just a tad bit in favour of the farmer due to the current inflationary spell. In other words, it's an **income transfer from urban India to the farmers.**

[Way forward](#)

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In short, inflation is a policy paradox. Policymakers need to find a balance, rather than condemning inflation as an unmitigated evil that it is projected to be in popular discourse.

47. Control inflation by acting on liquidity

Source: This post is created based on the article “Control inflation by acting on liquidity” published in The Hindu on 11th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3- Indian Economy – Growth and development

News: Inflation has assumed a menacing proportion in almost all countries.

Consumer price index (CPI) inflation in India stood (in March 2022) at 6.95%. It is expected to rise further in April. On the other hand, the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation had remained in double digits since April 2021.

It is not the case solely with India, the situation is the worst in the United States where the consumer price inflation stood (in March 2022) at 8.56%

Monetary and fiscal policy approach adopted after pandemic

After the advent of COVID-19, the major concern of policymakers all over the world was to revive demand. Government's tried to increase demand by raising government expenditure. However, it didn't happen due to supply constraints that came from a non-mobility of factors of production. But it is the right approach, the increase in output could happen with a lag and also with the relaxation of restrictions.

The focus of monetary policy in India also has been to keep the interest rate low and increase the availability of liquidity through various channels.

The Government's borrowing programme also went through smoothly, due to abundant liquidity.

Changing Policy measures due to inflation

Although the monetary policy is still accommodative, the focus is back on the gradual withdrawal of accommodation, to ease inflationary pressure.

What should be done?

Many experts are of the belief that present inflation is cost-push inflation that occurred due to rising crude oil prices and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Thus, some part of the increase in crude prices and food prices can be absorbed by the government.

However, an abundance of liquidity has also been an important factor. Thus, action on liquidity is very much needed, with a concomitant rise in the interest rate on deposits and loans.

VALUE OF CURRENCY AND RELATED ISSUES

48. **Explained: Making sense of exchange rate**

Source: This post is created based on the article “Explained: Making sense of exchange rate” published in Indian Express on 11th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3- Indian Economy – Money and Banking

News: Indian rupee hit an all-time low exchange rate of 77.6 against the US dollar.

What is the exchange rate?

The exchange rate tells us how much of a currency (e.g. Rupee) is required to purchase one unit of another currency (e.g. Dollar). For example, if the rupee’s exchange rate “falls”, it implies that buying American goods would become costlier.

How an exchange rate is determined?

In a free market, the exchange rate is determined by the supply and demand for currencies, i.e. rupees and dollars. For example, in case Indians demand more dollars in comparison to the demand of rupees in America, the value of rupees will depreciate.

Other than the market forces, central banks (RBI, in the case of India) also play a role in determining the exchange rate.

What are the factors determining the supply and demand of currency?

Balance of Payment determines how many rupees was demanded by the rest of the world and how much foreign currency was demanded by Indians. The BoP is divided into— current, capital, and financial accounts.

- The current account is used to mark the inflow and outflow of goods and services into a country.
- The capital account is where all international capital transfers in assets are recorded.
- In the financial account, international monetary flows related to investment in the business, real estate, bonds, and stocks are documented.

The following 2 scenarios will clear the Rupee’s exchange rate fluctuations

First, India imports 80% of its oil. In case the demand or price of oil goes up, India will need more dollars to buy crude oil in the international market. On the other hand, the demand for Indian rupees has not increased. This would weaken the Indian Rupee exchange rate due to the increasing trade deficit.

Second, if the US central bank raises its interest rates, Global investors would start investing their money in the US, instead of India. Again, the rupee would weaken. Such a transaction would be recorded in the Capital Account.

What is RBI’s role in exchange rate determination?

RBI plays a very important role in exchange rate determination. It controls the drastic fluctuations in Rupee’s exchange rate. For that, RBI can take various measures:

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In case of a drastic fall in Rupee value, RBI sells some of the dollars from its forex reserves. This is why the RBI's forex reserves have gone down sharply since the war in Ukraine started in February.

In case of a drastic rise in Rupee value, the RBI buys excess amount of dollars (by paying rupees in the market) and adds it to its forex reserves.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY - GST AND RELATED ISSUES

GST AND RELATED ISSUES

49. [Heading for GSTExit](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Heading for GSTExit**” published in the **Indian Express** on **12th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Issues and challenges in the federal structure

Relevance: GST Regime

News: Recently, Britain witnessed Brexit because loss of some sovereign freedom in return of the economic gains of a common European market was capitalised. India may also see the “**GSTExit**” if the trust and faith between the centre and the state is not revived in the **Union-states relationship**.

Importance of GST

The GST untangled **disparate taxation structures** across various states, reduced transportation costs and created a **unified market** that would boost economic growth and yield buoyant tax revenues for everyone to share.

Issues

The **2015 GST report** proclaimed that the GST would help in “**making one India**” through **centralised GST** by curtailing states’ fiscal powers. However, the GST could pave the path for the **over-arching centralisation project**. For example, one nation, one language”, “one nation, one religion”, “one nation, one election” etc. This seems to be **anti-federalist** and **anti-pluralistic ideas** of “**one India**”.

Five years after GST, Tax buoyancy has actually declined. The GST has led to fight between the Union and state governments during Covid-19.

The GST induced **fiscal federalism problem** has entered into other domains like the union and state governors fighting over Hindi impositions, NEET exam etc.

The GST has ruptured **India’s larger federal structure** and destroyed trust between the Union government and states.

What are the issues in the GST Regime?

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After the introduction of **the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017**, state governments lost their independent taxation powers. However, state had **fiscal independence** in liquor and fuel as both were exempted from the GST.

The **share** of both items in **revenue generation** have increased since the GST. Earlier, Both accounted for over 1/3rd of **states' own tax revenues**. However, the **alcohol's share** in overall state taxes has increased by 50% from the pre-GST years. In addition, Both the Union and state governments levy **high fuel taxes** to generate revenues as they do not have to seek **permission** of each other

The state governments kept **liquor shops** open during Covid-19 lockdowns to compensate for the **loss of revenue** because they had no other independent means to raise resources.

This GST framework and the **fiscal independence** in the fuel and alcohol domain is punishing the common Indian. For example, India has the highest fuel tax rates in the world.

The GST relies upon the foundation of **"compensation guarantee"** based on which states surrendered their fiscal powers in return for **guaranteed revenues**. This foundation is going to end and the trust deficit would plague GST.

Way Forward

The technical approach to the problem of states' **growing reliance** on **liquor** and **fuel taxes** is by bringing these sin goods within the GST ambit is not the solution. The root cause lies not in economics but in **politics**.

Fixing GST requires a fundamental reset of the **Union-states relationship**. It requires a state of mutual trust and respect. Both governments should uphold the value of **cooperative federalism** by extending it to ethics.

India has a lot of economic, social and political diversity. Therefore, the GST was always going to be a tough proposition.

The **revenue guarantee agreements** between the Union and states are necessary but not sufficient to make GST tenable.

The central government should deftly **balance all stakeholders** and win back their confidence instead of just bringing alcohol and fuel within the GST ambit. This would further constrain the fiscal sovereignty of states.

TRANSITION TOWARDS CLEAN ENERGY

50. **'Climate justice is an absolute must for effective climate adaptations, globally and within nations'**

Source: The post is based on an article “Climate justice is an absolute must for effective climate adaptations, globally and within nations” published in **The Times of India** on **14th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Environment and Ecology

Relevance: Climate Change Adaptations, Climate Justice

News: There is an ongoing debate on *climate justice, subsistence emissions, etc. which are vital and inevitable for effective climate change adaptations.*

Why is climate change taking place?

Climate change happens largely due to the **emissions** of **carbon dioxide**, which lasts over 150 to 170 years in the atmosphere.

Therefore, the **greenhouse gases** which were emitted a **century** and a **half ago** still exist in Earth's **atmosphere** today and are forcing changes in temperatures.

What is 'climate justice'?

Many countries have a natural debt of historical emissions. They burnt fossil fuels to spur their economic growth in the past.

The **UNFCCC** acknowledged the same and embraced the **principle of climate justice**. For example, the rich nations would reduce emissions while the poor could develop with access to money and technology for clean growth.

At present, it can be defined by a framework for climate justice developed by **the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)**. The framework argues for per **capita emissions entitlements** for attaining **climate justice**.

Is the idea of climate justice too relevant within nations?

The principle of climate justice also applies within a country. For example, there are **well-off people** or rich classes of people who overuse their own share of the **ecological space**. Therefore, the poor do not get their due share of ecological space.

What are the issues at present?

Even today, several countries scramble for more fossil fuels. It is evident in the Ukraine Crisis. In fact, the developing countries will also emit and add to greenhouse gas emissions for their development.

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The rich world has mostly undermined the **principles of climate justice**. For example, the **Paris pact 2015** has shed the term '**historical emissions**' and **dropped** the responsibility of the developed world to take on emission reductions.

The world doesn't have a global agreement based on **fair climate shares** in the world. This is in fact not talked about in **an intra-country context**.

Climate justice has been the most **divisive issue** in the global environmental community. The issue has not been highlighted in the **Western media**, despite their huge reporting of the climate crisis. In fact, 70% of the world also needs to grow.

Way Forward

The world should move forward based on **each person's fair share** of atmospheric space. Climate Justice should be classed with **human rights**.

Climate justice should be made **a bedrock** of climate action. We can't have effective agreements, accompanied by financial transfers, technology sharing, and measures to enable countries to grow economically without pollution.

The acknowledgment of climate justice is essential for **climate adaptation** and making international agreements truly effective.

We all need to live within our fair share of nature. The world should shift from **luxury emissions** to **subsistence emissions**.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – CLIMATE CHANGE

TRANSITION TOWARDS CLEAN ENERGY

51. [Needed: An economic response plan for a green transition shock](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**An economic response plan for a green transition shock**" published in the **Live Mint** on **18th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy; Environment and Ecology

Relevance: Green Transition

News: India is facing severe heat waves in many parts of the country. This is a reminder that the risks from climate change are rising.

What are the issues involved in transition towards a green economy?

Around a **fifth** of Indian households have access to either **air-conditioners** or **coolers** in their home. Nearly half of the **Indian labour force** works **outdoors** in the sun during heat waves month.

This excess heat will have an impact on India's wheat crop. This can lead to other **supply shocks** in the coming years

The **existing capital stock** in several sectors such as **energy** or **mobility** will become prematurely obsolete because of the government's tax policy or regulations that seek to reduce carbon emissions to mitigate climate events.

The debate on how the costs (based on discount rate) should be borne to tackle climate change should be spread over time

If a **lower discount rate** is imposed. It means today's generation bears a bigger burden of the costs.

If a higher discount rate is imposed, It means that the costs of mitigation can be pushed further into the future for coming generations to pay.

The '**green interest rate**' refers to how the **welfare of future generations** is to be treated while decisions are made today.

– Frank Ramsey developed a **mathematical framework** for a proportion a nation should optimally save from its income. His insights have been used for a range of other applications, including climate change computations. He insisted that **the well-being** of future people should be given the **same weight** as that of present people.

What are the challenges?

The climate scientists have shown that the **window available** for serious action is closing by the year.

A green transition can only be achieved over time. Any sudden action will almost certainly lead to **economic collapse**.

The costs of the transition will be spread over multiple generations, as most commitments to reach **carbon neutrality** are between 2050 and 2070. The challenges are how to distribute the costs (discount rate) over time, or who will bear than burden, i.e., present or future generation?

There is a **different viewpoint on discount rates**. For example, **Nicholas Stern** argued for a discount rate of 1.4%. **William Nordhaus** (the Nobel Prize Winner for economics in 2018), has argued for 4.3% in his model. He argued that the **discount rate** should be based on actual observed behaviour, and especially real interest rates in financial markets. On the contrary, **Stern** used a discount rate which was derived broadly on **ethical considerations**.

The green transition will involve a supply shock that will reduce potential growth.

Over the next decade, the **fiscal policy** will be **constrained** because the **public debt** across the world had bloated because of government spending during the pandemic. Therefore, the green investments will be a political and economic challenge.

Way Forward

The green transition will open up **opportunities** in new technologies, better infrastructure and the redesign of cities.

In the coming future, there should be **significant reallocation** of both capital as well as labour, assuming factor markets are flexible.

In addition to fiscal policy, the central banks will have a **dilemma** about whether they should add climate change mitigation to the policy targets to address inflation, growth and financial stability.

The **fiscal authorities** as well as **central banks** should maintain **low interest rates** to help new investments in a green economy. It will effectively make it easier for enterprises with older technologies to survive. The higher interest rates will kill polluting enterprises and make investments in new technologies more expensive.

The central banks can also choose **one interest rate** for green activities and **another one** for brown activities. This will lead to credit planning.

Much depends on how a **society** either **values** or should **value benefits** that will be available only many years down the line.

HEATWAVES IN INDIA

52. [Fiddling with a climate response while our workers face the heat](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “Fiddling with a climate response while our workers face the heat” published in Live Mint on 16th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Disaster management – heat waves

News: Meteorologists are predicting that temperatures will rise above 50°C across much of South Asia, owing to less rainfall than usual in this period.

Extreme heat and high humidity can prevent human sweat from evaporating, reducing the body’s ability to cool down, this condition is called ‘**Wet-bulb**’ temperature. Several Indian cities have recently experienced wet-bulb temperatures of close to 30°C. If it exceeds 35°C, then spending even a few hours outside in the shade with no physical activity can lead to death.

What are the implications of increasing heat for India?

The central government has asked state governments to take measures to prevent deaths due to heat waves and fire incidents. However, the available measures are not sufficient.

National Action Plan on Heat-Related Illnesses does not focus on protecting people from heat exposure. Instead, it outlines relatively minor strategies for dealing with the consequences.

Also, these measures are **ineffective for employees who are engaged in informal activities** with no legal or social protection. They have to come out for work or sleep hungry, as we have seen during covid times.

An International Labour Organization (ILO) report on heat stress and work states **that agriculture and construction sector would be worst affected** in terms of deteriorating conditions and working-time losses, due to global warming. But the **hundreds of millions of Indians who work such jobs typically have no choice** but to keep doing them.

The unpaid work of hundreds of millions of women and girls in India has been ignored even by ILO report. They have to go to fetch water for daily household use to faraway places. Now, as the scorching heat may dry up existing surface water sources and reduces groundwater supplies, they will have to walk long distances.

What should be done?

Governments have to be the main drivers of adaptation to higher temperatures. Universal social protection and occupational safety can be provided even for informal work.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – INDIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

ENERGY SECURITY

53. [Root cause analysis for the power crisis](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “Root cause analysis for the power crisis” published in Business Standard on 16th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Energy – Electricity sector

Context: The root cause of the present electricity crisis in India is said to be the demand surge due to heat waves. However, it is not the case with other products where the private sector is involved.

