

9 PM

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6th to 11th June, 2022

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General

Studies

Paper – 1

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GS1 – SOCIETY – WOMEN ISSUES

SURROGACY ACT AND RELATED ISSUES

1. **The debates around the Surrogacy Act**

Source: This post is based on the article “**The debates around the Surrogacy Act**” published in **The Hindu** on **7th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS1 – Women issues

Relevance: Surrogacy and related issues

News: Petitioners in the Delhi High Court questioned why marital status, age, or gender were the criteria for being allowed to commission or not commission surrogacy in India.

The female petitioner said that she already had a child, but the trauma of the first childbirth experience and her need to juggle work with child care persuaded her that surrogacy would be a better option for the second child. But under the provisions of the Surrogacy Act, she was denied a chance at commissioning surrogacy.

What is the Surrogacy Act?

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill was introduced in Parliament in November 2016, and passed in the Winter session of Parliament in 2021.

The **Act sought to regulate the surrogacy** part of a rather flourishing infertility industry in the country.

It defines ‘surrogacy’ as a practice where a woman undertakes to give birth to a child for another couple and agrees to hand over the child to them after birth,

The Act allows ‘**altruistic surrogacy**’ — wherein only the medical expenses and insurance coverage is provided by the couple to the surrogate mother during pregnancy. No other monetary consideration will be permitted.

As per the Surrogacy Act that kicked in from January this year, a married couple can opt for surrogacy **only on medical grounds**.

The law defines a couple as a married Indian “man and woman” and also prescribes an age-criteria with the woman being in the age group of **23 to 50 years** and the man between **26 and 55 years**.

Additionally, the couple should not have a child of their own.

Though the **law allows single women to resort to surrogacy**, she should either be a **widow** or a **divorcee**, between the age of 35 to 45 years.

Single men are, however, **not eligible**.

Why is there a need for a Surrogacy Act in India?

India has emerged as a **hub for infertility treatment**, attracting people from the world over with its state-of-the-art technology and competitive prices to treat infertility.

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Soon enough, due to **prevailing socio-economic inequities**, underprivileged women found an option to 'rent their wombs' and thereby make money to take care of their expenses.

Once information of the availability of such wombs got out, the **demand also picked up, and exploitation of these women began**. Several instances began to emerge where women, in often desperate straits, started lodging police complaints after they did not receive the promised sum.

Other issues also began to crop up. **For instance,**

– in 2008 a Japanese couple began the process with a surrogate mother in Gujarat, but before the child was born they split with both of them refusing to take the child.

– in 2012, an Australian couple commissioned a surrogate mother, and arbitrarily chose one of the twins that were born.

The time therefore, was ripe for proper regulation.

Who all are allowed to make use of the services of a surrogate mother?

Any couple that has '**proven infertility**' are candidates.

The 'intending couple' as the Act calls them, will be eligible if they have a '**certificate of essentiality**' and a '**certificate of eligibility**' issued by the appropriate authority.

– The **certificate of essentiality** will be issued if the couple fulfills three conditions: **a)**, a certificate of infertility of one or both from a district medical board; **b)**, an order of parentage and custody of the surrogate child passed by a Magistrate's court; **c)** insurance cover for the surrogate mother.

Who can become a surrogate mother?

Only a **close relative of the couple** can be a surrogate mother, one who is able to provide a medical fitness certificate. She should have been married, with a child of her own, and must be between 25 and 35 years, but can be a surrogate mother only once.

GS1 – SOCIETY – URBANISATION

URBAN PLANNING AND RELATED ISSUES

2. **Urban mining**

Source: This post is based on the article "**Urban mining**" published in the **Business Standard** on **7th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS1 – Urbanisation

Relevance: Tackling the problem of Construction and Demolition Waste (C&DW)

News: In late April, the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram angrily ordered its officials to find out who dumped "*malba*" — the Hindi word for Construction and Demolition Waste (C&DW) on either side of the Gurugram-Faridabad road.

Frameworks to tackle C&DW already exist. Implementation needs to be improved.

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What are the causes behind C&DW?

C&DW is generated from

- a) construction,
- b) renovation,
- c) repair, and
- d) demolition of houses, large building structures, roads, bridges, piers, and dams.

What is the utility of C&DW?

C&DW comprises wood, steel, concrete, gypsum, masonry, plaster, metal, and asphalt. The C&DW comprising cement mortar, stone, red bricks and concrete blocks undergoes screening, crushing and washing.

– It can then be processed to **produce usable building materials** such as fine aggregate, coarse aggregate, bricks/blocks, tiles, paver blocks, kerbstones and prefab slabs.

Aggregates made from this type of waste can substitute natural aggregates in a number of applications like road construction, landscaping and concrete production. This helps **save natural resources** and **minimize the waste** sent to landfills.

Effective management of C&DW helps in **curbing excessive consumption of natural resources** and contributes to sustainable development.

– **For example**, the demand for sand more than doubled between 2010 and 2020. In India, river sand is primarily used for construction. Increasing demand, constrained availability and limited government oversight have given rise to a thriving illegal trade in sand. **Manufactured sand** from C&DW provides an environmentally sustainable alternative.

Since almost 60% of the stock of buildings projected to be there in 2030 is yet to be built, effective management of C&DW, and therefore “greener construction” assumes even greater significance.

What are the associated challenges?

Insufficient recycling capacity: India generates an estimated 170 million tonnes of C&DW every year, according to the Building Material Promotion Council. But the official recycling capacity is a meagre 6,500 tonnes per day — just about 1%.

– The processing and recycling of C&DW in India is limited to **only four operational plants** — three in Delhi and one in Ahmedabad.

Rules not implemented: Construction & Demolition Waste Management Rules were notified in 2016 and apply to all involved with C&DW.

– For example, the rules require state government and local authorities to procure and utilize 10-20% of material made from construction and demolition waste in municipal and government contracts. This is **not implemented at all**, as is evident from anecdotal evidence.

What steps need to be taken?

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To address appropriate C&DW utilisation, elements of the existing policy framework need to be revisited.

The concrete and cement industry should **start embedding circularity within their operations** i.e. using recycled C&DW by reducing its dependence on natural aggregates and raw materials.

But in order to increase higher utilisation of C&DW in concrete and cement, a **fresh set of norms** are needed.

– The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) needs to **review many of the current specifications** it mandates for C&DW usage in cement and concrete.

– In public works programmes too, usage can be allowed to increase from 20 per cent to higher levels of 30-50 per cent.

What is the regulatory framework to tackle municipal waste?

In 2016, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has provided a regulatory framework for the management of municipal solid waste generated in urban areas of the country. These rules attempt to:

– Improve the collection, regeneration, recycling, treatment and disposal of C&DW in an environmentally sound manner.-

– Emphasise the roles and accountability of waste generators and various stakeholders.

In March, 2017, the Central Pollution Control Board followed this up with detailed procedural guidelines on Environmental Management of C&DW.

Way forward

It is not the lack of official frameworks for managing C&DW. The challenge lies in removing the laxity in their implementation at operating levels. This is now the big change required.

3. Unnatural urbanisation

Source: This post is based on the article “**Unnatural urbanisation**” published in the **Business Standard** on **5th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS1 – Urbanisation

Relevance: Issues related to urban planning

News: Recently, a 20-minute thunderstorm in Delhi uprooted many trees, some of them between 40 and 50 years old, throwing the city out of gear for hours. This chaos, caused due to **poor urban planning**, has become a pattern whenever a pre-monsoon storm, with high-velocity winds, hits the city.

Delhi High Court has taken note of this. It pointed out that the **growing concretisation of the city**, without providing trees sufficient breathing space around their trunks, causes their roots to dry out and make them vulnerable to the elements.

Uprooting of old trees causes huge biodiversity destruction, not just of flora but also the birds and insects that have inhabited them for decades.

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The lack of eco-sensitive urban planning in India is promoting an ecological and aesthetic disaster — for which Indians will pay in the long run.

How has unplanned urbanisation impacted Indian cities?

Chronic annual monsoon floods in Chennai and Bengaluru: In Chennai and Bengaluru, the **haphazard construction** over surrounding lakes, wetlands, and marshlands has deprived both cities of natural drainage systems, and unique bird and insect life.