For example, the surge in the ice-cream demand is higher compared to electricity in summers. However, no one would see a shortage of ice cream in the market. It is because ice cream is

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produced in the market economy, and profit-seeking producers ensure the availability of ice cream through projections and a sufficient supply of raw materials.

Why there is a shortage of electricity?

Lack of market-based mechanisms and State control.

An increase in the global price of gas (Market based) has not resulted in the shut down of captive gas-based thermal generating plants or an increase in the price of electricity(State determined). There are specialized “imported coal thermal plants” that only generate electricity with imported coal and sell electricity. These plants have 25-year lock-in prices for electricity. When the price of coal goes up, they stand to make a loss by operating the plant, and prefer to shut down the plant.

State-regulated systems lack self-correcting mechanisms, where High prices offer profit opportunities and less demand and vice versa.

What are the solutions?

The Indian electricity sector is at a breaking point through the forces of global warming, heatwaves, the carbon transition, financially unviable discoms, etc.

Thus, the price system of electricity should be market based so that profit-motivated firms start figuring out how to extract, store, import, and transport coal.

High prices encourage reduced consumption owing to changed behavior by self-interested customers.

GS3 – AGRICULTURE – MAJOR CROPS

FALL IN PROCUREMENT OF WHEAT

54. **Frequent policy flip-flops are bad for farmers as well as consumers**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Frequent policy flip-flops are bad for farmers as well as consumers**” published in **Livemint** on **19th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Agriculture

Relevance: Wheat export ban, food inflation

Context: In a sudden move, the central government banned the export of wheat on 13th May, a day after retail inflation numbers for April were released.

It was wheat inflation at 9.6% that triggered this panic reaction.

None of it was unexpected, given the trend so far. The Food and Agriculture Organisation food index has been at its highest since the series began, driven by inflation in edible oil and cereals.

Wheat prices have been rising since November and gained pace after the Russia-Ukraine war.

How did India go from making claims of ensuring global food security to worrying about its own in just a month?

The reason appears to be a **lack of understanding of the agrarian economy** or its food security impact.

What factors did the Govt failed to consider?

It was known that **wheat production would suffer** due to **extreme heat waves**, which damaged standing crops. While the government revised its production estimate down by only 5.7% to 105 million tonnes, actual output may be even lower.

Russia-Ukraine war: That wheat prices were rising internationally was also known months in advance. With the Russia-Ukraine war, there was a clear indication that global markets would

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witness a **25-30% fall in supply**, given the dominant share of these two countries in the global wheat trade. This information was available and used by traders to pay higher prices to farmers for grains. It was obvious even to the government, given the low arrival of grains at public procurement centres. As against our target of 44 million tonnes, actual procurement has been **less than 20 million tonnes**.

[What steps could have been taken?](#)

Relaxing the quality of wheat procurement will help, but is too little, too late.

A **bonus over the minimum support price**. This would not only have allowed the government to meet its procurement target on time, but also provided better prices to farmers. Instead, the government allowed private traders and speculators to take advantage of the situation and mop up supplies from the market. These were mostly bought for exports, but are now trapped by the ban.

[How domestic food security is being impacted by shortage of wheat?](#)

There's been a **cut-back in the NFSA allocation of wheat** in several states, many of them mainly wheat-consuming states.

The entire allocation under the PMGKAY for major wheat-consuming states Bihar and Uttar Pradesh has been withdrawn. The offer to replace these with rice shows a **confused bureaucratic approach** that assumes people can change their dietary preferences and tastes according to government fiat.

[What is the overall negative impact of the policy uncertainty?](#)

First, the Govt created a hype of a bumper crop and made claims that India had the ability to feed the entire world and the only reason it was not able to do so currently was due to WTO's rules.

Just a day before the export ban, India announced sending trade delegations to nine countries, including Morocco, Tunisia, Indonesia and Thailand, to explore opportunities for exporting wheat.

Then after all this hype, Govt put an export ban on wheat.

Such sudden decisions and overall policy uncertainty can have the following negative impacts:

– **uncertainty over government policies**.

– Apart from sending mixed signals to farmers and traders, it also reflects a **lack of understanding of the domestic food and agricultural economy**. At a time when inflation is likely to erode real purchasing power, especially in rural areas and of the poor, the withdrawal of NFSA and PMGKAY wheat allocations will worsen lives.

– But a far worse outcome would be a **loss of faith in public policy**.

55. [Lessons for today from India's 2006 wheat crisis](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**Lessons for today from India's 2006 wheat crisis**" published in **The Indian Express** on **19th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Agriculture

Relevance: Wheat shortage in India

News: India faced a wheat crisis in 2006. The present article lists out the reasons that caused it and lessons that can be learnt.

The author of this article was appointed as the Secretary of Food and Public Distribution during that time.

[What was the situation in 2006 and the reasons behind it?](#)

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– **Centre decides to liquidate its excess stock:** The central pool had been carrying large stocks and there was wide criticism that these were being held for no good reason and costing the taxpayer huge sums of money. The government had, after due consideration, decided to liquidate some stocks with the FCI for export.

– **Procurement begins to go down:** Coincidentally, procurement had started going down from a high of 20.6 MMT to 15.8 MMT in 2003-04, to 14.8 MMT in 2005-06. This trend and the resultant depletion of stocks went “unnoticed”.

Procurement in 2006-07 (April-March) at 9.23 MMT was **far below** the requirement.

The **buffer stocks were drawn down by 2 MMT**.

Hence, the stock position at the end of a poor procurement season had put the government in a tight spot.

What were the reasons behind the 2006 food crisis?

The thought that India has a food surplus and can feed its people and “the world” resulted in the **unintended depletion of public stocks**.

The **reduction in public stocks without reviewing the production and stock position** every quarter was ill-planned.

Overlooking the drop in production almost every alternate year, particularly in 2000-01, 02-03, and 04-05 followed by 05-06 proved costly.

Not estimating the impact of climate change (high temperatures) on production — grain formation and grain size/weight — turned out to be critical.

– The Department of Food, overconfident about procuring large quantities, believing that the crop size estimated by the Ministry of Agriculture is above 75 MMT, went about disposing of old stocks. By the time the third advance estimates came by end of May (*there were no drones or satellite imagery in those days*), the damage was done.

No data about private stocks: The government depended on only production and public stock data to take policy decisions, ignoring the importance of private stocks in the market.

What can India do to avoid such errors?

Set up systems to get reliable and timely estimates of crops. The second advance estimates come in mid-February and the third in mid/ late May. Food management requires a better picture by early March (same for kharif).

The National Crop Forecasting system including “FASAL soft” will have to be reset.

The much-hyped **Drone-Artificial Intelligence-Blockchain technologies should be deployed** to do a simple thing: Prepare a **correct estimate** of the crop well in time, for the government to plan and act ahead of any crisis.

Reliable price data has always been a missing link in policy planning. **Mandatory reporting of price** (not just the APMC price data) of all large (limits can be defined) transactions are a must. Price movement is an important indicator of the supply-demand mismatch.

The government should be aware of the quantum of private stocks, preferably in anonymised, aggregated formats. This needs legal backing. A **provision to mandate the submission of anonymised stock data** from all warehouses should be put in place.

The futures market remains grossly under-utilised. A **vibrant futures market** can help plan better. A futures market should be allowed to function without knee-jerk interventions from the government.

A **robust system (drones, satellites, ground data) to monitor weather conditions** like temperature, moisture stress, etc needs to be put in place immediately with a focus on key crops and major growing regions.

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With the expertise available in the country today, **algorithms can be built to assess the impact of weather and pest events on crop** size and quality. The government needs this information more than anyone else.

56. **Boon to ban: How the wheat export story changed in two months**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Boon to ban: How the wheat export story changed in two months**” published in **The Hindu** on **18th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy **Relevance:** Export of Wheat

News: On May 13, the government effectively banned the export of wheat.

Why were wheat exports banned?

On May 4, the government revised down its wheat production estimates from **111.32 million tonnes (MT)** to **105 MT** for the crop year ending June.

– **18 MT** of wheat were procured till May 14 of the ongoing 2022-23 marketing year, much less than the **36.7 MT** in the year-ago period.

So,

- the **decrease in production estimates** and
- a **considerable fall in wheat procurement**

raised concerns that domestic consumption may get impacted.

Moreover, the **local prices started to rise**. In March, the wholesale inflation of wheat crossed the 14% mark, though it eased a bit to about 10% in April.

In April, retail inflation of wheat flour accelerated to 9.59% from an already higher 7.77% in March. As of May 17, the average retail price of wheat flour was ₹33.05 per kg. The maximum price had touched ₹59/kg.

These factors forced the government to ban wheat exports on May 13, two days after the decision to send delegates to nine countries to explore the option of enhancing exports was taken.

What led to the decrease in production?

The **extreme temperatures** recorded in March and April, across north India, were the reason behind the sudden turnaround of the government. **For instance**, across Punjab, between April 8 and 14, the maximum temperature was over **6°C higher than the usual**, compared to the long period average.

The extreme heat led to a **marked decrease in wheat yields across north India**. Hence, the wheat arrivals in Punjab’s mandis were 20% lower in the first twenty days of the 2022 season compared to the same period in 2021.

57. **What explains India’s U-turn on wheat exports?**

Source: This post is created based on the article “What explains India’s U-turn on wheat exports?” published in Live Mint on 16th May 2022. This post is created based on the article “Government ban on wheat exports hurts farmers and traders, dents India’s image as a reliable global supplier” published in Indian Express on 16th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Agriculture – Cropping pattern and marketing of farm sector

News: Union government has recently banned the exports of wheat.

However, there are certain conditions, under which exports will be allowed:

First, where an irrevocable letter of credit has already been issued.

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Second, one window has been kept open for the neighboring countries in the notification. It says export will be allowed to other countries “based on the request of their governments”. It will be helpful in ensuring supplies to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal

What are the factors that led to the ban on exports of wheat in India?

Heatwaves at the end of March, have impacted the production of food grains, especially in northwest India.

The government has revised the wheat production estimates, lowering them by 6 million tonnes. Wheat prices have increased nearly 20% and prices of essential food items such as Atta has risen nearly 15% last year.

The government has given its reasons for export ban, i.e. to check prices and curb hoarding.

What are the implications of the wheat exports ban?

First, India is the world’s second-largest wheat producer and countries were expecting India to fill the gap created due to the Ukraine-Russia war.

Agriculture ministers from the G7 condemned India’s decision to withhold wheat exports amid a global grain shortage.

Second, Indian wheat traders have lost the opportunity to gain from the global grain shortage. Building export markets and establishing supportive infrastructure, like warehousing, takes time. Such policy decisions will create more difficulties in it.

Third, it will be a loss for farmers as well because the market price of wheat had become higher than MSP. Many farmers were preferring to sell in the market. It led to the highest purchase of wheat by private traders in Punjab in the last 8 years.

Fourth, it will raise questions about the farm trade policy’s credibility. Signs of low output due to March heat were already visible, still, the delegation was sent abroad by the commerce ministry with the slogan Indian farmers “feeding the world”.

GS3 AGRICULTURE - ISSUES RELATED TO FARMERS

SUSTAINABLE FARMING IN INDIA

58. **Direct paddy sowing reaps benefits**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Direct paddy sowing reaps benefits**” published in the Business Standard on 16th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Major Crops – Cropping Patterns in various parts of the country, – Different Types of Irrigation and Irrigation Systems.

Relevance: Sustainable Agriculture; Less water-intensive cropping methods; Direct Paddy sowing method

News: Recently, the Haryana government has announced a **higher incentive** of ₹ 10,000 per hectare for the **direct planting of rice**.

What are the issues in present rice cropping practice?

At present, rice growers generally use much **more water** than the crop **actually needs**. Around **40-45%** of the water used for irrigation goes to paddy alone.

There is a mistaken belief that paddy is an **aquatic plant** that needs waterlogged fields. But they do not necessarily need flooding all the time.

The **constant submergence** causes loss of **applied plant nutrients** due to leaching. It encourages the proliferation of **pests** and **diseases**. Further, it increases emissions of **methane**

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into the environment. Unsurprisingly, nearly 10% of the methane emission come from paddy fields.

The **water table** is declining rapidly in areas where such a cropping practice is done. For example, the water table in Punjab is receding, on average, by about one meter every year.

What are the causes behind the flooding of rice fields?

Free or subsidized supply of power and diesel for running water pumps. For example, the **intensive rice-wheat growing belt** in the Indo-Gangetic plain, particularly Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh are notorious for splurging water.

What are the solutions?

Changing Cropping Pattern: This includes replacing paddy with another **equally lucrative** but less **water-consuming crop**. However, this option may face a primary challenge from the **policy of open-ended rice procurement** at pre-determined prices.

Direct Paddy direct seeding method: This is the method that can be used instead of taking the **transplanting route**. This can **promote economical** and **efficient use of water**. In fact, this is a more **practical option** for the government to promote and farmers to adopt.

About the direct seeding method

Under this system, dry or pre-germinated seeds are sown straight in the fields with the help of **seed-drill machines**. The **laser land leveling equipment** should be used to level (perfectly even) the farmland. In addition, the menace of weeds can be tackled by **spraying herbicides** prior to sowing or after seed planting.

This technique originally experimented for medium to heavy textured soils. But it could be used even on relatively **light-textured sandy loam** and **loam soils** as well. Therefore, this can be adopted by farmers in a large part of the country including the **rain-dependent areas**.

Benefits of Direct Seeding

It ensures a normal harvest with substantially **lower water consumption**. It also does away with the **labour** and **cost-intensive operations**, such as nursery planting, soil puddling, and seedling transplanting.

Likewise, it cuts down the consumption of water by 20-35%. Furthermore, it also cut the requirement for diesel and power by nearly 40%.

It helps **save, 3540 man-days of labour** for every hectare of cropland. It involves lower cash inputs. Not only that, but it improves soil health and fertiliser-use efficiency. At last, it results in higher crop output, thereby, raising the net profits.

It **reduces methane emission from paddy fields**. In addition, the method also allows the crop to mature seven to 10 days earlier than normal. Therefore, farmers have more time to appropriately manage paddy stubbles instead of torching them to cause air pollution.

The Way Forward

The system is already gaining popularity in **unirrigated lands** in many states. It got a major boost during the Covid-19 pandemic. As there was paucity of labour due to **reverse migration**. Therefore, farmers were forced to look for less **labour-intensive ways** of growing rice. For instance, In Punjab, about 600,000 hectares of paddy was planted with this method last year.

The governments can offer **incentives** to promote direct seeding of rice in areas where agro-ecological conditions permit the deployment of this technology.

DEFENCE TECH IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

59. [For a stronger navy, India needs to fast-track the submarine project](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “For a stronger navy, India needs to fast-track the submarine project” published in Indian Express on 16th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Defence technologies

News: Recently, the French defence major, Naval Group, announced its inability to participate in India’s Project 75-I.

Russian and German submarine builders have also withdrawn from this project earlier.

India’s Project 75-I

Under this project, conventional (non-nuclear or diesel-electric) submarines are to be built domestically.

What are the issues with India’s Submarine project?

Installation of an air independent propulsion system (AIP): Conventional submarines are propelled underwater by electric-power. The submarine has to periodically expose itself to draw air for running generators that charge their battery-banks. Many European countries are thus trying to develop an air independent propulsion system. India’s contract for license-production of six Scorpenes was without including this system. Whereas Pakistan Navy (PN) may field up to 11 AIP-equipped boats by 2028.

Delays: The programme saw huge delays over contractual issues. The sixth and last submarine was launched in April 2022, a full 17 years after signing of the contract.

Trials: DRDO has developed an indigenous AIP system, based on electrolytic fuel cells. This system produces energy by combining hydrogen and oxygen with only water as the waste product. This AIP system will be subjected to stringent underwater trials before the Indian Navy can accept it. Now the challenge is (a) who will provide a submarine for trials? (b) Who will undertake installation and conduct trials? (c) And most crucially, who in our system will take such crucial decisions in a timely manner?

Now DRDO and its partners have to look for a foreign collaborator for P-75I who will install the indigenous AIP on the selected submarine and conduct collaborative trials.

Previous plans: In 1999, the government accorded approval to a “30-Year Submarine Building Plan.” The program envisaged the simultaneous serial production of two types of submarines in separate shipyards; 1) advanced submarine of imported design, 2) a home-grown product, designed by our own naval architects with foreign assistance. However, the project was stalled due to delays in decision-making.

EMPLOYMENT INTENSIVE GROWTH

60. **Three development models that can guide Indian state economies**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Three development models that can guide Indian state economies**” published in the **Live Mint** on **20th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy, Issues and challenges in the growth and development of India.

Relevance: The state development models in India

News: At present, India’s economic policymakers are trying to look after potential stagflation.

Possible long-term strategies for high, employment-intensive growth

Three broad groups of states are identifiable, each with a distinct development model.

Bihar model

Coverage: The model is generally found in a group of the **least developed states** which includes Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam and all the north-eastern states, among others.

Features: In this model, the states are growing at rates comparable to the **national average**. They have **very low per capita incomes**, the share of industry in the state’s gross domestic product (GSDP) is below the national average.

Further, there is a lack of modern industrial hubs, few existing large industrial units are often state-owned, there is a weak backward or forward linkage with the local economy.

These states have low levels of **human or social development** and **infrastructure development**.

The workforce depends upon agriculture, the non-agricultural workforce is mainly engaged in low-productivity, and low-wage jobs in thousands of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Problems

These states have a large size of government relative to GSDP: 26% compared to the 17% national average.

Government expenditure is **heavily dependent** on central transfers rather than the state’s own resources: over 59% as compared to the national average of just over 36%.

Solution

Cooperative federalism is important in **accelerating inclusive development** in these states.

If the government expenditure is strategically deployed, then it can significantly impact the development trajectory of the state.

Gujarat model

Coverage: It includes a group of fast-growing state like Gujarat, Haryana and Telangana.

Features: They have a high per capita income, nearly 6 times that of Bihar. A large share of its workforce is still dependent on agriculture. The share of industry in GSDP is at 44% (way above the national average).

The state’s growth is driven by **traditional industries** like agro-processing, **modern industries** like pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, IT services and modern financial services.

In fact, infrastructure is highly developed.

Problems

These state’s lag behind the country’s leading states in social development, such as education and health outcomes. This challenges the quality of human resources which determines competitiveness.

Causes of problem

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The **deficit** in education and health outcomes is due to the relatively small size of government expenditure (only 11% of GSDP). Further, much of the spending goes to physical infrastructure.

Tamil Nadu Model

Coverage: This includes industrialized states/UTs like Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Maharashtra. Kerala too

Features: These are **prosperous states** with high per capita income. These are India's most industrialized states. In addition, the Industrials sector accounts for over **34% share** in GSDP. Unlike Gujarat, the share of its workforce in agriculture is not above 30%. There is high social development indicated by high life expectancy.

The state's dependence on **central transfers** is also quite low, in fact lower than Gujarat's. Much of the achievements have been despite **Tamil Nadu government's expenditure** well below the national average.

Solutions

The Tamil Nadu model of development is thus the most successful model under Indian conditions.

The states should improve their power situation and leverages on **science and technology research institutions** to emerge as a knowledge economy hub.

Way Forward

The **three development models** described above spell out a roadmap for long-term development in different states.

States following the Tamil Nadu model should stay the course and do more of the same.

States that follow the Gujarat model should course correct, prioritizing education and health services

States that have followed the Bihar model should switch to the Tamil Nadu model. They need strong central government support to do so.

Further, the labour migration from Bihar model states to Gujarat model states and especially Tamil Nadu model states will serve as the **market-based adjustment** within the country.

INFORMAL ECONOMY AND RELATED ISSUES

61. Mundka fire is a symptom of all that ails the informal sector

Source: The post is based on an article "**Mundka fire is a symptom of all that ails the informal sector**" published in the **Indian Express** on **17th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Disaster Management, Infrastructure (Urban Infrastructure)

Relevance: Fire Incidents, Informal Sector

News: Recently, a fire broke out at **Delhi's Mundka**, with a death toll of 27 persons so far. A majority of the persons who died in the incidents were women workers in informal manufacturing units.

What issues have been exposed the fire incident in our urban areas?

The reports on buildings catching fire leading to fatalities exposes the picture of **illegal constructions** and **unplanned infrastructural development** in urban centres. The buildings do not have required **fire clearance** and **no-objection certificates (NOC)** from concerned authorities. For example, the norms of construction were not followed in the building involved in the Mundka mishap.

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The incident underscores the **invisibilities** and **insecurities of informal workers** in the city. This shows the lack of identity of informal sector workers.

Although **enquiry commissions** are instituted and assurances are made of **tightening procedures**. But no substantial change takes place at the ground level. Such incidents keep on repeating.

There are thousands of **unregistered/informal industrial units** functional in cities like Delhi. These workplaces violate all norms, including basic labour laws.

What is the nature of informal industrial units in urban areas?

Working conditions: There are extremely poor working conditions, like Poorly ventilated workplaces, dilapidated buildings and violation of even the basic norms of occupational safety requirements, shady and stingy rooms, inadequate safety precautions, the provision of drinking water and toilet facilities are often denied to workers

The **quality of jobs** is very poor in the **informal establishments**, especially for women. For example, long working hours, absence of any leave, including maternity leave, dusty among other things.

Most of the workers are young in their 20s or 30s. They are **migrants** with **poor economic conditions**. They are forced to join the labour market in **low-paid** and **highly-informal jobs**.

There is often a clear separation of tasks for men and women. Women workers are involved in packing or as helpers that are the lowest skilled.

Wages are kept **very low** in the informal units because the **labour pool** remains massive and the job profiles **do not require** much **skill**. The living expenses have soared. Thus, a dignified life is beyond imagination. Many women workers are often the sole earners or primary earners of their households.

Due covid-induced resultant decline in work opportunities and household income, women are compelled to join employment to compensate for the loss of employment or declined income of male household members.

There is poor enforcement of the labour laws by the **enforcement machinery** as the corruption has entered into administration.

What are the consequences of such an informal sector?

There are limited **opportunities** for **personal** or **economic advancement**, with monotonous repetitive work filling the day. The conditions expose the issues in **economic empowerment** of women.

What are the issues in The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (OSHWC)?

There are anxieties that **the new labour codes** will add to the vulnerability of informal workers. The code has left the compliance to the small units themselves. They will follow prescribed safety conditions themselves. This can go unaccountable.

Way Forward

The accountability of employers should be increased. In addition, the political will can improve working conditions.

CYBERSECURITY AND RELATED ISSUES

62. **How to strengthen cyber security the right way**

Source: This post is based on the article “How to strengthen cybersecurity the right way” published in **The Indian Express** on 17th May 22.

Syllabus: GS3 – Information Technology

Relevance: CERT-In directions on cybersecurity compliance

Context: On 28th April, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) issued “directions” under Section 70-B(6) of the IT Act 2000 relating to information security practices, procedure, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents.

These directions have expanded the scope of obligations of the above requirements compared to the IT (The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team and Manner of performing functions and duties) Rules, 2013 (Rules).

Some of the provisions in the absence of clarification from CERT-In have raised concerns amongst industry observers and cyber security experts.

What are the obligations under the new directions?

Among the activities in which compliance is sought by service providers, intermediaries, data centres and body corporates are the –

- **Synchronisation of computer clocks** to the network time protocol set at the National Physical Laboratory and National Informatics Centre (NIC)
- **Mandatory reporting of all cyber incidents** within six hours of noticing or being brought to their notice in the prescribed format
- **Designating point of contact and notifying CERT-In** and undertaking to perform such actions for cybersecurity mitigation when notified by CERT-IN
- **Maintaining all logs of all ICT systems** up to 180 days within Indian jurisdiction and for data centres, virtual private network service providers, cloud service providers and virtual private server providers to maintain all records of their users and usage for a minimum of five years.

What are the concerns with the new directions?

The directions **do not differentiate between the scales and nature of the incident**. Some cyber incidents are far more common and occur regularly. An organisation might receive hundreds of phishing emails and the effort to notify each would drastically **increase their compliance cost**.

A window of 60 days has been provided before implementation of these compliances begins. Given the scale of the revamp, this might be **too short** a window. The government must look at the concerns that arise from such directions and work out a realistic timescale. In this case, there will be multiple companies even from the MSME sector that will **take time to set up systems for compliances**.

At present, most entities maintain logs for around 30 days, and in order to maintain logs for 180 days, the **additional data storage device cost** would be huge.

- Similarly, data centres, virtual private server providers, cloud service providers and virtual private network service providers **will need to retain additional information for five years or more** after the cancellation or withdrawal of registration.
- The virtual asset industry too will have to **maintain all KYC records and details of all financial transactions for five years**.

The compliance cost in each case is going to rise substantially.

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Many of the entities will have to shift their servers geographically as well as add excess storage capacity. Most importantly, the **recruitment of additional manpower for compliance may take far longer**. A realistic timeline would be six months, which would allow the entities to effectively migrate to the new regime.

The **penalty for non-compliance is stiff** (including up to one year of imprisonment and monetary fines). But it is also unfair to create unrealistic deadlines for industry.

Privacy concerns: With VPNs and virtual asset wallets being asked to store and share KYC and transaction data, these concerns become evident. In the **absence of legislative backing for data protection in India**, the question is: How will the user have any say on which information can be held back or how his sensitive personal information is being protected?

Way forward

While CERT-In has been proactive in recognising the changing frontiers of technology and trying to deal with unknown cyber threats, it is wanting in terms of a **graded approach** to ensuring compliance.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND GROWTH

REGULATION OF DIGITAL MARKETS

63. **Digital markets must be defined well for competition regulation**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Digital markets must be defined well for competition regulation**” published in **Livemint** on **16th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Industrial policy and growth

Relevance: Regulation of digital markets

Context: Digital markets operate differently than traditional markets. Hence, the rise of the digital sector has presented **unique challenges for Indian regulatory authorities**, including the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

Further, several issues emerging from the growth of digital markets are being analysed by regulators in other countries simultaneously, resulting in a **lack of guidance from other jurisdictions**.

There is growing demand, worldwide and in India, to hold digital platforms responsible and accountable for adverse impacts caused by them. This is evidenced by recent investigations initiated by the CCI into the operations of digital platforms such as Google, WhatsApp, Apple, Zomato, Swiggy, etc.

Proper assessments of **relevant markets** is needed, so that India’s digital emergence story doesn’t end up stifled by over-regulation.

How a relevant market can be defined?

The Competition Act of 2002 requires the CCI to define a ‘relevant market’ based on what is regarded as **interchangeable or substitutable by a consumer** (“Relevant Market Test”).

The factors required for consideration by the CCI while defining a ‘relevant market’ include

- the physical characteristics or end use of goods
- prices of goods or services
- consumer preferences
- Regulatory trade barriers
- Local specification requirements

What has been the CCI’s approach so far?

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Until 2016, while defining a ‘relevant market’ for e-commerce companies and marketplaces (such as Snapdeal, Ebay, Yepme, Cloudfair, etc), the CCI **viewed online and offline segments as different channels of distribution and not different relevant markets.**

In 2018, when examining a complaint filed against e-commerce companies that alleged ‘abuse of dominance’ by way of predatory pricing and preferential treatment to certain sellers, the **CCI diverged from its initial view** and recognized the possibility of a distinction between online and offline segments.

In October 2019, the CCI drew a defined distinction in its prima facie order initiating a probe against MakeMyTrip by defining the ‘relevant market’ in its case as “*the market for online intermediation services for booking of hotels in India*”. This case is still under consideration.

What needs to be done?

Given the pace at which the digital sector is expanding in India, and the emergence of several issues prompted by this growth, it is essential that the **CCI carefully consider the question of ‘relevant market’**, and more particularly, the question of whether the online and offline distribution segments of such a market are substitutable in each case and industry.

A ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to this question will prove unsatisfactory, given the large variation in business models today and the significant number of businesses that have add-on ‘online’ delivery channels.

Accordingly, the **CCI should define a ‘relevant market’ in the digital sector** by taking into consideration all substitutable and interchangeable products or services for each industry, including what’s available offline.

CCI should **conduct market surveys to explore consumer preferences, habits and dependence on digital platforms**, on a case-to-case basis. It needs to reach out to consumers on a wider scale and not limit its analysis to secondary studies or surveys.

Way forward

It is critical that the CCI’s approach in digital markets is well considered, consistent and proportionate, so that the digital sector gets space for growth while safeguarding the interests of competition and consumers.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES

64. [How to tackle the inflation spiral](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**How to tackle the inflation spiral**” published in the **Indian Express** on **18th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy, Effects of liberalization on the Indian Economy

Relevance: Macroeconomic Situation

News: Recently, The World Economic Outlook, published by the IMF in April, expects global growth to be slower than the forecast made in January, with inflation on the rise.

The global macroeconomic situation is showing signs of **macro instability**. The global debt has increased sharply during the pandemic, inflation is on the rise, and macroeconomic uncertainties have increased due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine.