Shutdown of Mumbai when the rains intensify: In Mumbai, it's the hectic **horizontal and vertical construction** on mangrove forests and low-lying reclaimed land that has deprived the city of a critical conduit for monsoon rain. It has also contributed to the massive destruction of marine biodiversity.

The cities are **out of sync with nature**. This can be seen most tragically in India's Himalayan and Nilgiri mountains, where Dubai-style glass and concrete jungles are sprouting on fragile and stunning beautiful terrain.

What is the way forward?

Urbanisation is unavoidable. Hence, it is critical that planners **pay more attention to optimising the environmental balance** with urban development.

Urban bodies need to **promote vertical rather than horizontal development** to contain urban sprawls. **For instance:** the steady encroachment of Delhi on to the Ridge, the city's green lungs, or of Gurugram over the ecologically priceless Aravalli.

Uncontrolled tree felling for various infrastructure projects in all major cities is another issue that can be **approached with greater imagination** than a mindless replanting exercise, which is of limited value.

Insistence on the **use of local, eco-friendly material**.

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General

Studies

Paper – 2

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GS2 – POLITY – PARLIAMENT AND STATE LEGISLATURES

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

1. **From Rajendra Prasad to Our Next Rashtrapati**

Source: This post is created based on the article “From Rajendra Prasad to Our Next Rashtrapati” published in The Times of India, on 11th June 2022.

Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Indian Polity – Powers and function of Executive

Context: The election date for the post of India’s President has been announced by the Elections Commission. Now, it is to be seen, whether political parties will choose candidates who will be rubber stamps or defenders of the constitutional values of the country.

Except for President APJ Abdul Kalam, all other Presidents of India have been political personalities. The majority of these political personalities have been Governors, Rajya Sabha MP, or Finance Ministers.

How the system of selection of Presidential candidates has changed over the years?

For the first 20 years after Independence, anyone could stand for presidential elections in the country. An interesting example was a lawyer from Rohtak, Choudhary Hari Ram. He was a candidate in the first five elections.

History books record his name as the runner-up in the 1962 elections, in which Dr. Radhakrishnan was elected President.

Parliament plugged this loophole by requiring a prospective candidate to get his name proposed by voters in the presidential election, i.e. MPs and MLAs. The law now requires at least 50 proposers and 50 seconders for a valid candidature.

What was the discussion about the election of the President during the framing of the Constitution?

During the framing of the Constitution, there was an extensive debate on how the President would be elected.

The draft Constitution proposed an electoral college made of MLAs and MPs and a two-term limit on an individual holding the office of the President.

However, Constituent Assembly members like KT Shah wanted the direct elections for President by adult franchise. He wanted the president “not to be a creature of party majorities in the Centre or local legislatures, but a real representative of the people”.

However, this reasoning was contrary to the parliamentary model of government being proposed by BR Ambedkar and Jawahar Lal Nehru. Nehru defended the Electoral College mechanism for the presidential election.

He stated that it was a middle ground that ensured that the President was not elected by the majority party dominating Parliament. And that it gave members of the state legislature a role in the election of the President.

The final Constitution retained the electoral college mechanism for electing the President, but rejected the two-term limit.

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Powers of President

Constitution framers were also concerned with the nature of the President's powers. Ambedkar equated the position of the President in the Indian Constitution to that of the King in England.

He said that the President "is the Head of State, but not of the executive. He represents the nation, but does not rule the nation. He is the symbol of the nation. His place in the administration is that of a ceremonial device of a seal by which the nation's decisions are made known."

But shortly after Independence, **differences arose between President Rajendra Prasad and Prime Minister Nehru**. The point of contention was **whether the President could act independently of the advice of the council of ministers**.

During Prime Minister Indira Gandhi government, the constitution was amended. It specified that the President shall **act on the advice of the council of ministers**. However, after the emergency, the **Janata Party amended the Constitution**, and it allowed the President to ask the council of ministers to reconsider its advice.

Conclusion

Under our Constitution, there is a special place for President. Ministers and members of Parliament bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution. But the President takes the oath to "protect and defend the Constitution and the law".

GS2 – GOVERNANCE - WELFARE SCHEMES

JAL JEEVAN MISSION AND SWACHH BHARAT

2. [The Jal Jeevan and Swachh Bharat Missions are combining to improve people's well-being](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**The Jal Jeevan and Swachh Bharat Missions are combining to improve people's well-being**" published in the Indian Express on 10th June 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Relevance: Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat Mission

News: The government has launched **Swachh Bharat Mission Phase-2**. It will focus on plastic waste management, biodegradable solid waste management, grey water management and faecal sludge management.

About Schemes

The **Swachh Bharat Mission**: It was launched to stop the scourge of open defecation. More than 10 crore toilets were built with a **twin-pit design** that has **in-situ treatment** of **faecal sludge**.

The **Jal Jeevan Mission**: It was launched in 2010. It is aimed at providing **tap water connections** to over 9.6 crore rural households.

The Concept of Convergence

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Ex-FM Arun Jaitley introduced **convergence** as one of the **primary operating principles** of the government in his first budget speech.

There is a **power of unity**. One stick may break but when many sticks are bundled together, it's impossible to break the stack. The unity lies in convergence between ideas, projects and schemes.

About Swachh Bharat Mission Phase-2: – Convergence of the Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat Mission-

Both, the **Jal Jeevan Mission** and the **Swachh Bharat Mission** faced the challenge of managing **grey water discharge**. About 70% of all household water turns into **grey water**, which can lead to **undesirable consequences**, if discharged untreated.

Therefore, the **Jal Jeevan Mission** has been converged with the **Swachh Bharat Mission** under SBA to achieve holistic sanitation in which the treatment of grey water became a vital component.

Under **SBA Phase-2**, arrangements for solid and liquid waste management have been made in the focussed areas.

Under the second phase, the government will have the **continuous pursuit of perfection** like covering loose ends, plugging gaps in delivery and taking the benefits to the last man in line.

Agenda of Swachh Bharat Mission's Phase 2

Two-thirds of all toilets which were not connected to the main sewer lines during SBA-1 will be connected. This will lead to a solution to the problem of **untreated faecal sludge** which at present does not find entry into sewer lines.

It will also address **India's plastic waste pollution problem** which is staggering at present

Both **Jal Jeevan Mission** (JJM) and **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** (SBA) are centred around the dignity of women.

- (1) JJM aims to relieve **women** of the **drudgery** of **travelling** long distances to fetch water, and
- (2) The **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** and **UNICEF survey** revealed that 80% of the respondents stated that safety and security were the main drivers of their decision to construct toilets. Around 93% of women reported feeling safe and said that they had found dignity in using household toilets.
- (3) The Jal Jeevan Mission reserves 50% seats for women in **village** and **water sanitation committees**. In every village, at least five women have been entrusted with water quality surveillance etc.

Achievements of SBA-2 So Far

3.5 lakh villages have become plastic dump free and nearly 4.23 lakh villages have minimal litter.

Nearly 178 **faecal sludge treatment plants** and nearly 90,000 km of **drains** have been constructed.

Importance of these schemes

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A 2006 study revealed that inadequate sanitation cost India 6% of India's GDP or Rs 2.4 trillion at that time. Thus, SBM apart from preventing GDP loss, provides annual benefits worth Rs 53,000 per household.

Way Forward

These schemes should be regarded as **stepping stones** to taking on tougher challenges. It strikes at the root of social problems.

GS2 – POLITY – ELECTORAL ISSUES

ELECTORAL REFORMS

3. [No more lost votes: EC's pilot on remote voting for migrants is a big plus for democracy. Aim for 2024 full rollout](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**No more lost votes: EC's pilot on remote voting for migrants is a big plus for democracy. Aim for 2024 full rollout**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity

Relevance: Electoral reform and other issues

News: Democracy becomes meaningful and equitable when every citizen has a fair chance to cast a vote. Hence, the Election Commission move to conduct a pilot project to explore the possibility of remote voting for migrant workers is a big plus for electoral democracy.

Why remote voting provision is significant?

Internal migrants will benefit: Not everyone can take a train or flight back home to vote. Nearly 300 million citizens out of a total of 910 million electors didn't cast their votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Ways to enfranchise them must be found.

From the 2011 Census that counted 450 million internal migrants, the number is estimated to be **600 million** now. Short-term migrants who spend some months of the year in cities far away from their villages rarely acquire a vote in their place of work. This category will benefit from EC's move.

What are some associated challenges?

Logistic issues: Migrants will have to be mapped and then enrolled for remote voting. Designated polling centres must be set up across India.

There will be election day tech challenges – verifying voter identities and ensuring the vote cast on the EVM is channelled to the correct booth and constituency.

Also, those listed for remote voting but turning up physically at domicile polling booths due to personal or other emergencies – recall the lockdown – must be accommodated.

Way forward

With institutional and political will, difficulties can be overcome.

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From shuttling security forces and polling officers across polling phases, sanitising electoral rolls, enrolling first-time voters to getting the women's vote out, EC is a past master at resolving logistical problems.

The previous Lok Sabha had passed a bill to extend **proxy voting facility to NRIs**, but the bill lapsed. Such reforms should get **cross-party backing**.

As EC starts the migrant voting pilot project, it should also start the process of **identifying migrant voter clusters**. Gujarat is a migrant worker hub. Let the pilot happen there and EC should aim for a 2024 full rollout.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

AGRICULTURE RELATED ISSUES

4. [WTO rules on foodgrains must be updated](#)

Source: This post is created based on the article “**WTO rules on foodgrains must be updated**” published in **Business Standard** on **8th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 2- International Institutions and Related issues

News: About 60 countries, including India and China, have pushed for a joint proposal for consideration of several WTO rules. The proposal was pushed at the upcoming 12th ministerial summit of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The proposal has been moved to solve some of the contentious issues linked to, food stockholding, agricultural subsidies, international trade, and humanitarian aid.

What are the aspects that have been proposed to change in the computation of farm subsidies?

WTO's methodology still uses 1986-88 prices as the benchmark.

Existing provisions regarding **permissible subsidies are** fixed at present at a maximum of 10 percent of the value of the produce.

[Peace clause](#)

WTO's Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), which has failed to deliver on its aims to remove trade barriers, promote transparent market access, and integrate global markets. AoA has been criticised for its tilt towards the developed countries.

What are the reasons behind pushing for these reforms?

First, the proposal has been supported not only by food-exporting but also food-importing countries of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific regions, including India, China, Egypt, Indonesia, South Africa, and Pakistan.

Second, the present rules were mainly negotiated and drafted by US and the European Union. The negotiators from the developing countries were mainly officials from their trade ministries, who were not allowed to have much say in these negotiations.

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Third, the reference period for the calculation of subsidies 1986-88, favoured developed countries. It allowed them greater leeway to increase their support to the farmers while denying the similar space to developing countries. Thus the reference period requires updation.

Fourth, the proposal permits exports of foodgrains from public stocks to meet the urgent needs of food-stressed countries.

Lastly, it envisages greater flexibility for developing countries to formulate their policies concerning the production, acquisition, and stocking of foodgrain. It will promote domestic food security of developing countries.

GS2 – GOVERNANCE – CIVIL SERVICES

INDIAN CIVIL SERVICES AND RELATED ISSUES

5. **Dhiraj Nayyar writes: The problem with putting the civil services on a pedestal**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Dhiraj Nayyar writes: The problem with putting the civil services on a pedestal**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Governance

Relevance: Civil services and related issues

Context: Most countries in the world have a cadre of professional civil servants, but nowhere are new entrants to the system of government celebrated like in India. It's like the public itself hasn't overcome the colonial legacy of the civil service being the grandest of professions.

This has consequences, and must change.

Why society has a favorable view of civil services?

Most ordinary people don't aspire for themselves or their children to join politics which is viewed as murky, the domain of the less-educated non-professionals. But the civil services are **highly aspirational**. It is due to the following reasons –

For one, candidates are selected on **merit based** on an open examination and interview. One cannot inherit a position in the civil services, like in politics.

Then there is the **job security** that comes with gaining entry. Unless a civil servant does an extraordinary wrong, she has a job for life, and steady, time-bound promotions which ensure that everyone retires at the top irrespective of performance.

What are the weaknesses in the civil services?

In the perceived strengths of the civil services lie its weaknesses.

– The **single UPSC examination**, which most candidates take in their early or mid-20s, is treated as gospel. Often, it is used as an argument against lateral entry because unless people have passed that examination, they are deemed to not be meritorious or deserving of being in government. It is also used to determine career trajectories. Those who stood first or second in their batch while in their 20s are more likely to rise to important positions such as cabinet

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secretary or foreign secretary thirty years later when they are in their late 50s. **Merit and competence cannot be judged by a single exam.**

The permanence of the job is a problem too. Punishment for over-reach or misuse of power is a transfer, either from a weightier ministry to a lighter one or from high-profile capitals to geographically remote ones.

The result is that all civil servants, never mind their ability or competence, **operate in a system of limited accountability** with few incentives to perform and plenty of opportunities to use and abuse their powers.

Way forward

The civil services system needs to be **brought down from its pedestal and placed at par with every other profession** like elsewhere in the world. This will not happen via political diktat. It requires the **weight of public opinion.**

The system must be **manned by capable, competent individuals.** This cannot be decided on the basis of one exam.

The bad eggs need to be separated, which cannot happen when the job is for life.

GS2 – POLITY – CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES

ROLE OF GOVERNOR AND RELATED ISSUES

6. **Bengal decision to make CM as Chancellor**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Bengal decision to make CM as Chancellor**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Role of a Governor

Relevance: Tussle b/w Governor and state government

Context: The time may have come to reconsider having Governors as university Chancellors.

What is the recent issue?

The West Bengal government recently decided to make the Chief Minister the Chancellor of State-run universities, instead of the Governor. This decision appears to be an outcome of the severely strained relations between Governor and Chief Minister.

They have often differed on issues concerning the appointment of Vice-Chancellors and the functioning of universities. The governor had alleged that VCs were appointed without the approval of the Chancellor, the appointing authority; on some occasions, VCs had not turned up for a meeting with the Governor-Chancellor.

Other instances of friction b/w Governor and state govt

Tamil Nadu recently passed Bills to empower the State government, instead of the Chancellor, to appoint VCs. It also passed a separate Bill to establish a new university for alternative systems of medicine, with the Chief Minister as its Chancellor. The Bills are yet to receive the Governor's assent.

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In **Kerala**, there is a different kind of controversy, with the Governor asking the Chief Minister to take over the Chancellor's role in the light of alleged political interference in the functioning of universities.

These developments underscore that the conferment of statutory roles to Governors may be a source of friction between elected regimes and Governors, who are seen as agents of the Centre.

Why Governors hold the office of Chancellor?

The original intent of making Governors hold the office of Chancellor and vesting some statutory powers on them was to **insulate universities from political influence**.

Justice R.S. Sarkaria Commission, acknowledged the distinction between the Governor's constitutional role and the statutory role performed as a Chancellor, and also underlined that the Chancellor is not obliged to seek the government's advice.

Justice M.M. Punchhi Commission, which examined Centre-State relations, was quite forthcoming in its 2010 report. Noting that the Governor should not be "*burdened with positions and powers... which may expose the office to controversies or public criticism*", it advised against conferring statutory powers on the Governor.

Way forward

The time may have come for all States to reconsider having the Governor as the Chancellor.

However, they should also find alternative means of protecting university autonomy so that ruling parties do not exercise undue influence on the functioning of universities.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – COMMUNAL HARMONY

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY

7. The path towards greater religious tolerance and social harmony

Source: The post is based on an article "**The path towards greater religious tolerance and social harmony**" published in the **Indian Express** on **8th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS1 Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India; Communalism

Relevance: Religious Amity and Social Harmony

Context: In the words of **K M Munshi**: "Indian culture is a living force. It absorbs alien elements when necessary but transmutes them into a new pattern of homogeneous richness. It has made us what we are in the world today; and will make us what we want to be in the world tomorrow."