What are the causes?

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Inflation has been caused due to **war**; and **fiscal** and **monetary expansion** that happened during the pandemic. This was witnessed in both the **G20 emerging markets** and developing countries like Brazil, Turkey, India and Indonesia.

As per the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department, there has been **revenue foregone** and **additional expenditure** during Covid.

The problem of rising debt and inflation is going to compound macro challenges for the low-income **developing countries**.

Globally, the total support comprising **revenue foregone**, **expenditure stimulus** and **liquidity support** was estimated to be \$17,000 billion. Out of this, the government guarantees were one-fourth of the total. In case of default, it can weaken the fiscal balance sheet in the medium term for items that are below the line at the moment.

There has been an increase in **money supply** during the last two years to **support governments** to deal with Covid..

There has been an increase in money supply due to the **government operation** and the central bank's support to the government during Covid. In the year 2020, this support increased to 9%. In addition, the growth of the US central bank's support to the government had increased immediately after **the global financial crisis** in 2010.

According to **the IMF international debt statistics** for 2022, both **domestic** and **external debt stock** increased sharply during the pandemic. The external debt stock to the export ratio, export to debt service ratio and the share of public sector external debt in total external debt has shown increase for low-and middle-income countries during this period.

Way Forward

The central banks in many countries including India have raised interest rates for **inflation management**.

Reduction of debt takes time, but management of inflation can't wait.

The global economy needs **coordinated policy** for **monetary tightening** and **fiscal sustainability**.

There is a need to start **fiscal normalisation** without creating adverse distributional consequences. For this, every country needs to chart out a **fiscal normalisation plan** which are sequenced in a proper manner to bring back global economy on track,

There is a need to enhance fiscal resources for the government for **public investment** in the social and economic sector

The government should also create a framework for **sector-specific differentiated responses** for a full recovery.

There is a need for a **quick** and **efficient resolution** of the challenges arising due to the elevated debt levels of **low-income countries**.

There should be greater **international cooperation** to ensure more resource flow to the poorer regions of the World. This will lead to an equitable, fair and sustained recovery during post-Covid.

FUNCTIONING OF THE RBI

65. **Central banks and the rule of law**

Source: This post is based on the article “Central banks and the rule of law” published in **Business Standard** on **19th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Functioning of the RBI

Context: Two recent developments in India underline the need to inspire the rule of law in the functioning of central banks (CBs).

What are these two recent developments and the reasons behind it?

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) normally makes policy announcements in line with a predictable schedule. But on May 4, **it went off the schedule and increased the policy rate by 40 basis points**. Markets were surprised by this and the 10-year government bond yield jumped. The inflationary outlook had not changed between the last MPC meeting of April 8 and the off-schedule announcement of May 4. So, why the RBI did this?

– **One possibility relates to the exchange rate**. Over the last year, the US dollar has appreciated by 8%. Holding other things constant, this means the normal rupee depreciation should be about 8%. The RBI seems to be countering this by selling reserves, and by responding to the large hike by the US Fed that was coming a few hours after the RBI’s surprise announcement.

The second development is the **public statement of the co-founder and chief executive officer of a NASDAQ-listed crypto exchange** that his company disabled the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) system from its platform due to informal pressure from the RBI. The company had earlier announced that they would build systems in India whereby investors could receive/send money using UPI. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) came out with a negative press release, and all Indian banks refused to do business with the exchange. Such ostracisation by banks, with or without the involvement of the RBI, is tantamount to **violating the Supreme Court order** striking down the RBI ban on cryptocurrency.

What are the recommendations of FSLRC wrt integrating rule of law in and independence of financial agencies?

Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission (FSLRC) recommended three pillars:

Pillar one- Regulation-making function of all SRAs, which is relevant in India as the RBI has been given the role of financial regulation for the payments and banking industries (and some other components). There is a problem of **democratic legitimacy** when unelected officials write law.

– The solution lies in **technical expertise** that is displayed, in consultation and control of all regulation-making process by an expert board where private persons have a majority. All these elements address the problem of “the administrative state”, the rule of officials, and generate legitimacy in the writing of law by the agency.

Pillar two – Executive functions of investigations, prosecutions and punishments. There is a case for **political independence** here. It should not be possible for the political masters to trigger punishments for their enemies.

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– This requires processes, encoded in parliamentary law, which enshrine separation of powers, define and limit the powers of investigation, require due process in prosecutorial decisions, hygiene in how hearings take place, etc.

Pillar three: Monetary Policy is defined as the control of the short interest rate of the economy. There is a role for political independence here.

– It should not be possible for the political masters to trigger a rate cut prior to a tough election. Most of the developed world has gravitated towards an independent expert MPC structure for the discharge of this function.

What are some other issues with the functioning of RBI?

The mandate of RBI at present has an improbable combination of functions, ranging from running an exchange to investment banking for the Union government and state governments.

The **sheer scope of this mandate** induces innumerable conflicts and rule of law concerns.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS, SURVEYS

DROUGHT IN NUMBERS REPORT

66. **The UN report that highlights India's vulnerability to drought**

Source: The post is based on an article “**The UN report that highlights India's vulnerability to drought**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **19th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment and Ecology; and Disaster Management

Relevance: Drought, UNCCCD COP15

News: Recently, the Droughts in Numbers, 2022 report was presented by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

What is the Drought in Numbers Report?

The report is a collection of data on the **effects of droughts** on our ecosystem and the manner in which they can be mitigated through **efficient planning** for the future.

The report also gives information about negotiations that are undergoing at the **UNCCD's 15th Conference of Parties (COP15)** on key issues like drought, land restoration, and related aspects such as land rights, gender equality and youth empowerment.

What is UNCCD'S COP15?

UNCCD's COP15 focuses on **desertification, land degradation, and drought**. The theme for COP15 has been kept to be “**Land. Life. Legacy: From scarcity to prosperity.**”

The conference has brought together **government representatives, private sector members, and civil society stakeholders** to ensure that land continues to benefit present and future generations. They are expected to **brainstorm** sustainable ideas to further land restoration and drought resilience, focusing on “**future-proofing** land use.

It proposes to tackle “**the interconnected challenges of land degradation, climate change, and biodiversity loss**” in the ongoing **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-30)**.

The UNCCD envisions restoring **one billion hectares** of degraded land by 2030, creating a **land degradation-neutral world**.

What are the findings of the report?

The number and duration of droughts around the world has increased by an alarming 29% since 2000.

As per the report, Globally, droughts have caused **economic losses** of approximately \$124 billion between 1998 and 2017 due to severe droughts. Similarly, India's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** reduced by 2 to 5% in the same period.

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Pattern of drought emergencies between 2020 and 2022: It has revealed that **many parts of India** fall under the list of regions that are **vulnerable** to droughts globally.

Human impact: Drought is the **second-worst disaster** after flooding. For example, Africa was the worst hit, with 134 droughts, of which 70 occurred in East Africa.

It affected more than **a billion people** around the world between 2000-19. The **worst sufferers** are **women and girls**, especially in emerging and developing countries. The droughts impact their education, nutrition, health, sanitation, and safety.

- For example, droughts cause water stress, therefore, women and girls who bear the disproportionate burden of water collection are forced to go out to fetch water during droughts.

The droughts lead to **water stress** and also impact **livestock** and **crops** in almost every part of the world.

Environmental aspects

If global warming reaches 3° C by 2100, drought can lead to 5 times higher **drought losses** than today's levels. The largest drought losses are projected in the **Mediterranean** and the **Atlantic regions** of Europe.

The droughts will intensify wildfires, which will threaten 84% of all terrestrial ecosystems. For example, **2019-2020 Australia's mega drought and wildfires** caused the killing or displacement of about three billion animals in addition to loss of their habitats.

According to a FAO Report 2017, around **12 million hectares of land** are lost each year due to **drought** and **desertification**.

Other aspects

According to the **World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)**, weather, climate and water hazards have accounted for 50% of all disasters and 45% of all reported deaths since 1970. Most of the deaths have occurred in developing countries.

According to **World Bank estimates**, **drought conditions**, along with other factors like water scarcity, declining crop productivity, rise in sea levels and overpopulation can force up to **216 million people** to migrate by 2050.

According to the report, climate change alone will cause 129 countries to experience an increase in drought exposure in the next few decades.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – GST AND RELATED ISSUES

SC'S VERDICT WRT GST COUNCIL

67. Let's keep GST good and simple

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

- **"A timely reminder"** published in **The Hindu** on **21st May 22**.
- **"Let's keep GST good and simple"** published in **Times of India** on **20th May 22**.
- **"Explained: The SC ruling that GST Council decisions are not binding on Centre or states"** published in **Indian Express** on **21st May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: GST and related issues, GST Council

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Context: The [Supreme Court ruled](#) on May 19th that the recommendations of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council only have persuasive value, and cannot be binding on the Centre and states.

It should be noted that the case – *Union of India vs Mohit Minerals Pvt Ltd* – was dealing with the levy of Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) on ocean freight and not per se on central and state legislative powers.

Must Read: [Objection milords: SC's GST Council ruling is an overreach and can be hugely disruptive](#)

What are the concerns with the SC verdict?

There are concerns that after the SC decision is **various states will now begin pulling in different directions**, taking indirect taxes back to the VAT era.

The SC decision comes at a time when states have been very concerned about their ability to manage their fiscal situation once the compensation cess provided to counter revenue losses on account of GST comes to an end in June 2022. Suggestions by states to increase the period of the cess by two or three years, have not yet elicited any positive response from the Centre. In this situation, and given the SC ruling, there is concern on **whether the level of uniformity in GST legislation across states, presently in force, will continue in future.**

[How have the stakeholders reacted?](#)

Opposition-ruled States have hailed the verdict as upholding their rights *vis-à-vis* what a few termed as the 'arbitrary imposition' of Centre's decisions in the Council.

The Finance Ministry has sought to disperse the anxiety by indicating that the Court has only elaborated on the Council's existing arrangement and the status quo would continue. States can already reject the Council's decisions, but none has chosen to so far, it said.

[How has the GST Council performed so far?](#)

The GST Council has met 46 times till now and its decisions have largely been unanimous, indicating a **high level of fiscal maturity** and understanding between the Centre and states.

While some states have had divergent viewpoints on some issues, the Council however has been **effective in balancing the interests of the Centre and the states.**

It has also **dealt with various implementation issues** during the past five years and ensured that the overall aim – a common indirect tax across the country – is not diluted.

Way forward

There does not appear to be any reason for immediate alarm, as the **outcomes of GST Council meetings have largely been implemented** by all states till now.

– Also, both the Centre and states have worked on GST in a spirit of **cooperative federalism** and the uniformity in GST laws across states has benefited both consumers and manufacturers. At worst, the SC verdict can trigger **more contestations** in Council meetings, and at best, **infuse a fresh sense of responsibility** among members.

The Centre can **strive to be more conciliatory towards States' concerns and fiscal dilemmas.** The Council should also **meet more often** to nurture the critical fiscal federalism dialogue in the right direction and minimise trust deficits.

There are **many pending reforms that require the Centre to work more cohesively with States** to take India's economy forward and lift those left behind. **For instance:** An overhaul of land and labour markets as well as the agrarian sector.

What we need right now is a restatement of the principle of 'One Nation, One Tax', that it won't become a 'One Nation, Many Taxes' situation all over again.

GST should now move further along the path of **procedural simplification**, improving the ease of doing business. It is in essence a tax collected from consumers by businesses and paid to both

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central and state governments. Therefore, **collective views of both consumers and businesses should be duly considered** before considering any changes in the GST decision-making framework.

68. **Frequent policy flip-flops are bad for farmers as well as consumers**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Frequent policy flip-flops are bad for farmers as well as consumers**” published in **Livemint** on **19th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Agriculture

Relevance: Wheat export ban, food inflation

Context: In a sudden move, the central government banned the export of wheat on 13th May, a day after retail inflation numbers for April were released.

It was wheat inflation at 9.6% that triggered this panic reaction.

None of it was unexpected, given the trend so far. The Food and Agriculture Organisation food index has been at its highest since the series began, driven by inflation in edible oil and cereals. Wheat prices have been rising since November and gained pace after the Russia-Ukraine war.

How did India go from making claims of ensuring global food security to worrying about its own in just a month?

The reason appears to be a **lack of understanding of the agrarian economy** or its food security impact.

What factors did the Govt failed to consider?

It was known that **wheat production would suffer** due to **extreme heat waves**, which damaged standing crops. While the government revised its production estimate down by only 5.7% to 105 million tonnes, actual output may be even lower.

Russia-Ukraine war: That wheat prices were rising internationally was also known months in advance. With the Russia-Ukraine war, there was a clear indication that global markets would witness a **25-30% fall in supply**, given the dominant share of these two countries in the global wheat trade. This information was available and used by traders to pay higher prices to farmers for grains. It was obvious even to the government, given the low arrival of grains at public procurement centres. As against our target of 44 million tonnes, actual procurement has been **less than 20 million tonnes**.

What steps could have been taken?

Relaxing the quality of wheat procurement will help, but is too little, too late.

A **bonus over the minimum support price**. This would not only have allowed the government to meet its procurement target on time, but also provided better prices to farmers. Instead, the government allowed private traders and speculators to take advantage of the situation and mop up supplies from the market. These were mostly bought for exports, but are now trapped by the ban.

How domestic food security is being impacted by shortage of wheat?

There's been a **cut-back in the NFSA allocation of wheat** in several states, many of them mainly wheat-consuming states.

The entire allocation under the PMGKAY for major wheat-consuming states Bihar and Uttar Pradesh has been withdrawn. The offer to replace these with rice shows a **confused bureaucratic approach** that assumes people can change their dietary preferences and tastes according to government fiat.

What is the overall negative impact of the policy uncertainty?

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First, the Govt created a hype of a bumper crop and made claims that India had the ability to feed the entire world and the only reason it was not able to do so currently was due to WTO's rules.

Just a day before the export ban, India announced sending trade delegations to nine countries, including Morocco, Tunisia, Indonesia and Thailand, to explore opportunities for exporting wheat.

Then after all this hype, Govt put an export ban on wheat.

Such sudden decisions and overall policy uncertainty can have the following negative impacts:

– **uncertainty over government policies.**

– Apart from sending mixed signals to farmers and traders, it also reflects **a lack of understanding of the domestic food and agricultural economy.** At a time when inflation is likely to erode real purchasing power, especially in rural areas and of the poor, the withdrawal of NFSA and PMGKAY wheat allocations will worsen lives.