Nature of Indian Society

India is the beloved home for **practitioners** of all **major religions** in the world. Indian culture accepts **diversity** of faiths and beliefs.

Chhatrapati Shivaji once wrote to Emperor Aurangzeb that Islam and Hinduism appear to be contrasted terms. But they are nothing but **diverse pigments** used by the **divine painter** (the god) to fill in his picture of the whole **human race**. If men try to draw new lines on a picture, this is not the fault of the painter."

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Importance of harmony and cohesion

Religious harmony and **social cohesion** are two **core elements** for **progress** and **development**. They are the core requirements for global peace.

What are some worrisome developments emerging on sustaining religious amity?

From time immemorial, the societies have been facing divisiveness on the ground of religion, colour, race, caste, untouchability etc.

Over the last three decades, the most sufferings were inflicted on humanity in the name of religion.

Nani Palkhivala wrote: "A man may study or practice religion. But if he is a **fanatical fundamentalist**, he deserves to rank as a **religious illiterate**, whatever his **formal education** may be".

Hatred and violence against other religions is generated and created through **misinterpretations** and **misinformation** by some ill-equipped minds who could be called religion illiterates. Such persons are severely devoid of that basic human instinct of compassion.

In case of India, the external elements are pursuing the **policy of inflicting a thousand cuts on India**. They are active and exploiting vulnerable elements like religious divisiveness.

Way Forward

The ultimate goal of all religions is the same. The only differences lie in the paths which have been articulated in varied ways.

Compassion is at the heart of every religion. For example, **Dalai Lama** refers to his mother as his **teacher of compassion**.

All practices of separation are a consequence of **ignorance**. Therefore, expansion of education is important to vanish it.

The basic tenet of **Indian culture** is that every **temple** and **mosque** deserve equal respect and should get it.

True scholars of every religion must rise to the occasion; go to people, and educate them on essential unity of all religions.

We, the people of India, must strive hard to generate compassion, strength, sincerity and commitment to ensure the safety and security of India. Further, there is a need for rejuvenation of the **great dialogic tradition**

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GS2 – GOVERNANCE – GOVT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA

8. [Asia's highland: Do better than Thais, fully decriminalise marijuana](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Asia's highland: Do better than Thais, fully decriminalise marijuana**” published in The Times of India on **10th June 22**.

Relevance: Legalization of Marijuana

News: Thailand recently became the first Asian nation to decriminalize marijuana for medical and industrial use.

Details about Thailand's move on Marijuana

Thailand's move means is that farmers will be able to grow the plant while entrepreneurs can sell cannabis-infused food, drinks and cosmetics.

There are two caveats –

- smoking pot in public will still be outlawed
- possession and sale of cannabis extracts containing more than 0.2% of its psychoactive ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), will not be allowed.

Thailand's part decriminalisation of marijuana is expected to fetch the industry as much as \$435 million by 2026.

What is the situation in India wrt Marijuana?

India continues to stick to a grey area where only certain parts of the plant (bhang leaves) and certain uses (medical and scientific) are allowed.

This system came about because India had given in to **American pressure in the 1980s** and banned all narcotic substances. But since then the US has reversed course and today 19 American states allow recreational marijuana.

Therefore, it **makes little sense to keep marijuana in the proscribed list**, clog up courts by prosecuting low quantities of possession, drive the trade underground and eschew legitimate revenue.

Way forward

Before the ban, India had a centuries-old tradition of marijuana use as part of its culture. Decriminalising marijuana fully makes legal sense, as well as an economic one.

REGULATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

9. **Moderation's broken but this isn't the way to fix it**

Source: The post is based on the article “**Moderation's broken but this isn't the way to fix it**” published in the “**Livemint**” on **10th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges

Relevance: Understanding the challenges associated with the draft amendment to the Information Technology(IT) Rules 2021.

News: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology(MEITY) has released a fresh draft of the amendment to the [Information Technology\(IT\) Rules 2021](#).

What are the draft new amendments to the IT Rules,2021?

Read here: [Union Govt seeks fresh comments on Draft IT Rules](#)

What are the issues associated with the draft amendments?

1) State oversight of moderation could open the doors for overreach and censorship, 2) There will be debates on free speech in social media as the state-appointed entity judging the contents, 3) **Challenges with last year IT rules:** Many of last year's IT Rules were legally challenged and both the Bombay and Madras high courts have stayed provisions that asked digital news companies to comply with a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism headed by the government.

Note: India's last year IT rules asked for messages to be traceable, for instance, which would technically require all chats decrypted.

What could be done?

The idea of self-regulation by platforms: Authorities worldwide have been trying to hold Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc, accountable for the spread of fake information. Globally, Facebook has an oversight board that has not achieved much. Their self-regulation addresses only a fraction of disputes between users and moderators.

India could have a pan-industry panel containing eminent Indian jurists and other such citizens known for their independence to oversee an arbitration team. Further, they should be equipped with resources and expertise to resolve a rising number of complaints.

ENCOUNTER KILLINGS BY POLICE

10. **It is a bumping-off of the rule of law too**

Source: The post is based on an article “It is a bumping-off the rule of law too” published in the “The Hindu” on 9th June 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 Provisions of the Constitution of India; GS 3 Internal Security; Mandate of the security forces

Relevance: Rule of law, and Fake encounters

News: Recently, the commission of inquiry on the Hyderabad fake encounter 2019 has submitted its report.

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Present Case

In 2019, a veterinary doctor was gang-raped by four youth and then murdered her and burnt her body on the outskirts of Hyderabad near Shamsabad.

The Commission's findings

The killing of the youths was a **pre-meditated cold-blooded murder**. It was a fake encounter.

The police officials by-passed the law and due processes and eliminated suspects with impunity.

Therefore, the law should take its own course; a first information report (FIR) should be filed against the police officials concerned.

What are the reasons for fake encounters in India?

There is **public outcry** to apprehend the men after the commission of the crime. It may push the police to take the law into their own hands and eliminate the suspected criminals.

The police personnel see fake encounters as opportunities to wear and demonstrate the "encounter specialist" tag.

Political Mandate

In 2017, the UP Chief Minister publicly stated that criminals would be jailed or killed in encounters. The law-enforcing agencies were given a free hand to deal with criminals in a subtle manner. Therefore, around 151 criminals had been killed in the state.

Similarly, the Assam Chief minister also gave clear directions to the Assam police personnel that criminals who attempted to escape should be shot. Thereafter, around 28 suspects have been killed.

Similarly, the Uttar Pradesh model of encounter killings has been suggested for adoption in Bihar in order to bring down the crime rate.

Issues in Fake encounters

Majority of those killed in encounters belong to the minority community and ethnic communities

Extra-judicial killings go against the very spirit of **rule of law**.

Despite involvement of senior police officers, the commissions of inquiry usually target **low-ranking officers**, from constables to inspectors. The lower personnel face the brunt.

Magisterial inquiries conducted by local magistrates turn out to be farce. The local magistrates work in consonance with the police of the district. Therefore, they would be inclined to go with the police version.

The fake encounters may include killing unarmed and helpless suspects who may not decidedly be criminals.

If States begin to adopt extra-judicial strategies to bring down the crime rate, then it may lead to a country ruled by criminals in uniform.

Way Forward

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If **any police personnel** are incarcerated for fake encounters, **senior officers** should also be prosecuted. It is the responsibility of senior police officers to ensure that the rule of law is strictly followed in their jurisdiction.

Complaints of fake encounters need to be attended to on top priority. The judiciary should be activated immediately after a complaint is received because police may not readily register a complaint of a fake encounter.

Commissions of inquiry should comprise **magistrates nominated** from other States and **police officers** from other States. They would be impartial and fair in their inquiries

The **medals** or **citations** given to those who were indicted in fake encounters and have been awarded **police gallantry medals**, should be withdrawn as fake encounters immediately.

The SC Judges Markandey Katju and C.K. Prasad said that “Fake encounter killings are nothing but **cold-blooded brutal murder**. This offence should be treated as the **rarest of rare offenses** and police personnel responsible for it should be awarded the **death sentence**.”

There should be fast track courts, as it will serve as a signal and deterrent to other policemen.

PRELEGISLATIVE CONSULTATION

11. **Let's redesign the process of pre-legislative consultation**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Let's redesign the process of pre-legislative consultation**” published in the **Live Mint** on **7th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Governance; Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Relevance: Pre-legislative Consultation Policy 2014

Context: In 2014, India's ministry of law and justice issued a policy on pre-legislative consultation.

Background

In 2012, the **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** issued a set of 12 recommendations on policymaking practices for member and non-member nations.

Importance of Pre-Legislative Consultation

It ensures **transparency** in the legislative process. Further, lawmakers keep in mind the concerns of all affected parties.

To do so, regulators should offer **meaningful opportunities** to the public to participate in the legislative process.

Features of Indian policy

The Central government should **place legislative proposals** in the public domain for a period of at least **30 days** before they are submitted to the **Cabinet** for consideration.

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The **proposal** must be accompanied by a brief note justifying its **necessity**, its broad **financial implications**, an assessment of its impact on the **environment** as well as the **fundamental rights** and **lives** and livelihoods of the people.

Public comments be summarized and placed on the website of the department or ministry concerned. These also had to be included in a note to the Cabinet along with the draft proposal.

What are the issues?

Most legislative proposals in India do follow this practice, but the consultation itself is no more than a formality today.

In many instances, the **time set aside** for consultation is **too short** to be of any practical consequence,

The government is under no obligation to justify why a given **suggestion** was excluded from the final draft.

Stakeholders have no way to tell whether their suggestion was rejected after due consideration or simply ignored.

Way Forward

In order to extract value from **pre-legislative consultation**, there is a need to **redesign** the process.

(1) In the **first place**, instead of putting a draft legislation, the government should first describe the issues for which legislative solutions are being sought. This will lead to the start of a **constructive conversation**.

The issues for consultation should be put in public domain with a set of questions, to seek responses from the stakeholders.

The feedback should be taken in a structured manner, ideally through a digital interface.

(2) The final step would be to prepare a report that lists all the **suggestions** received and the **final decision** arrived at on each issue.

The report should clearly state the reasons for non-acceptance or discarding of the suggestions.

(3) Thereafter, a draft legislation can be prepared along the lines of the final recommendation.

(4) Some Good Cases in India

(a) **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Model**: All its recommendations are a result of a process exactly like mentioned above. Therefore, the TRAI reports are highly regarded policy papers in India.

(b) **The Justice Srikrishna Committee on data protection** also used a similar process. It sought inputs from the stakeholders before making recommendations.

(5) In addition to the government's approach for accommodating viewpoints of the stakeholder, the stakeholders should also approach such an exercise **constructively**. They need to realize that **policy-making** is an exercise in **compromise**. All their demands during negotiations cannot come on final papers, otherwise the process will become unfortunate and counter-productive.

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

HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED ISSUES

12. [Gagan Deep Sharma writes: Celebrating Indian universities' rise in global rankings](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Gagan Deep Sharma writes: Celebrating Indian universities' rise in global rankings**” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues related to development and management of education

Relevance: Higher education in India and related issues

News: In the recently announced QS World Universities Rankings 2023, Indian higher educational institutions have done their best to date.

Seven universities have made a grand entry this year, while 17 universities ascended and 17 others stood unwavering on their previous year's position as the world's top higher educational institutions.

The 20% increase in new entrants has pushed India up the ladder.

[What are the QS World rankings?](#)

It is the world's largest and most remarkable annual survey of academic opinion, the QS rankings evaluate a university's performance by measuring the sentiments of academic stakeholders over six performance indicators —

a) academic reputation, **b)** employer reputation, **c)** faculty/student ratio, **d)** citations per faculty (CpF), **e)** international faculty ratio, and **f)** international student ratio.

The globalisation of education has transformed the way institutional excellence is measured. Hence, the elite status of world-class universities now also relies on **international recognition** from university rankings.

[How have the Indian educational institutions fared in the latest rankings?](#)

The 19th edition of the rankings draws a stronger picture of India.

– **Nine institutions** of eminence are ranked in the top 1,000, **five** in the top 500, and **three** in the top 200.

– In the prestigious band of the top 200 are the Indian Institute of Science (155), IIT-Bombay at 172nd, and IIT-Delhi at 174th globally, moving up 31, five, and 11 places respectively from the previous year's score. IIT-Indore debuts at an impressive 396th rank globally among the new entrants.

The **University of Madras** lands in the 541-550 band, while **Chandigarh University** (800-1000) is the youngest university to secure a spot on the list.

It is historic that after a gap of 10 years, all Indian institutions in the top 500 have improved their ranking.

[What are the parameters on which Indian univ have improved?](#)

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Indian universities have established a significant global standing in the QS World Rankings 2023, with the highlight being

- the improved faculty/student ratio
- citation per faculty
- international student admissions
- male/female student enrollment ratio.

All this has happened due to the conscious efforts of the government towards improving the standards of higher education.

Way forward

Despite the improvement, there are also a number of areas that call for immediate attention of the government.

- State expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP
- India's spending on research has been low for decades
- Issues of mobility of international faculty and students.
- Lastly, India doesn't have education penetration to the last mile. This is something which the government aims to rectify through its target of achieving a 50 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio by the year 2035 against 26.3 per cent in 2018, as envisaged in the NEP.

The government should address these issues to make India's education system strong, inclusive, and equitable.

13. The need for digital collaboration

Source: The post is based on an article "**The need for digital collaboration**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **7th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Social Sector, Education Sector

Relevance: Higher Education Reforms in India

News: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has simplified its approval process for local universities to collaborate with their counterparts abroad, to offer joint degrees, dual degrees, and twinning programmes.

Which Higher Education Institution (IHEI) are eligible for collaboration?

Indian

Any IHEI accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council having a minimum score of 3.01 on a 4-point scale or any IHEI featuring in the top 1,000 of the Times Higher Education or QS World University Rankings will be eligible to participate in the collaboration.

Further, Indian institutes in the top 100 list of the National Institute Ranking Framework will also be eligible.

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Foreign Institutes

The willing institute must rank in the top 1,000 in either of the two world university rankings.

What are the issues?

The UGC's regulations do not allow **academic collaboration** with **foreign institutions** for **online learning** and **open and distance learning (ODL)**.

This hinders leveraging the potential of information and communication technology in the teaching and learning process.

Importance of ODL Programme in India

The NEP 2020 recommends for more ODL and online programmes to increase the gross enrolment ratio in HEIs in India, especially to improve access in remote areas.

Part-time employees in both the organised and unorganised sectors opt for ODL in order to upgrade their qualifications for better career prospects.

Distance enrolment constitutes 11.1% of the total enrolment in higher education in the postgraduate, undergraduate, PG Diploma, Diploma, and Certificate levels programmes in India.

The ODL programmes are more affordable compared to the in-person programmes and are therefore popular among disadvantaged sections.

Online Education

The government has been promoting online education in India. For example, MOOCs, SWAYAM and NPTEL

The universities and colleges are now being centrally funded under the **RUSA** and **TEQIP-III programmes** to create and strengthen infrastructure for online and digital education.

In addition, the Union Budget announced the establishment of a **digital university**.

Other disadvantages from the move

The chances of a state-sponsored institution for **smooth international collaboration** will be thwarted by the UGC regulations. The central universities, the IITs and the IIMs are better funded by the Centre. In fact, the central institutions outplay their **State-sponsored counterparts**. The State-funded HEIs do not perform well in the ranking system.

The move will only exacerbate the divide between central and State institutes.

What will be the advantages from the International Collaboration?

According to AISHE's findings, 49,348 international students from 168 countries are enrolled in Indian universities. For example, 45.6% are from four neighboring nations: Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

The move will pave the way for an increase in the footfall of international students in India.

The move will be a game changer for the financially constrained HEIs.

It will help to compensate for the outflow of foreign exchange from India.