– But a far worse outcome would be a **loss of faith in public policy.**

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND ISSUES ARISING OUT OF IT

INEQUALITY AND RELATED ISSUES

69. Jobs scheme will not offer a long-term solution to urban unemployment. Safety nets need to better conceived

Source: This post is based on the article “**Jobs scheme will not offer a long-term solution to urban unemployment. Safety nets need to better conceived**” published in **The Indian Express** on **21st May 22.**

Syllabus: GS3 -Indian economy – Issues related to growth and development

Relevance: Tackling the rising inequality in India

Context: A few days ago, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister released a report on the state of inequality in India. The report, prepared by the Institute of Competitiveness, provides a detailed examination of the existing disparities in society.

Some of the suggestions to tackle rising inequality in India included putting in place an urban equivalent of MGNREGA and introducing a **universal basic income.**

These require careful consideration.

- For more on the report – Click [here](#)

Why the proposal for an urban employment guarantee scheme has been made?

The proposal to introduce an urban employment guarantee scheme comes in the backdrop of the pandemic, exposing the critical position of workers, especially those employed in the informal sector in urban areas.

It's also argued that not only would this provide employment during times of distress, but this would also **serve as a channel to push funds** through quickly in periods of stress.

Several states have in fact been experimenting with this concept. Recently, the Rajasthan government announced a scheme for urban areas — the Indira Gandhi Shahri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana — on the lines of MGNREGA.

What are the problems associated with the idea of an urban employment guarantee scheme?

First, such a scheme may simply **encourage migration**, which without the creation of the attending infrastructure, will only exert further **pressure on the crumbling facilities of these cities.**

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Second, demand for work under MGNREGA tends to move in line with the agricultural cycle. As such, it is seasonal in nature. However, in urban areas, there is **no such seasonality in either work demanded or unemployment**, complicating the design of such a scheme. And moreover, many of the migrant workers are unlikely to have the **requisite skills** needed for regular jobs in cities.

Third, it is also **debatable whether the educated but unemployed workers will take up these jobs**.

Fourth, there are **capacity constraints with the urban local bodies**, which are likely to be the implementing agencies.

Lastly, there is also the **question of financing** such a scheme at the national level.

Way forward

The proposal seeks to address the continuing employment and inequality crisis that plagues India. However, India's job challenge is **structural in nature**, owing in part to the absence of a labour-intensive manufacturing sector.

A more prudent approach would be for economic policy to **focus on boosting growth, lowering inequalities in opportunities, improving access to education and health, and providing pathways for upward mobility**.

GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – THREATS TO INTERNAL SECURITY

LEFT WING EXTREMISM

70. **Talking peace, negotiating with the Maoists**

Source: The post is based on an article “Talking peace, negotiating with the Maoists” published in the “The Hindu” on 21st May 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Internal Security

Relevance: Extremism in India

News: Recently, **the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh** announced that the State government was ready for peace talks with the Maoists provided they laid down arms and expressed their faith in the Constitution of India.

Earlier attempts

In 2010, the then Home Minister tried to bring the Maoists to the negotiating table. He asked them to halt violence and come to talk. In response, the Maoists placed **three pre-conditions** to a dialogue.

In 2014, the **Andhra Pradesh State government** lifted the ban on the party. Consequently, there was a **four-day peace dialogue** between the representatives of the People's War (PW) party and government. Maoists proposed a **11-point charter** of demands such as legislation on land ceiling; creation of a separate state of Telangana; and questions associated with armed action by either side. However, the **peace process collapsed mid-way** and the ban was re-imposed on the CPI(Maoist) and its sister organisations.

What are the major conditions of the Maoists?

First, the **'withdrawal of all-out war'**, i.e., a cessation of hostilities by both sides simultaneously, i.e., mutual ceasefire and not unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists.

Second, lifting of the ban on the party was necessary for peaceful legal work by the Maoists,

Third, the government should adhere to the **Constitution** and end the **illegal** arrests, tortures and murders in the name of encounters. The government was also required to release some leaders

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Should the Govt withdraw security forces from Maoist areas?

For

The government should **go ahead with the Maoist's demand of withdrawal of armed police forces** with a mutually agreed 'ceasefire'. For example, Maoists must abjure violence and the Security force's Anti-Maoist operations must be halted for some period.

Against

The State government cannot afford the risk of moving out security forces as a pre-condition for initiating peace talks. The Maoists misused the ceasefire during the 2004 peace talks in Andhra Pradesh.

Way Forward

The State governments should implement **the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996**.

The release of jailed Maoist leaders should not be made a pre-condition by the Maoists. In fact, the Chhattisgarh government has withdrawn criminal cases against many tribals and has also ensured expeditious trial of Naxal cases.

The government may give some **concessions** with regard to lifting a ban on the CPI(Maoist), the PLGA and its front organisations.

GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – DEVELOPMENTS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS AND EFFECTS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

SIMULATING GRAVITY

71. **Simulating gravity**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Simulating gravity**” published in the **Business Standard** on **20th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Developments in Science and Technology; Space Technology

Relevance: Artificial Gravity, Space Settlement

News: Recently, the **Orbital Assembly Corporation** announced a plan to develop a **space business park** (hotel) which will be made operational by 2025. The hotel will be equipped with **artificial gravity**.

Benefits of artificial gravity

It would keep astronauts **healthy** on long trips, prevent loss of **bone density** and **muscle atrophy**. For example, in **microgravity**, the fluids in the body shift upward to the head. This put pressure on the eyes and causes vision problems. This worsens humans' physical and mental health.

Further, the creation of artificial gravity can help humanity to **settle** on **celestial bodies** beyond Earth.

What are the proposals to create artificial gravity?

The first and considered most feasible is making a **spaceship rotate**. The inertia or the pseudo “**centrifugal force**” in such a scenario would be the basis of the solution to artificial gravity as was in the movie **2001: A Space Odyssey**.

– The **centrifuge solution** is worth considering when looked at for setting up space colonies. It is called **the O'Neill system**. In fact, the space company **Blue Origin** has shown interest in building O'Neill cylinders.

– Similarly, **centripetal acceleration** could be used and a person on board would feel the outer hull of a spaceship pushing him/her towards the centre.

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Second, another approach could be to use **electricity** and **magnetism** to substitute for **gravity**. The electricity will be run in circles to produce magnetism. This will result in a magnetic field. Astronauts would wear metal boots and the magnetic attraction should allow them to walk on the floor.

Third, the scientists could also **harness real gravity**. Everything with mass has gravity. Therefore, the scientists can go for creating a planet which will have enough gravity. The key might be to get a lot of mass into a very small area. **For instance**: A teaspoon of **neutron-star material** might be enough to give us gravity, or a tiny pencil prick of a **black hole**. Both of these are neither feasible nor possible currently.

Fourth, another idea is making **gravity generators**. A Russian engineer named **Eugene Podkletnov** has claimed to have designed and demonstrated **gravitomagnetic devices**. These devices consisted of rotating discs constructed from ceramic superconducting materials. The **string theory** does predict that gravity and electromagnetism could be unified in hidden dimensions. This can act as a way to “generate” gravity in the future.

What are the issues with these ideas?

At present, there is no confirmed technology that can simulate gravity, other than **actual mass** or **acceleration**. All the above-mentioned solutions are in the realms of concept and the fictions. In case of **centrifugal approach**, there is an issue of size. With rotating spacecraft, the radius of rotation grows with the square of the orbital period. The delivery of materials to space is very expensive. Such a concept was envisioned in the epic science fiction movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* released in 1968.

The **electricity and magnetic approach** would require a lot of **power supply** which is very difficult due to limited resources.

Creating a planet is easier said than done.

The **claim of gravity generators has not been verified by third parties**. In 2006, another research group created a similar device but the gravity created was very small. The process wasn't replicated.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

OIL PRICE RISE

72. **Crude Economics – Macro-Economic impacts of oil price rise**

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Crude Economics**“, published in **Business Standard** on **26th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3, Indian Economy – Energy

News: The level of crude oil prices often changes the macroeconomic outlook in India.

How do oil prices impact India's economic outlook?

India's macroeconomic outlook improves when oil prices are low and stable.

Whereas, a **rise in oil prices means a higher Current Account Deficit and pressure on the currency**. It also results in inflation and pressure on government finances.

High oil prices also lead to the **reversal of the price decontrol reforms**. For example, Oil Marketing Companies have stopped changing retail oil prices lately.

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As a result, the **system of under-recovery for OMCs is back**. Under-recovery for petrol is over Rs. 13 per liter and Rs 24 for diesel.

It is putting private retailers in a weak and harmful position. They don't have any pricing power, thus their business is becoming unsustainable. At present, they are looking to scale down their operations to cut losses. However, if the situation prevails, they may have to shut down their business.

It will **discourage any private investment** in this sector in the future. It will also become more difficult for the government to find investors for Bharat Petroleum Corporation.

What should be done?

Government must reduce its dependency on tax revenue from the petroleum sector. For instance, the contribution of the sector to the central exchequer was over Rs 4.55 trillion in 2020-21, which was 2.6 times more than in 2014-15.

Rationalization of taxes will make it easy to put them under the GST system. It will enable taxpayers to claim input credit and the government to impose a separate carbon tax.

A **review of both direct and indirect tax systems** is required, which could push up the tax-to-GDP ratio.

Government should **avoid interfering in pricing and implement price decontrol** effectively.

GIG ECONOMY AND RELATED ISSUES

73. [Indian gig workers may finally be getting a fairer deal](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Indian gig workers may finally be getting a fairer deal**” published in **Livemint** on **26th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Issues related to growth and development

Relevance: Gig economy and related issues

Context: Uber's recent announcement of new terms for drivers may prove revolutionary in the long history of labour relations, specifically wrt the Gig economy.

To work around the recurrent problem of drivers cancelling rides because they did not want to go to the destination or wanted a cash payment upfront rather than waiting for the company to reimburse them weekly, the cab hailing service is making that information available to drivers so that they can pick which rides to accept.

What are some recent issues faced by the Gig economy and the startup ecosystem?

First, poor working conditions and high fuel prices are making the retention of drivers and two-wheeler delivery personnel an uphill battle. Attrition at food delivery companies is estimated at around 40% every month.

Second, the US Federal Reserve's accelerated rate hikes this year mean that **funding might not come as easily as before**. India's low labour costs had made windfalls for startup founders even more dramatic. Unicorns were minted at rich-world valuations while the pay offered to 'delivery partners' stayed decidedly developing world. Last year, 40 new unicorns—companies with valuations of \$1 billion or more—were created in India.

Is India's startup growth slowing down, and why?

Yes.

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As The Economic Times reported on 28 April, in March and April, “four unicorns were minted in India compared to 10 during the same period last year. So far this month, no new unicorn rounds have been announced, against eight new ones in April 2021.

Reasons:

The backdrop for this slowdown is a global bear market. At the start of the May, the S&P 500 and US government bonds have fallen simultaneously for five or more weeks consecutively.

What is the economic situation in India?

Large consumer goods companies are reducing the size of packages of biscuits and detergents or raising prices. As volume and margin growth slows, and interest rates rise, **new investments will be postponed.**

Core inflation, notably of medical services and education, has been there for some time now and has likely cut into middle class spending on goods.

The Centre’s continual hikes of taxes on petrol and diesel over the past couple of years may have been necessary to keep its fiscal deficit in check, but it has also acted as a **consumption tax.**

Markers of middle-class prosperity as **sales of entry-level cars and two-wheelers are languishing.**

India’s middle class has been shrinking for a few years. Last March, Pew estimated 32 million Indians had fallen out of the middle class during the pandemic, amid a global drop in the size of the middle class.

This year’s **sharp rise in Indian inflation** even before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will have undermined the recovery in earning power for those working in restaurants and hotels, even as those industries continue to see a welcome rebound.

Way forward

India is set to face a 6%-plus inflation for the foreseeable future.

In the US, workers in labour-intensive industries are demanding and getting a better deal.

Thus, indexing petrol costs to payouts for gig economy drivers and delivery riders and giving them better working conditions marks a welcome socioeconomic shift, in India.

UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

74. Universal basic income plan faces implementation issues

Source: This post is based on the article “**Universal basic income plan faces implementation issues**” published in **Livemint** on **27th May 22.**

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy – Issues related to growth and development

Relevance: Universal Basic Income and related issues

News: Practical challenges in implementation have come in the way of rolling out a universal basic income scheme proposed by experts and mooted in the 2016-17 Economic Survey, an official privy to the government discussions said.

Background

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Universal basic income has often come before on the radar of policymakers as a means of support for the bottom of the pyramid, but designing the scheme has proven to be a big challenge.

The latest recommendation for such a scheme came earlier this month in a **report** commissioned by the economic advisory council to the PM on **income inequality**.

The idea of universal basic income, or a single unconditional income that reduces government efforts to ensure last-mile delivery of individual social security schemes, **first featured in the Economic Survey 2016-17** prepared by the then Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian.

– The suggestion then was that the scheme will **provide every citizen unconditional cash transfer** in place of the many benefits, like health facilities, fertilizer, fuel, food subsidies etc. The case for a single unconditional income is that it reduces government efforts to make sure individual schemes reach the right targets.

But over the years, the idea has turned from being a universal scheme to a **targeted scheme** that brings with it implementation challenges and problems in identifying the right beneficiaries.

[What are the challenges that have cropped up?](#)

For rolling out universal basic income, an **institutional mechanism** has to be in place.

Which **institution can do it, who are the eligible beneficiaries and how to track and verify the delivery of benefits on a large scale**—these are questions that need to be looked into before taking a decision on UBI.

Also, the problem in the scheme comes when **cut-offs are set and benefits** are targeted at certain groups, i.e. instead of being a universal scheme, a targeted scheme is aimed at.

Fiscal issues also surface when, rather than having a fixed budget for the scheme covering all citizens, cut-offs for various segments have to be worked out.

A targeted scheme cannot be called universal and this will also require **another round of Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC)** to get updated data on beneficiaries as the 2012 data is now outdated and does not provide the correct picture.

[Why a universal scheme would be unsustainable?](#)

In its original form of being a universal scheme, applicable for all Indian citizens, the scheme is expected to become unsustainably large, stretching the country's finances to a breaking point.

– Even going by the decade-old urban poverty line of ₹1,000 per person per month, providing UBI to about 1.3 billion citizens would cost the government **₹15.6 trillion a year**.

75. Time for us to work out a universal basic income

Source: This post is based on the article “**Time for us to work out a universal basic income**” published in **Livemint** on **23rd May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Issues related to growth and development

Relevance: Rising inequality and Universal Basic Income (UBI)

Context: India's debate on the need and feasibility of a **universal basic income (UBI) as an elementary safety net for all our citizens was revived again after the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister released a [report on inequality](#)**.