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Way Forward

The UGC needs to revisit its policies for **foreign collaborations**. It should ensure students studying in State-sponsored HEIs and opting for ODL and online education are not deprived of benefits in India

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL ORG AND GROUPINGS

BIIMSTEC AND RELATED ISSUES

14. **A ‘silver’ moment to propel a Bay of Bengal dream**

Source: The post is based on an article “**A silver moment to propel a Bay of Bengal dream**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **7th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 International Relations; Regional Grouping

Relevance: BIMSTEC

News: On June 6, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) has completed 25 years

Background

It was launched as a modest grouping of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand), with the acronym, **BIST-EC** as a result of the Bangkok Declaration 1997.

Later on, three countries (Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar) and it became the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Importance of the Grouping

It is an instrument of regional cooperation and integration between South Asia and the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**.

Resurgence

The far-reaching decisions which were taken in Goa paved the way for the **institution’s reform**. Further, the Goa decisions took final shape in **Kathmandu summit** in 2018. Further, The **Colombo summit** in March 2022 finally approved the plans of rejuvenation.

Key achievements

It has crafted a **new Charter**. The charter spells out the grouping’s vision, functions of its constituent parts, and has secured a legal personality.

It has prioritised the **sectors of cooperation**. The sectors have been reduced from 14 to 7. Each member-state will serve as the lead country for the assigned sector.

It has taken measures to strengthen the Secretariat.

Unlike the SAARC, post-2014, BIMSTEC has continued to hold its **summits and meetings of Foreign Ministers**.

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The grouping has **progressed in combating terrorism, and forging security cooperation**. It has created mechanisms and practices for the better management of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The grouping has **established institutions** such as an Energy Centre and the Centre on Weather and Climate to push sectoral cooperation forward.

What are the challenges?

BIMSTEC has been hindered by the burdens of South Asia Countries. Therefore, it grew slowly.

In the 21st century, the **strategic contestation** between the **United States** and **China** defines the region's geopolitics and geo-economics. It is creating new tensions and opportunities.

There are **internal tensions** between member countries. For example, the **Rohingyas influx** into Bangladesh, **Myanmar's military coup** has led to its **virtual boycott** by a large segment of the international community; and Sri Lanka is facing political and economic crisis.

It has failed to produce a **comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** despite signing of the Framework Agreement before 18 years.

Despite **summit declarations**, the concerned ministers and officials have failed to expedite action.

There has been **poor connectivity** with respect to infrastructure (roads, railways, air, river, and coastal shipping links); energy; the digital and financial domain; and institutions. This has been despite the adoption of the **Master Plan for Connectivity** supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The **bilateral initiatives**, for example, taken by India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan to strengthen transport links have also been delayed inordinately.

The grouping has not started working upon the Blue Economy.

The members have not engaged **business chambers** and **corporate leaders** with activities of BIMSTEC. Therefore, the grouping remains in the hands of officials and experts.

Way Forward

The **Heads of state** and **government** need to assert their authority to fulfil the FTA obligations.

More financial resources are needed for greater regional connectivity. The BIMSTEC Development Fund can be launched.

The vision of the **Bay of Bengal Community (BOBC)** should be realized. It has the potential to play a pivotal role to deepen linkages between South Asia and Southeast Asia in this **Indo-Pacific century**.

The collaboration can be done with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) to accelerate the **region's economic development**.

Three countries have a special responsibility: Bangladesh as the host of the BIMSTEC Secretariat; Thailand as the representative of Southeast Asia; and India as the largest state in South Asia

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GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – SEX WORKERS ISSUE

SEX WORKERS IN INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

15. **Taking steps to ensure sex workers' rights**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Taking steps to ensure sex worker’s rights**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **7th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Fundamental Rights of Sex Workers

News: Recently, the SC in ***Budhadev Karmaskar v. State of West Bengal & Ors***, has given directions related to rights of the sex workers and their children.

About Sex Worker and Prostitution

The expression ‘sex worker’ has not been defined in the **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA)** or any other law. But according to the ITPA 1987, ‘**prostitution**’ means the sexual exploitation or abuse of persons for commercial purposes.

The expression ‘prostitution’ includes offering the body to a person for **promiscuous sexual intercourse** for hire. It also include taking unjust and unlawful advantage of trapped women for one’s benefit or sexual intercourse.

Six SC directions which the central government agreed to implement

The court directed the government to implement the **other six recommendations** as well as the provisions of **the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) of 1956**. These are:

- (1) to provide immediate **medical assistance** to sex workers who are victims of sexual assault;
- (2) to release **adult sex workers** detained in ITPA protective homes against their will;
- (3) to sensitise the police and other law-enforcement agencies about the rights of sex workers to live with dignity;
- (4) to ask the **Press Council of India** to issue guidelines to the media so that they don’t reveal the identities of sex workers while reporting on arrest, raid and rescue operations;
- (5) To not consider **health measures** that sex workers employ for their safety (such as condoms) as evidence of commission of an offence; and
- (6) To ensure that the **legal service authorities** of the Central and State governments educate sex workers about their rights vis-à-vis the legality of sex work.

Four recommendations on which The Central Government has shown reservations

- (1) Preventing the police from taking any **criminal action** against a sex worker on the basis of ‘age’ and ‘consent’, if sex worker is an **adult** and is participating with **consent**.

An adult sex worker who is a **sex worker voluntarily** is not an offence per se, until exploitation or abuse is reported by the sex worker or revealed during investigation.

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(2) Since **voluntary sex work** is not illegal and only running a brothel is unlawful. Therefore, sex workers should not be arrested or victimised during any raid in the brothel.

(3) No child of a sex worker should be separated from the mother merely on the ground that the mother is in the sex trade. If a minor is living in a brothel or with sex workers, it should not be presumed that he/she has been trafficked.

As per law, the law presumes trafficking if a child is found with any person in a brothel. Such a child or a minor after being rescued should be placed with any child care institute recognised under the Juvenile Justice Act. Similar remarks have also been reiterated in **Gaurav Jain v. Union of India (1997)**, by the Supreme Court of India

(4) The government should involve representatives of the sex workers in the process of decision-making in laws relating to sex work. For example, rehabilitation of sex workers, improving their living conditions etc.

Way Forward

The ITPA and CrPC may be amended suitably to **enforce** the directions of the **Supreme Court**.

If possible, other directions may be implemented through **executive orders** by the governments.

The government should differentiate between **prostitution** and the work of sex workers. It can ban prostitution per se. However, voluntary sex work should be allowed with certain conditions keeping in mind the public interest.

The women in the **flesh trade** should be viewed more as victims of adverse **socioeconomic circumstances** rather than as offenders.

The law should be appropriately amended to define 'sexual exploitation' and 'abuse of persons'.

GS2 – POLITY – JUDICIARY

JUDICIAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

16. The judiciary should have annual performance reports, too

Source: This post is based on the article “**The judiciary should have annual performance reports, too**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Judiciary

Relevance: Judicial transparency and accountability

News: In a rare exhibition of transparency, the Orissa High Court has published an **annual report taking stock of its performance** in a difficult year that marked by the resurgence of the pandemic. By subjecting itself to the scrutiny of the common citizen, the court has shown exceptional humility.

Details of the annual report

The report provides a **district-wise breakup of cases** and **availability of judges**.

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It contains a section explaining the **reasons for delays and backlog** at the level of the district judiciary. The following reasons have been cited for the delay –

- The tendency of higher courts to “stay” proceedings
- The uneven distribution of cases amongst judges in trial courts
- The non-availability of witnesses due to transfers

The report also sheds light on the **administrative functioning** of the court.

In addition to **listing the judges on each administrative committee**, the report acknowledges the work done by them.

– **For instance**, the committee that deals with the appeals by the employees of the district judiciary against orders passed by disciplinary authorities had 40 appeals, out of which it disposed of only 13 appeals. This is useful information if one wishes to assess the **administrative workload of judges and the efficiency** with which they discharge their tasks. Most HCs do not share this information with ordinary citizens even if requests are made for the same under the Right to Information Act.

Significance of annual reports

Annual reports have traditionally been an important way of **ensuring accountability of public bodies to Parliament and citizens**.

Each Union ministry is required to supply copies of these reports to the Lok Sabha Secretariat a week before the Demand for Grants of the ministries is taken up.

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has detailed instructions on the expectations regarding the timeline and content of such reports.

These reports are **examined by the Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committees and the Parliamentary Committee on “Papers Laid on the Table”**, which regularly takes to task ministries for delays in tabling reports of the government companies and autonomous bodies under their control.

Unlike the executive, the **judiciary is not under any legal obligation to prepare annual reports** or table them before Parliament or the state legislature.

Do courts publish annual reports regularly?

No.

A survey of the websites of the 25 high courts in the country revealed that only the high courts of Madras, Himachal Pradesh and Tripura had published an annual report in the last two years.

At most, **all high courts submit short reports to the Supreme Court** which compiles all the information into one annual report on the judiciary.

Way forward

It's up to Parliament to **enact a law that mandates high courts to publish an annual report** not just on their performance, but also on the performance of the district judiciary under their administrative control.

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This law should **clearly outline the expected content** of the report and establish a **clear timeline for its publication**.

GS2 – SOCIAL ISSUES – HEALTH RELATED ISSUES

HEALTHCARE INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA

17. [K. Sujatha Rao writes: Healthcare in India is ailing. Here is how to fix it](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**K. Sujatha Rao writes: Healthcare in India is ailing. Here is how to fix it**” published in **The Indian Express** on **9th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Health

Relevance: Institutional reform in Healthcare in India and related issues

Context: The pandemic experience has shown that India needs to make public health a **central focus**. Covid has also shifted the policy dialogue from health budgets and medical colleges towards much-needed and badly-delayed **institutional reform**.

It is heartening to note that the Ministry of Health has issued guidelines to states to establish a **public health cadre**.

It is time our political systems listen to people and take care of their everyday needs, instead of going for easy options like privatisation, commodification and medicalisation of healthcare.

Why India's three-tiered subcentre model has failed?

Less than 10% of the health facilities below the district level can attain the grossly minimal Indian public health standards. Clearly, the three-tier model of subcentres with paramedics, primary health centres with MBBS doctors and community health centres (CHC) with four to six specialists, has failed.

Reasons:

The model's weakness is the **absence of an accountability framework**. The facilities are designed to be **passive** — treating those seeking care.

What needs to be done?

Like in Brazil, we need **Family Health Teams (FHT)** accountable for the health and wellbeing of a dedicated population, say 2,000 families.

– The FHTs must consist of a doctor with a diploma in family medicine and a dozen trained personnel to reflect the skill base required for the 12 guaranteed services under the Ayushman Bharat scheme — midwives, public health nurses, other paramedics, health workers and community workers.

A **baseline survey** of these families will provide information about those needing attention — the elderly, diabetics, hypertensives, handicapped, pregnant women, infants, and those needing mental or physiotherapy services.

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The team ensures a continuum of care by taking the family as a unit and ensuring its well-being over a period. Their work should be closely monitored, and the personnel should be given **outcome-linked monetary and non-monetary incentives**.

Such a system of primary care will need to work under the **close supervision of a CHC** manned by specialists in family medicine.

Creation of public health cadre: There must be a public health cadre manning the posts at the PHC and CHCs consisting of sub-specialists in family medicine, public health and public health management.

– Likewise, among nurses, the cadre should comprise two distinct sets of personnel — **public health nurses** (not ANMs promoted based on seniority) and **nurse midwives** capable of independently doing all clinical functions for handling pregnancies and women’s health issues except surgical interventions.

India needs to move beyond the doctor-led system and paramedicalise several functions. Instead of “wasting” gynaecologists in CHCs, when there is an overall shortage of them, midwives (nurses with a BSc degree and two years of training in midwifery) can provide equally good services except surgical, and can be positioned in all CHCs and PHCs.

Likewise, lay counselors for mental health, physiotherapists and public health nurses are critically required for addressing the multiple needs of primary health care at the family and community levels.

This needs to be acknowledged, and such trained persons appropriately positioned based on patient load and disease burden.

Way forward

A transformative health system will require a comprehensive review of the existing training institutions, standardising curricula and the qualifying criteria.

Faculty reviews are required to make the training inspirational and not dull and repetitive, as it is currently.

Spending on **pre-service and in-service training** needs to increase from the current level of about 1%.

FOOD SAFETY INDEX

18. **Safe foods: On the need to develop lab infrastructure in States**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Safe foods: On the need to develop lab infrastructure in States**” published in **The Hindu** on **9th June 22**.

Relevance: Food safety in India and related issues

News: The **4th State Food Safety Index** was released recently.

Tamil Nadu deserves credit for finishing at the top among 17 large States for food safety; it was ranked third in the previous edition of the State Food Safety Index.

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How have the Southern states fared in the index?

Except Tamil Nadu, there's nothing for the other southern States to cheer about, despite the region being more advanced than the rest of India in many socio-economic indicators.

- **Kerala**, which came second last time, is now at sixth spot;
- **Karnataka** has retained its ninth position;
- **Telangana** slipped from 10 to 15
- **Andhra Pradesh** dropped to the last slot from the penultimate slot in the previous edition when 20 States were covered, unlike the 17 now.

Among Union Territories, **Puducherry** rose from seventh to sixth spot.

Way forward

In an area such as food safety, States alone cannot make a big difference without the support of the Central government.

Liberal assistance should be provided to the States and Union Territories as far as laboratory infrastructure and improvement of manpower, both technical and non-technical, are concerned.

The **private sector should come forward** in a big way to have staff trained at their cost and where such persons are used productively for the purpose.

Every stakeholder in the field of food safety should realize is that each one has a critical role to play, and there has to be **collective and well-coordinated action**.

ILLEGAL ORGAN TRADE

19. Why kidney rackets thrive

Source: This Post is created based on the articles: 1) **“Explained: Why kidney rackets thrive”** published in **Indian Express** on **6th June, 2022**.

2) **“Busting illicit organ trade is imperative”** published in **Indian Express** on **6th June, 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Issues related to health, Government policies for various sectors

News: Last week, a network of kidney traffickers was busted in Delhi. This is the 3rd such scam in the last 15 years in Delhi.

The trafficker involved doctors and other healthcare personnel, hospital administrators. They catered to patients that have end-stage kidney diseases and cannot be treated with medicines or dialysis and require a transplant.

The Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 2011

The act was amended in 2011 and 2014

The Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 2011 recognizes 3 kinds of donations by living organ donors:

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1. by near-relatives (parents, siblings, and spouses)
2. by altruistic donations
3. by swap donations

Swap transplant is allowed when a near relative is medically incompatible with the recipient. It allows swapping with another related, unmatched donor-recipient pair.

Altruistic donations are those donations where someone donates an organ, usually a kidney or part of the liver, to someone they are not related to or, in some cases, even to a complete stranger.

The act allowed donations from cardiac dead patients (earlier, organs could be donated only by brain-dead patients).

The law **prohibits any financial exchange** for donations.

All cases of living donations have to be scrutinised by an in-hospital committee to ensure no commercial dealing happens. In cases of unrelated donors or any case flagged by hospitals, an external panel examines all papers.

What are the reasons behind the prevalence of organ trafficking in India?

More than 1.5 lakh people in the country require kidney transplants every year. But the number of organ donors is a small fraction of this requirement.

The black market in the organ trade flourishes by disguising illegal trafficking as “altruistic donation”.

Medical authorities have ignored suggestions to increase the transparency in the work of committees that scrutinise organ donations.

Unlike some western countries, India does not have a “**opt-out**” system. This system assumes all citizens to be willing organ donors after death unless they “opt-out” of it.

India’s organ transplant law recognises **cadaver (after death) donations** with family approval. However, declaring a person brain-dead in time for the organs to be harvested is very difficult in India. Most hospitals lack the expertise and facilities required for this purpose.

Why Kidney trafficking is most prevalent among organs?

In 2020, there were 7,443 transplants in the country, of which 5,486 or nearly 74% were kidney transplants. Thus, the demand for transplants is high.

The kidney can survive longer outside the body — 24 to 36 hours — than the lungs (4-5 hours) and the liver (8-12).

There is a severe **shortage of Kidneys** and the quality of life after transplant is quite good.

India has **expertise in kidney transplantation** and the procedure is standardized. So patients face low risk.