Regardless of divisions in opinion over the poverty levels in the country, inequality demands a bold policy response.

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What are the two key suggestions made in the report?

Urban employment guarantee scheme: It advocates fallback job options for urban Indians along the lines of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, which assures rural residents 100 days of pay-for-work each year for the asking.

Universal Basic Income (UBI): The report also supports a UBI, an idea that is still seen as somewhat radical in policy circles.

Must Read: [Issues with the idea of an urban employment guarantee scheme](#)

How has the pandemic affected the economy?

Large numbers of asset-poor suffered a **severe impact on their income**.

Modest earners had been hit hard by a formalization drive a few years earlier, while an overall slowdown of India's economy **worsened a job scarcity** that is yet to ease.

To be sure, free food rations and job handouts played vital roles in offering the poor relief. But the distress has spanned multiple socio-economic classes. Credible reports suggest that **even middle-class homes were pushed into poverty**.

What are the factors involved in the implementation of UBI in India?

For welfare efficiency, we should institute **leak-proof direct transfers** covering all adults.

Expensive scheme: No doubt, a UBI scheme would be expensive. For about a billion beneficiaries, it would cost an annual ₹12 trillion just for each adult to get a monthly ₹1,000.

– But what looks like **premature welfarism** today could well be affordable tomorrow as central coffers expand, especially if we cut inefficient fiscal expenses and urge the non-needy to opt out of UBI net.

An **eligibility cut-off** is sure to be proposed, but a **denial criterion** could defeat its inclusivity and pose barriers to upward mobility at that level.

As for the **worry of workers not working hard**, an assured income would act as a belly-filler at best, so that should not deter an Indian UBI plan.

– In general, a decrease in an economy's labour-supply caused by cash giveaways have been debunked by studies. In the US, a 2018 working paper by Ioana Marinescu on the behavioural effects of cash transfers found just a 1% drop in labour supply induced by a 10% income boost.

– Earlier research by Abhijit Banerjee and others, outlined in 'Debunking the Stereotype of the Lazy Welfare Recipient', had similar findings for emerging economies.

Way forward

It's time for a plan to share public funds with all citizens in need.

FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

76. **How consumption is set to outstrip food grain production**

Source: This post is created based on the article “**How consumption is set to outstrip food grain production**”, published in **Business Standard** on **26th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3- Indian Economy- agriculture, GS Paper 2 – Hunger and malnutrition

Context: Food consumption is outpacing food production. It may prove the Malthus theory correct.

In 1798, British philosopher and economist Thomas Malthus gave a theory. The theory predicted a catastrophe, which is also called “Malthusian catastrophe”. He predicted in his theory that population growth would outpace food production to cause shortages and famine.

His theory was widely criticised at that time for not taking technological developments into consideration. However, it may become a reality in the near future.

What are the indicators that are proving Malthus theory correct?

First, some of the following policy decisions of countries are an indicators of this:

- 1.) India banned most wheat exports.
- 2.) Indonesia banned palm oil exports.
- 3.) Europe is being criticised for its farm-to-fork strategy promoting sustainable farming.

Second, the following findings of the Business Standard analysis are also strong indicators:

- 1.) The number of moderately or severely food insecure people rose to 30.6 percent in 2020, compared to 22.6 percent in 2014.
- 2.) In Africa, food insecurity increased from 47.3 percent to 59.6 percent during this period.
- 3.) The United States Department of Agriculture reported that global consumption of corn, wheat, and rice will outstrip production in the coming year.

However, all these factors may not result in a shortage immediately. A sustained period of production and consumption gap may cause problems. If innovation comes to the rescue this time also, then Malthus’s theory can be proved wrong again.

TRENDS IN INDIA'S AGRI SECTOR

77. **Can agri-exports be made more sustainable?**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Can Agri-exports be made more sustainable**” published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy – Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices; Public Distribution System

Relevance: External Sector, India’s Agri-Export in wake of present crisis, Subsidies etc.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

News: In the fiscal year 2021-22 (FY22), agri-exports scaled an all-time high of \$50.3 billion with registering a growth of 20% over the preceding year. For example, India's exports constituted 41% of a global rice market of 51.3 MMT.

What were the driving forces?

This was made possible largely by **rising global commodity prices**. In addition, there were other driving forces like **favourable** and **aggressive export policy** of the Ministry of Commerce and its various export promotion agencies like APEDA, MPEDA, and commodity boards.

The composition of India's Agri-exports

Among the several agri-commodities exported in FY22, rice ranks first, followed by marine products, sugar, spices and bovine (buffalo) meat.

How sustainable is this growth in agri-exports?

Given India's resource endowments and the country's **domestic needs**, the government has already banned **wheat exports**.

Of the Agri-export commodities, two commodities, rice and sugar, are **water guzzlers**. This issue poses a challenge to their **global competitiveness** as well as their **environmental sustainability**.

The case of rice:

When most of the other commodity prices were surging in global markets, the price of rice collapsed by about 13%, largely due to India's massive exports. This means that India had to export a **greater quantity of rice** to get the same amount of dollars. This is not in India's economic interest.

Another concern is that a substantial part of its global competitiveness comes from highly subsidised **water, power** and **fertilisers** that go into its production.

The rice export led to a **virtual export** of India's **water** because rice crop is another **water guzzler** crop.

The Case of Sugar

The sugar export led to a **virtual export** of India's **water** because Sugar crop is another **water guzzler** crop.

The sugar industry receives a number of subsidies (including **export subsidy**). These subsidies have crossed the 10% limit mandated by the WTO. Therefore, India lost **the sugar case** in the WTO.

Others

The non-basmati rice was exported at a price which was lower than the MSP of rice. This might have been the result of **leakages** and divergence in the **PDS** and **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)**.

India exported at least 62 billion cubic meters of virtual water. Much of this water is extracted from groundwater in **Punjab** and **Haryana** belt (for rice), and in **Maharashtra** and **Uttar Pradesh** for sugar. This can lead to a water disaster.

The rice production systems contribute to 17.5% of GHG emissions generated from agriculture (2021). This is among the most important sources of **anthropogenic methane emissions**,

Way Forward

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

In accordance with **trade theory**, the optimal export tax of 5 to 1% must be levied. Further, India should optimally not go beyond 12 to 15 MMT of rice exports, else the marginal revenue from exports will keep falling.

The upcoming **environmental disaster** can be tackled if farmers are supported smartly. They should be given aggregate **input subsidy support** on a per hectare basis and the input **prices of fertilisers** and **power** should be allowed to be determined by market forces and their costs of production.

Innovative farming practices such as **alternate wetting drying (AWD)**, **direct seeded rice (DSR)**, and micro-irrigation should be promoted. They can save up water and reduce the **crop's carbon footprint**.

The farmers should be incentivised to switch some of the area under **rice** and **sugar cultivation** to other **less water-guzzling crops**. For example, Haryana has launched **Mera Pani, Meri Virasat** for incentive farmers to switch from paddy to alternate crops and **Kheti Khaali, Fir Bhi Khushali** Scheme to give money to farmers if they do not grow any crop during the kharif season.

It is high time that the government can introduce the option of **direct cash transfers** in lieu of almost free grains under the PDS and PMGKAY. This will help plug leakages as well as save costs. The savings can be used for **better diversification** of our food systems, better use of scarce water and other practices that lower GHG emissions, and saving on burgeoning food and fertiliser subsidies.

FALL IN THE PROCUREMENT OF WHEAT

78. [India can't feed the world with a major chapaati crisis at home](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**India can't feed the world with a major chapaati crisis at home**” published in **Live Mint** on **27th May 2022**. **Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 3 – Agriculture – Agriculture produce and marketing**

News: India has imposed ban on wheat import amid the global food crisis.

What are the reasons behind the export ban by the government?

First, this year India's wheat output is around 6.5% less than the previous year.

Second, the hottest March in 122 years has stunted grain formation. Last year, a kilogram of Indian wheat resulted in about 770gm of flour. This year, that might go down to 720gm.

Third, India's crop will at best exceed 100 million tonnes this year, it is a steep decline from the initial government estimate of a record 111 million-tons harvest.

Fourth, Food Corporation of India (FCI), also slashed its procurement target to less than half of the last year's target of 43 million tonnes.

What can be done to tackle the issues?

If prices of food grains increase, the following options can be adopted:

The government can impose stock limits to force traders to release their hoards.

FCI could also offload more rice than wheat into the subsidized public distribution system. This could free up about 10 million tonnes of wheat for government-to-government supply deals such as with Egypt, as most of the Indians use both rice and wheat.

79. **Food security does not need this ‘surgical strike’**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Food security does not need this ‘surgical strike’**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **23rd May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Issues and Challenges in PDS and Food Security

Relevance: Wheat Export, Food Security, and Public Distribution System (PDS)

News: Recently, the Government of India announced a sudden ban on export of wheat when the government was looking out for ways for augmenting India’ wheat exports.

Two schools of thought for ensuring food security in India

One school of thought argues that food security has to be ensured through **domestic production**.

Other school of thought suggested that food stocks be run down in India and that needs of food security be met through **world trade** and the **Chicago futures market** as part of the **liberalisation policy**.

About Indian Public Procurement System

Since the mid-1960s, India’s public procurement system has been the backbone of food policy in India to ensure food security

In summer 2022, procurement of wheat by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) has been very low.

Why has there been low wheat procurement in India?

The wheat production this year has been lower than estimated on account of **high heat** and **other factors**.

For more: Click [here](#)

What are the issues with increasing India’s export?

Those western countries which have asked India to meet the shortfall, are already much **larger exporters** of wheat. They have themselves not increased their exports in the current context.

The stock of wheat in the **central pool** has been much lower than last year. Although, it is comfortably higher than **buffer stock norms**. But lower procurement in year can lead to **food security** in problems.

Other challenges

Over the last two years, costs of production have risen sharply. The important causes are the **spiralling price of fuel**, higher input costs and yield losses.

The flip-flop on export of wheat is one example that this government lacks a coherent policy of food security.

The Way Forward

During the two COVID-19 years, the **Public Distribution System (PDS)** played a stellar role. It kept people out of starvation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it should not be dismantled.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

The PDS and open market operations can be used to cool down **food price inflation**. At present, most States have high inflation rates and States with better PDS, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, have low inflation rates.

The government ensures adequate distribution through **the food rationing network**. Further, the **open market operations** should be undertaken to ensure stable prices. If needed, rice can be distributed in lieu of wheat.

Food security is both an immediate and **long-term concern**. A well-functioning PDS can control prices and offer relief to consumers.

The government should overcome the shortfall in public procurement by increasing the procurement price and buying more. The government should provide **remunerative prices** to farmers to promote production. **The National Commission on Farmers** has highlighted the issues of inadequately announced minimum support price (MSP) for wheat.

80. Why GoI Can Resume Wheat Exports

Source: This post is created based on the article **“Why GoI Can Resume Wheat Exports”**

Published in **The Times of India** on **23rd May 2022**.

Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 3 – transport and marketing of agricultural produce

News: As per the third advance estimate of crop production for the year 2021-22, India has harvested a record foodgrain production, up by 3.77 MMT over the preceding year.

While the rice production is up compared to previous year, wheat production is a bit low.

It has led to several negative effects on traders who purchased wheat at higher price, on farmers due drop in price. Also, Export controls and stocking limits inflict an ‘implicit tax’ on farmers.

Read- [Implications of wheat export ban](#)

What government can do to contain negative effects of export ban?

It should announce that it will honour its commitment to exporting 10 MMT of wheat. Additionally, it can export 10-15 MMT of extra rice.

It can provide bonus for wheat farmers who want to sell wheat to government.

Under, PMGKAY and NFSA allocations, government can give option of cash to beneficiaries. It will give beneficiaries an option to buy more nutritious food, be it pulses, milk, eggs, meat or fish.

Lastly, government should reconsider its policy of free food under [PMGKAY](#) and NFSA to 800 million plus people.

ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION

81. Nature has the answers

Source: The post is based on an article “Nature has the answers” published in the “The Hindu” on 23rd May 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 Environment and Ecology

Relevance: Importance of Biodiversity and Nature Based Solutions

News: Recently, The **International Day of Biodiversity on May 22, 2022** was celebrated. It was done amid the pandemic, and the recent heat waves in much of northern India and floods in Meghalaya. The uncertainty is being further fuelled by the continuing degradation of lands and biodiversity, growing malnutrition and hunger, and inequities and environmental injustice.

Man-Environment Relationship

We, the human species, are an **integral** and **influential component** of biodiversity. Our own bodies host living microbiomes of tiny organisms without which we cannot survive.

Our cultures shape the biodiversity around us, and biodiversity shapes our cultures and our future here on Earth.

India’s ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity has been greatly influenced by the **unique features** of our land, climate and geography as well as **forces of migration** and **evolution**. These forces have enriched our land with a multitude of species of plants, animals, and other organisms.

Importance of international day celebration

The day provided us an opportunity to appreciate the wonder of biodiversity, renew our commitment to nurture and protect all the many forms of life with which we share our planet.

What are the problems?

India’s biodiversity is under assault. For example, our natural landscapes and waterscapes have seen decline and degradation.

Way Forward

Nature-based solutions: Biodiversity provides us with **potential solutions** to our most pressing **sustainability challenges**. The use of biodiversity and natural world processes are the best path for sustainability. These can be done as below:

Climate change: The **restoration of biodiversity** over the vast tracts of **deforested** and **other degraded lands** can mitigate climate change. This direct connection between biodiversity and climate change has been acknowledged in the Glasgow Summit of the UNFCCC. Further, Restoration also has the potential of creating **millions of jobs**, diversifying farming systems and agriculture-based livelihoods. It can also help India to meet its intended commitment to tackle climate change.

Enterprises working in the **biotechnology** and **healthcare sector** can harness the untapped potential of our **rich medical heritage** that includes thousands of **medicinal plant species**.

Nature can lead to our economic, and physical well-being; and minds and spiritual enrichment.

It will help India in the realisation of the **UN’s Sustainable Development Goals**.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

The government has launched a **National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-Being**. The key features of the missions are:

The mission will promote biodiversity in **development programmes**, particularly in the sectors of agriculture, health, bioeconomy, ecosystem services, and climate change mitigation.

The mission seeks to ensure public engagement which is key for **biodiversity conservation**.

The Mission seeks to develop a system for assessing and monitoring, restoring, and enhancing biodiversity.

The Mission can help address various issues: the emergence of infectious diseases; inadequate food and nutritional security; rural unemployment; and climate change.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – GST AND RELATED ISSUES

GST AND RELATED ISSUES

82. **Storm in a GST cup**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Storm in a GST cup**” published in the **Business Standard** on **28th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India; Issues and Challenges pertaining to the Federal Structure

Relevance: Fiscal Federalism; GST Council

News: The Supreme Court has given a ruling on a commercial dispute, **the Union of India versus Mohit Minerals**, over the levy of the integrated goods and services tax (GST) on ocean freight charges paid by importers. It has triggered a nationwide debate.

About the Judgment

The judgment is virtually a recitation from **the Article 279A (4)** of the Constitution of India. The article states that the GST Council shall “**make recommendations**” to the Centre and the states on all matters relating to the GST.

In legal terms, the recommendations are not binding on either the Centre or the states. Had the recommendations been binding, it would have been in **violation** of the **legislative supremacy** (Tax Sovereignty) of both Parliament and state legislatures.

The SC ruling also endorses the broader **Constitutional position** of **fiscal federalism**. It explicitly placed Centre and individual states on a par with each other in respect of GST. The Article 246(A) provides for **concurrent taxation powers** of the Centre and the states in relation to the levy of GST.

The bench has articulated that the **GST’s Council’s deliberations** have “persuasive value”.

Implications of the judgement

The “landmark” ruling has unintentionally “**stirred and shaken federalism**”. It has the potential to alter the nature of **fiscal federalism** in India.

The GST compensation will end from July 1, 2022. This will trigger dissent in the GST Council. This can lead to disruption and confrontation within the Council.

The judgment can be used by the GST Council members to pursue their agendas, the Centre to renege its committed obligations, or states to get some elbow room on indirect taxation policy.

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The council will be driven more by **political consideration** than **policy persuasions**, and **performance** of the GST regime. The **political view** that state governments compromised their **tax sovereignty** in the GST regime is gaining currency.

Way Forward

All decisions of the GST Council have been based on consensus, rather than on voting.

The GST Council should start and strengthen the **dispute resolution mechanism**. **Article 279A (11)** requires the GST Council to establish a mechanism to adjudicate on any disputes arising out of its recommendations and its implementation. This should be in the form of the GSTS Tribunal.

The GST Council must use its status as a **constitutional body** and **skills** as an institution to draw up guidelines for **adjudication mechanisms** to address disputes amongst GST Council members.

All the stakeholders should be made aware that more than **loss of tax sovereignty** of states, the GST was premised on **pooling of tax sovereignty** by both the centre and states.

The **next Finance Commission** can recognise the changes in the **institutional landscape** of the **fiscal federalism post-GST Council**. A new set of principles will be developed that will empower the states without disempowering the Centre must be worked on.

The GST Council could work out a **state-specific GST** outside the existing GST framework. This would transition from a **co-operative federalism mindset** to a **collaborative federal system**.

83. [Making sense of the GST bonanza](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Making sense of the GST bonanza**” published in **The Indian Express** on **27th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy

Relevance: Goods and Services Tax (GST) and related issues

News: There has been a remarkable upswing in GST collections in recent months. In fact, collections touched a record high of Rs 1.67 lakh crore in April.

What are the reasons behind an inc in the GST collections?

First, the **sharp rise in inflation** has played a significant role. After all, as output turnover increases, taxes paid per filing will automatically increase. Thus there is a price effect. However, even after taking away the price effect, collections have grown at a pace faster than GDP, indicating an increase in buoyancy.

When a tax collects greater revenue without changing the rate of taxing, it is said to be buoyant.

Second, part of the overall increase in collections can be traced to **higher imports**. But even if one is to exclude the revenue accruing from imports, the rise in GST collections has outstripped GDP growth, indicating higher buoyancy.

Third, in order to improve compliance levels, the **GST Council has been modifying the rules to tighten the system**. This can be observed at multiple levels.

– Earlier, filers could get away without submitting returns for a few months. But the screws have now been tightened. As a consequence, returns filed have gone up, while the number of non-filers and those who delay filing have fallen.

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– Alongside, the administration has also taken steps to **tackle the menace of fake invoices** by placing restrictions on the quantum of input tax credit that can be used to pay off tax obligations.

– The **introduction of e-invoicing** has also played a role. Until recently, this was being implemented for firms with a turnover of more than Rs 50 crore. From April, this process has been extended to firms above Rs 20 crore.

Fourth, some part of the revenue gains are likely to have accrued due to the **changing structure of the economy**.

– The formalisation of firms, the growing concentration of economic power in the hands of a few, imply that for the same level of output, the tax paid will be higher.

This explanation is also in line with data that shows a rise in GST registrations, filings and tax paid per registration.

Way forward

Considering that some of the drivers discussed above are unlikely to sustain at current levels, **tax rates will need to be raised** to fulfil expectations of higher collections. However, this requires careful consideration.

Lower compliance levels and greater exemptions require higher rates to garner the same level of revenues. Hence, compliance must be improved.

Considering the current economic situation, **now may not be an opportune moment to raise taxes**. But there is no getting around it. Both the Centre and the states need to work towards this.

84. Supreme Court's ruling on GST deepens the churn in the tax regime

Source: This post is based on the article “**Supreme Court's ruling on GST deepens the churn in the tax regime**” published in **The Indian Express** on **26th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: GST and related issues

News: Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that the decisions taken by the GST Council are merely recommendations with “persuasive value” and are not binding.

The ruling has opened up serious questions on the stability and certainty of the structure and operation of GST which is still evolving.

What has been the reaction to the SC judgement?

The states, notably those ruled by non-BJP parties, have **welcomed the judgment** stating that this is the triumph of cooperative federalism and provides them enough scope to have a say in the decisions.

The revenue secretary has clarified that the SC has merely stated the obvious, and, in effect, **does not alter the ground situation**. All the decisions taken in the Council are based on consensus (except the one on lotteries) by the Union and states (and Union Territories with legislatures), and that spirit will continue to guide the deliberations and decisions in the Council.

How the SC verdict states the obvious?

In some ways, the verdict states the obvious.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

Article 246-A inserted after the 122nd constitutional amendment states, “Notwithstanding anything contained in articles 246 and 254, Parliament, and, subject to clause (2), the **Legislature of every state, have the power to make laws** with respect to the GST imposed by the Union or by such state.”

Thus, the power to levy the **central GST (CGST) vests with Parliament**, the power to levy **state GST (SGST) vests with state legislatures** and Parliament has exclusive power to make laws with respect to the GST on items that are part of inter-state trade or commerce. Thus, the **GST Council is only an advisory body** and the actual decisions regarding model GST levies, principles of levy, etc will have to be taken by either Parliament in the case of CGST and IGST or the states in the case of SGST.

In effect, decisions on the structure and operation of the tax can be made by the Centre and individual states without discussion and deliberation in the Council and both can ignore any recommendation made by the Council.

What will be the impact of the SC verdict?

Inc in bargaining strength of the states: It paves the way for **more intensive bargaining and negotiations**, placing states on an equal footing with the Centre in taking decisions on the structure and operations of the tax.

– The immediate impact of this will be **bargaining by states for extending the period of compensation** for the loss of revenue. The five-year period of compensation gets over at the end of June. States have therefore been demanding the extension of the compensation period by another two-three years and this decision will now help the states to bargain hard for the extension.

The lasting solution lies in increasing the revenue productivity of the tax by pruning the list of exempted items, rationalising the rates and taking administrative measures.

Way forward

The decision that GST Council's recommendations are not binding will have significant implications in determining the nature of the tax, which is still evolving.

Hopefully, the Court's decision will also **strengthen the cooperative spirit** in reforming the domestic consumption tax system in the country.

85. A new road for India's fiscal federalism

Source: The post is based on an article “**A new road for India's fiscal federalism**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **25th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure

Relevance: Fiscal Federalism, GST Council

News: Recently, the Supreme Court of India delivered its verdict in the **Union of India vs Mohit Minerals** case, where it also made several observations on the GST Council recommendations

About GST Regime

The GST regime was introduced through the 101st constitutional Amendment in July 2017 which aimed for unification of tax administration in India – ‘**One Nation, One Tax**’.

GST Council: The Amendment Act introduced **Article 279A** which mandated creation of a GST Council.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

GST Council Composition: This body comprises the **Union Finance Minister**, the **Union Minister of State for Finance**, and **Ministers of Finance** from every State government.

Functions: The act led to deletion and amendment of many entries in the State list of Schedule VII of the Constitution. It enabled the state government to legislate on GST through a newly introduced **Article 246A**. The State governments could not legislate on sale or purchase of goods (barring a few exceptions, such as petroleum and liquor).

The Council was empowered to make **recommendations** to the Union and States on various matter. The matters included goods and services that may be **subjected** to or **exempted** from GST and **the rates** at which tax is to be levied.

Voting share: The Union government was granted a virtual veto in the GST Council's voting structure and system

Confusions between advisory and binding nature of GST Council's recommendations

The use of the word "**recommendations**" suggested that the GST decisions would be advisory, at best.

The mandate of establishment of a mechanism under **Article 279A** to adjudicate disputes between governments on decisions taken by the Council suggested that advice rendered were binding in nature.

Impact of making recommendations binding in nature

It could lead to dissolution and destruction of the well-laid plans of the Constituent Assembly, which carefully divided **Fiscal responsibilities** between the Union and the States.

Must read: [Let's keep GST good and simple](#)

What are the Supreme Court's observations in the *Union of India vs Mohit Minerals*?

The Court proceeded on a technical reading of the provisions of the **Central Goods and Services Tax Act**.

The Article 246A provides **concomitant power** both to the Union and to the State governments to legislate on GST. It does not discriminate between the two in terms of its allocation of authority.

The **concomitant powers** allocated in **Article 246A** cannot be limited by Article 279A, which establishes a GST Council, and which treats the Council's decisions as "recommendations".

Both Parliament and the State legislatures enjoy equal power to legislate on **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**. The **Goods and Services Tax Council's** recommendations are just advisory that could never be binding on a legislative body.

According to the Court, the **State legislatures** can deviate from any advice rendered by the GST Council and to make their own laws by asserting, in the process, their role as equal partners in **India's federal architecture**.

If the GST Council was intended to be a decision-making authority having binding recommendation. Such a qualification would have been included in Articles 246A or 279A.

Way Forward

The legislatures can give binding effect to the **Council's recommendation** through statutory law. But, according the SC, a **constitutional power** can never be limited through statute.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

Indian federalism is a dialogue between **cooperative** and **uncooperative federalism**. The federal units are at liberty to use **different means** of **persuasion** ranging from **collaboration** to **contestation**.

GST was conceived as a product of what some described as “**pooled sovereignty**” where our nation can take a genuine turn towards a more “**cooperative federalism**”.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EVs)

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND RELATED ISSUES

86. **Let commercial vehicles take the lead in going electric**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Let commercial vehicles take the lead in going electric**” published in **Livemint** on **24th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Energy and Infrastructure, Industrial policy and growth

Relevance: Increasing the adoption of Commercial Electric Vehicles (EVs) in India

Context: India’s air quality has been diminishing on the back of urban development and higher e-commerce adoption, among other factors. The cost of this progress means some of our large Indian cities figure among the world’s most polluted.

Citizens’ right to clean breathable air is a fundamental need and is a critical parameter in global benchmarks used to list the world’s happiest and most liveable cities.

A shift from ICE vehicles to EVs is crucial to reversing the impact on air quality.

Efforts at reducing air pollution

India has set promising targets and taken several steps to bring about both accountability and action. For example, the government aims to reduce carbon emissions by 45% by 2030,

In 2019, it launched the **National Clean Air Programme** as a **strategic intervention to reduce air pollution levels across the country**. **City-specific clean air action plans have been prepared and rolled out for implementation in as many as 132 cities**.

Meanwhile, the NITI Aayog and Rocky Mountain Institute’s **Shoonya campaign** is **building awareness around fleet adoption of electric vehicles (EV) for last-mile deliveries**.

– **Urban freight vehicles** account for over 10% of transportation-related CO₂ emissions in India, a number that is set to increase by about 115% by 2030 due to the sharp rise in e-commerce demand for deliveries, according to the NITI Aayog.

Meanwhile, Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru are **upgrading their public transport facilities**, albeit they are still using internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.

Why a shift from ICE vehicles to EVs is necessary for India?

A shift from ICE vehicles to EVs is crucial to reversing the impact on air quality as ICE commercial vehicles are large users of diesel in India.

China reduced air pollution in its major cities of Shanghai and Beijing by limiting ICE vehicles, relocating polluting units and using EV incentives, among other steps.

A glance at ecology-conscious markets like **Norway and Iceland** offers a clear picture of how rapid EV adoption can meaningfully reduce pollution levels.

Way forward

9 PM Compilation for the Month of May, 2022

Various Indian states have proposed independent EV policy frameworks, but these do not include light commercial vehicles (LCVs). **Policy incentives** need to be given to logistical service providers to shift to electric LCVs.

Incentives to EV original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and green taxes levied on ICE vehicles based on emissions and time spent in urban areas could deter ICE vehicle usage.

An effective policy framework for **charging infrastructure** would help too.

As of now, no distinction is made between slow, medium and fast charging set-ups, and India's recent battery swapping policy applies more to the 2W and 3W segments than their 4W counterparts. A **push for a reliable pan-India fast-charging network** will be an essential driver of EV adoption across vehicle categories.

Lowering the cost of ownership and bringing in more fleet financing options will support the EV adoption rate for commercial transport. The total cost of ownership (TCO) for EVs, a key determinant, needs parity with ICE vehicles.

An **upfront subsidy for fleet owners** to purchase commercial EVs could be instituted.

Recently, the NITI Aayog recommended the inclusion of EV and EV-charging in the **Reserve Bank of India's framework for priority sector lending**. This would help finance EV fleet conversion, as 60-70% of vehicles are financed with little or no difference in interest rates.

Loans for EVs could be made more efficient. While banks typically offer a 25-50-basis-points benefit on ESG (environmental, social and governance) assets, lending institutions currently take a hit on their bottom line in providing ESG finance.

Incentivizing innovation among new-age electric OEMs and helping build a **talent pool** that will fuel this growth story are equally important.

India has the potential to leap into a **global leadership position on the commercial EV front**. It is among a handful of countries supporting the global 'EV30@30' campaign that aims for 30% of all new vehicle sales by 2030 to be electric.

GS3 - ENVIRONMENT - ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

DESERTIFICATION AND RELATED ISSUES

87. **Combating desertification**

Source: This post is based on the article "**Combating desertification**" published in **Business Standard** on **25th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Relevance: Tackling desertification and reclaiming the degraded land

News: The 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was recently held at Abidjan.

It called upon nations to invest in restoring degraded land for future prosperity, and urged the 196 participating nations to **reclaim 1 billion hectares of degraded land by 2030**.

What is the global situation wrt land degradation?

Globally, about 40% of the land, supporting about half of humanity, is facing the threat of desertification.

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In the business as usual scenario, an additional area equivalent of the size of South America, might get degraded by 2050, warn the papers presented at the COP15.

Why restoring of the degraded land is esp relevant for India?

India is a **land-stressed country**, where close to 30% of the land falls in the degraded category.

More worrying, the **process of decline in the quality of land is still ongoing** despite the government's resolve to achieve "land degradation neutrality" (zero addition to degraded land) by 2030.

According to the data collected by the Indian Space Research Organisation through satellite imagery, **the extent of deteriorated land has risen** from 94.53 million hectares (mha) in 2003 to 97.85 mha in 2018-19.

The Energy and Resources Institute had assessed the **losses due to decline in land productivity** as worth around Rs 3.17 trillion in 2014-15, amounting to about 2.5% of GDP in that year. About 82% of these losses were attributed to the deterioration in the quality of land under agriculture, forests, and pastures, and the remaining to the changes in the land-use pattern — diverting land to less productive use.

– This study, significantly, had also underscored the need to expedite implementing land improvement projects as the cost of land reclamation could rise above the potential economic gains by 2030.

What are the factors behind land degradation?

Among the major factors responsible for land degradation, the most significant ones are –

– **soil salinity** and **water-logging** in agricultural fields due to flawed agronomic practices, and
– **water** and **wind erosion** in the areas that have lost their vegetative cover.

– In the Northeast, a hilly region, the continuation of the **practice of shifting cultivation**, also known as slash-and-burn agriculture or jhum, is the main cause of land degradation. Under this system, the farmers clear the forested land, cultivate it for a few years, and then move to another spot, leaving the old patch **barren**.

Way forward

India is fortunate to have time-tested technologies capable of rejuvenating problematic lands.

- These have already been tried successfully in reclaiming the sprawling **salt-affected tracks in Haryana** and the **lime quarrying-hit slopes of the Mussoorie hills in Uttarakhand**, besides **stabilising the shifting sand dunes in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan**.

These should now come in handy for the country to achieve its self-determined target of restoring 26 mha of degraded land by 2030.

However, more important would be to **make soil conservation an integral part of all land-related programmes** to curb further land degradation. It would further help India contribute to **meeting the COP15's main objective** of combating desertification and **acquiring resilience against droughts**.

SEMICONDUCTOR CHIP SHORTAGE

88. **Knotty supply chains deepen global chip shortage**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Knotty supply chains deepen global chip shortage**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **27th May 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy, Effects of Liberalization on Indian Economy

Relevance: Global Supply Chain Disruptions, Automobile Industry

News: Recently, Toyota Corporation has been struggling to meet its production targets. It has apologised to its suppliers and customers a third time in less than two months for delaying making new vehicles and changing production plans.

Nature of Semiconductor Industry

The manufacturing process is a complex, and interconnected ecosystem with its own ebb and flow.

The chip-making process is divided into **front-end** and **back-end parts**. Wafer fabrication and probe are generally referred to as **front-end operations**, and **assembly** and **test** as **back-end operations**.

The front and back-end processes are spread out across the globe, creating a **global chip-making ecosystem**. This semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem involves roughly **25 countries** in the direct supply chain, and **23 countries** in allied functions.

A semiconductor-based product could cross international borders about 70 times before finally making it to the end customer.

Semiconductors are produced as **200mm** or **300mm wafers**. The **larger wafers** are expensive and mostly used for advanced equipment, whereas **smaller diameter wafers** remain in high demand in automobile sector, laptops, tablet, and smartphone production.

Why there has been a global shortage of semiconductor chips?

There has been a **global shortage** of **chips or semiconductor devices**. This has been due to many reasons:

The industry faced its share of glut and shortage in the past decade as **consumer preferences shifted** from one electronic fad to another.

The **manufacturing equipment** needed to make the semiconductor devices were in short supply even before the pandemic began. That's because the industry was moving in the direction of **5G** and **advanced communication**, which required **expensive wafers**.

The chip making production also halted as the **factories were closed during Covid-19** induced lockdowns.

Due to the pandemic hit, people switched to **work from home**, children **connected** to schools through **laptops**, get-togethers happened over **video calls**, and subscription-based **mobile games** became popular. This shift led to a surge in demand for semiconductors in **laptops** and **tablets** production.

Post-lockdown, the industry gradually tried to pull itself out of the supply crunch, but they started facing the problem of **exacerbated logistical complexities**. The global supply chains were disrupted.

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The Just-In-Time (JIT) Approach used by the chipmakers became a weakness. It let firms take inputs from suppliers only when they are needed. During, due to poor demands from automobile industry, chipmakers concluded deals with other industries.

About a decade and half back, semiconductors have been produced through **global supply chain** by interconnecting several parts of the world.

The geopolitical events in Central Europe and production shutdowns in China add pressure to the already complicated semiconductor supply chain.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine strained exports of **essential commodities** required to make chip sets. For example, Moscow supplies **rare materials** like **palladium**, and Kyiv sells **rare gases** to make semiconductor fab lasers.

Way Forward

Europe and the US have taken measures such as the European Chips Act (45 billion euros) and CHIPS for America Act (\$52 billion). These measures would incentivise fab makers to set up their units in these regions and balance.

Together, these two will enable the semiconductor manufacturers to have equal investments in the East and West by 2030. At present, 80% is in Asia, and 20% is in Europe and the U.S.

INDIA'S TRADE POLICY

89. [Be wary of growing exports](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**Be wary of growing exports**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on 26th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment and Ecology, Food Security

Relevance: Net Carbon Dioxide Export

News: Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the western sanctions on Russia, and Sri Lanka's ongoing struggles have created **export opportunities** for countries such as India. However, there are **environmental concerns** into it.

What are the issues?

The developed countries consume polluted goods which are produced elsewhere like China and India. Such exports from developing countries are said to be carbon emissions-embodied products

About Net CO₂ exports

It can be calculated by taking the difference between carbon emissions-embodied exports and carbon emissions-embodied imports.

Global Trends

(A) Net CO₂ Export

China is the largest exporter of carbon emissions-embodied products, followed by the U.S., Russia and India.

China's net exports began to decline from 2007-08, whereas India's net CO₂ exports or carbon emissions-embodied products started to steadily increase in that period. India's recent **export performance** has been attributed to petroleum products, electronics and chemicals.

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India's agricultural and food export items involve virtual export of depleting natural resources such as water. For example, Rice export.

Net CO₂ Import

Most developed countries, for instance, the **OECD member countries**, are the net importers of polluted goods produced elsewhere, especially in the developing countries.

The largest net importers of carbon emission-intensive goods are the **U.S., Japan** and **Germany**.

Why did the development countries become Net-CO₂ import countries?

Pollution haven hypothesis

Due to the **stringent environmental measures** adopted by developed countries, **pollution-intensive industries** relocate from developed countries to developing countries. They impose an **environmental tax** to address a **broad spectrum** of environmental issues. For example, in OECD countries, the tax roughly constitutes 2% of the GDP.

The destination countries have the **lowest environmental standards/weak enforcement of environmental standards** in order to cut resource, labour costs among other costs. For example, the environmental tax in India is around 1%. Further, the tax as a percentage of GDP has marginally come down from 1.38% in 2005 to 1.07% in 2019.

Environmental Kuznets curve: There is an **inverted U-shape relationship** between the income of a country and its environmental degradation. This implies that as income increases, environmental quality begins to deteriorate, but improves after some time.

Consequences of such export

The growing consumption in rich countries has come at a cost for developing countries such as India.

The **virtual water trade** will have an adverse impact on **long-term sustainability** and food security in India.

For example: (1) the **agricultural water withdrawal** as a percentage of total available renewable water resources has increased from 26.7% in 1993 to 36% in 2022, and (2) The total per capita renewable water resources have also declined from 1909 cubic metres to 1412 cubic metres during this period.

Way forward

As per the **water use efficiency index**, there has been an **overall improvement** in water-use efficiency.

Strict environmental measures need to be explored in order to ensure long-term sustainability. For example, increasing the **environmental tax, water-saving policies** to promote **sustainable production** of rice and also safeguarding food security in the country.

IPR AND RELATED ISSUES

90. **You can't fight a pandemic without IP: Intellectual property rights were vital in producing life-saving Covid vaccines**

Source: This post is based on the article “**You can't fight a pandemic without IP: Intellectual property rights were vital in producing life-saving Covid vaccines**” published in **The Times of India** on **26th May 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Relevance: Vaccine development and IPR

News: Recent data from ‘Our World in Data’ suggest Covid-19 related infection around the world and India is waning. Hospitalisations and deaths are very low.

Vaccines must take great credit for keeping Covid largely out of the headlines after two years. There are now 10 Covid-19 vaccines recommended by the WHO, and over 60 vaccine candidates in late stage clinical trials or pending regulatory review.

How have IPRs played a critical role in quick vaccine development?

The **intellectual property (IP) rights** have given companies ownership and rights over their inventions.

– IP has **enabled dozens of research collaborations** and **manufacturing partnerships** all over the world, often between competitors. Rivals have shared proprietary compounds, platforms and technologies to develop new vaccines and flood the market in record times.

– Since June 2021, the number of vaccine manufacturing partnerships has risen from **93 to 357**.

What are some concerns related to IPR?

Health NGOs and some governments argue that developing countries will get speedier access to new vaccines if IP rights are suspended so that manufacturers everywhere can produce them.

Others argue that patented drugs and vaccines by **increasing price create deadweight loss for the consumers**, negating the idea of endogenous growth models that innovation leads to economic growth and prosperity.

That argument drives a World Trade Organisation proposal to **dismantle IP rights for Covid vaccines**, now in the final stages of negotiation. Meanwhile, an equal push to weaken IP rights in a new treaty on Pandemic Preparedness is in its early stages at the WHO.

- *A deadweight loss is a cost to society created by market inefficiency, which occurs when supply and demand are out of equilibrium.*
- *Endogenous growth theory maintains that economic growth is primarily the result of internal forces, rather than external ones. It argues that improvements in productivity can be tied directly to faster innovation and more investments in human capital from governments and private sector institutions.*

What happens if IP rights are diluted?

Removing or weakening IP rights for pandemic vaccines and therapeutics would be highly counterproductive, **undermining the incentive to invest in new technologies and treatments**.

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– IP rights allow for **risk-taking** that brings rewards – such as the first mRNA vaccines that underpin global Covid vaccination.

Removing IP rights in pandemic situations would also **destroy the international manufacturing collaborations and partnerships** essential to saving millions of lives in the current pandemic.

If IP rights are weakened, few private sector companies would be willing to commit resources to pandemic vaccines and therapeutics. This would **leave the world reliant on alternative open source or IP-free models of drug and vaccine development.**

– One IP-free vaccine from the University of Helsinki was unable to secure funding for clinical trials, while Corbevax, another patent-free vaccine developed by Texas Children’s Hospital has been authorised for use in India, but there is no public data on its efficacy or clinical trials.

If successful, IP-free vaccines could prove useful additions to the pandemic preparedness arsenal. But these patent-free models face **difficulties in securing the capital and expertise to rapidly scale up global production.** In other words, they would be unreliable if needed quickly in another pandemic.

By contrast, vaccines that have leveraged IP rights have moved quickly through clinical development, regulatory authorisation, and into mass manufacture and distribution.

What’s the way forward?

The TRIPS Agreement already gives flexibility to the individual countries to minimise the deadweight loss that may arise from higher drug and vaccine prices.

– For example, any individual country **may decide not to grant patents** to diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical methods for treating patients.

Many other governments are already **subsidising patented drugs** to lessen the impact of drug price rise. **Jan Aushadhi outlets** in India are a step in that direction.

There’s also a **need for greater global harmonisation** of regulation.

Meanwhile, various **trade barriers have disrupted vaccine availability globally.** Governments should agree on a legally-binding way to ensure this can’t happen again, preferably at the WTO.

Covid has shown what works and what doesn’t in pandemics. IP is clearly fundamental. It would be a mistake to remove it, either for Covid or for future pandemics.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES

91. [The Indian consumer will have to spend more for a little longer](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**The Indian Consumer will have to spend more for a little longer**” published in the “The Hindu” on 27th May 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy

Relevance: Inflation, Consumer Food Price Index, Wholesale Price Index

News: In April 2022, the **consumer price index-based inflation** for food had reached 8.4%. This implies that the gap between **wholesale** and retail food inflation has been narrowing, suggesting a **higher pass-through of input costs.**

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Situation of Inflation

Around **40%** of overall consumer spending is on food. Its purchase frequency is also higher. Thus, food witnessed a higher impact on inflation expectations.

The **headline inflation** started picking up for imported commodities. For example, edible oils and cereals. Now, domestically produced items are getting caught in the price fire.

What are the causes of concern?

The average food inflation, of 6% in the past three years, is significantly higher than the pre-pandemic five-year average of 3.5%.

The driving forces behind current inflation are **exogenous**. Further, their impact will become worse when domestic demand improves.

There is little that **monetary** and **fiscal policies** can do to soften the **primary exogenous** blow in the short-term.

The frequency of purchase, rather than the share of expenditure, **shapes inflation-related expectations of consumers**.

Why is food inflation surging?

Proximate Causes

There are three reasons: (1) a surge in transportation costs; (2) rising cost of production; and (3) elevated global food prices.

Ultimate Causes

The Russia-Ukraine war is a cause of concern. It is affecting everything, including the food prices.

A sharp rise in transportation costs has pushed up retail prices of agricultural commodities like vegetables,

The **domestically produced commodities** such as wheat and products, coarse cereals, and meat are witnessing inflation due to a low base and a sequential price rise in these components.

The food production costs have risen also due to increase in fertiliser, pesticides and also animal feed prices.

Impact of the inflation

Rising **food inflation hurts** consumers a lot **more** than inflation in other commodities since households do not have much discretion in altering food consumption.

The consequences are more adverse for the **rural population** which spends a higher share (around 47%) than the urban (roughly 30%) on food; and the **bottom 20%** of the population which spend out a **higher share** (60%) on food consumption.

Measures Taken by the government

The **Monetary policy** has seen hiking of the **repo rate**, the **cash reserve ratio** and gradually winding down the easy **liquidity situation**.

On the **fiscal policy front**, the government has reduced **excise duties** on petrol and diesel, increased fertiliser and cooking gas subsidies, and allowing duty-free imports of edible oils.

Way Forward

The RBI is expected to raise repo rates by another 75-100 basis points in the rest of this fiscal.

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The pressure on prices of agricultural commodities will take time to soften. Therefore, the government can go for extending the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** beyond the stipulated period.