With **changing life styles**, diseases like diabetes and hypertension are increasing. These diseases can go undetected for years and causes kidney diseases.

What can be done?

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Increase donations from the dead. In 2020, of all the transplants, only 9.4%, used organs from deceased donors.

GS2 – POLITY – UNION AND STATES:ISSUES

FEDERAL STRUCTURE AND RELATED ISSUES

20. The new era of fiscal federalism could strengthen national unity

Source: The post is based on an article “**The new era of fiscal federalism could strengthen national unity**” published in the **Live Mint** on **06th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Fiscal Federalism and related issues

Context: The 15th Finance Commission (2021-2026) retained the states’ share, and its methodology of assigning weights based on population. This is likely to be a factor in the **politics** of federalism.

Importance of fiscal federalism in India

Linguistic pluralism, a federal structure and **fiscal federalism** have served us well and enabled us to succeed

At the time the Constitution came into force, some regions were endowed with more human capital, infrastructure and industrial capacity, others had abundant natural resources, and a few had very limited economies. Therefore, fiscal federalism is important for balancing equity, equality and efficiency in a country having a **hyper-diverse federation**.

Fiscal federalism is an important force to leverage the **comparative advantage**.

On the one side, the **linguistic reorganization** of states helped address political aspirations. On the other side, fiscal federalism has been important for the **political restructuring**.

Why states in India have weak fiscal capabilities?

The following reasons have resulted in India’s states to have **relatively weak fiscal capabilities**:

The Planning Commission was an important arbiter of how funds were shared. **Central planning** constrained both the **market and State governments** in allocation of resources.

The nationalization of banks further **centralized** resource allocations and aligned them to planning.

Important Institution to uphold fiscal federalism

Finance Commission

The Constitution of India created an independent, **non-partisan** Finance Commission to determine how fiscal resources ought to be shared among the Union and states.

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It has functioned **transparently**, **professionally** and has played a fundamental role in keeping the country united. For example, politically sensitive and border states receive disproportionately larger shares of funds.

Every Finance Commission has worked with **consultative** and **non-partisan** character. Therefore, its recommendations have been accepted by the Union and states as fair.

Measures towards Fiscal Federalism

A new era of **fiscal federalism** started when the **14th Finance Commission** raised the states' share of funds from **32%** to **42%**.

In addition to this, the **Planning Commission** was disbanded by the government in 2015.

Further, the GST framework has been adopted. The GST Council has given a powerful platform to the states to negotiate their fiscal interests. Therefore, the states enjoy a greater degree of **fiscal autonomy** than before.

What are the challenges involved?

Now the Union government has a larger role in **directing expenditure** through a large number of "**centrally sponsored schemes**" like those for education, health and rural employment guarantee.

The states are laggards in setting up **state finance commissions** to devolve funds to municipalities and panchayats.

State governments and local bodies have also been reluctant to raise their own revenues.

There are political considerations which prevent taxing of the **richer farmers** in India.

There are bureaucratic incapacities at the municipal level in terms of the collection of property taxes because "**the closer the government is to the people, the more unwilling it is to raise taxes**".

Way Forward

The states have to learn how to **frame fiscal policy** otherwise, the fiscal balance will tilt towards the Centre.

There should be requisite deliberations on providing a **permanent secretariat** to the Finance Commission

The **Inter-State Council** chaired by the Prime Minister and comprising state chief ministers, must be upgraded into a national forum.

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GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

INDIA – CHINA RELATIONSHIP

21. Himalayan challenge: To build better along LAC is necessary, but against China, so are strategic friends

Source: The post is based on the article “**Himalayan challenge: To build better along LAC is necessary, but against China, so are strategic friends**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **10th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and its neighbourhood- relations

Relevance: Understanding the challenges associated with Chinese infrastructure along LAC.

News: US Army’s Pacific Commanding General visiting India has drawn attention to China’s rapid build-up of military infrastructure along the LAC.

What is the new infrastructure being built by China along LAC?

China is rapidly building a dual-use border infrastructure. China is building troop shelters, gun positions, helipads and other infrastructure in disputed areas in eastern Ladakh to border villages along with Arunachal Pradesh. Add to this, two new [Chinese bridges across the Pangong Tso](#).

Must read: [Explained: Strategic significance of bridge China is building on Pangong Tso](#)

What are the implications of Chinese infrastructure along LAC?

These infrastructures might solidify China’s position all across the 3,488 km LAC. Further, the construction denotes China’s aggressive foreign policy posture and border standoff with India might continue in future.

How India is responding to the Chinese infrastructure along LAC?

Ramped up border infrastructure development: In the last year’s budget, the government has increased the capital outlay for the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) by 40%. This included a six-fold hike in allocation for Arunachal Pradesh’s Border Area Development Programme.

India has **quicken**ed the pace of its border infrastructure development since the Galwan clashes, inaugurating multiple bridges and border roads along the LAC.

Further, India is also planning to enhance rail connectivity in the Northeast.

Focusing on faster implementation: In May 2020, the Government has increased the BRO’s procurement powers from Rs 7.5 crore to Rs 100 crore. Thus allowing BRO to acquire critical equipment for speedier laying of border roads and other construction.

What should be done?

However, in terms of resources, China still outpaces India. Hence, India needs to simultaneously engage in tactical collaboration with the US and other countries concerned about Chinese belligerence.

The upcoming [Yudh Abhyas](#) joint exercise with Americans in the Himalayas and the finalising of a logistics support pact with Vietnam are steps in the right direction.

INDIA-PAK RELATIONS

22. An enduring agreement bridging India-Pakistan ties

Source: The post is based on an article “**An enduring agreement bridging India-Pakistan ties**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **10th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations; Bilateral

Relevance: Indo-Pakistan Relations

News: Recently, the **118th meeting** of the **Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)** comprising the Indus Commissioners of India and Pakistan was held on May 30-31, 2022 in New Delhi,

About the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

It is a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan that was established in 1960. It makes arrangements to use water in the Indus and its tributaries.

About Treaty

It was signed in **Karachi** on September 19, 1960. It was negotiated by the **World Bank**.

The treaty establishes a **cooperative mechanism** for **exchanging information** between the two countries. It is regarding the use of the **western rivers** (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) allocated to Pakistan and the **eastern rivers** (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) allocated to India.

It allows each country to use the rivers allocated to the other for certain purposes such as irrigation and hydroelectricity.

The Permanent Indus Commission oversees the cooperative mechanism. It ensures that the two countries meet annually to discuss myriad issues emerging from the treaty.

What are the challenges in implementation of the treaty?

India-Pakistan relations are mired by the **high politics** resulting in a **political stalemate** between the two countries.

Both countries have objected to the **technical design features** of one or the other hydroelectric projects.

– For example, although India is permitted to construct hydroelectric power facilities on the western rivers, but Pakistan has objected to the Kishanganga and Ratle plants located on the tributaries of the Jhelum and the Chenab, respectively

Similarly, Pakistan raised objections on the **construction** and **technical designs** of the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydropower plants located on Marusudar river, a tributary of the Chenab.

Similarly, India has raised concerns on Pakistan’s blockade of the **Fazilka drain**, which resulted in water contamination in the border areas.

To resolve differences over **Kishanganga** and **Ratle HEP plants**, Pakistan approached the World Bank to facilitate the setting up of a **court of arbitration**, and India requested the appointment of a Neutral Expert on the settlement of differences and dispute of the treaty. Therefore, the World Bank appointed both a neutral expert and a chairman for the court of arbitration. However, an acceptable solution has not been found.

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Achievements of the TWT

Notwithstanding the differences, both countries have so far **endeavoured** to **amicably** address all such issues. Both sides have assured to implement the treaty in letter and spirit.

The treaty is an illustration of a **long-standing engagement** between the conflicting nations that has stood the vagaries of time.

It has withstood tensions, including conflict, providing a framework for cooperation.

The treaty is considered **one of the oldest** and the **most effective** examples of water management cooperation in the region and the world. For example, 118th bilateral meeting corroborates its effectiveness.

Way Forward

Potential for cooperation

The treaty can help to tackle the challenges of climate change. India & Pakistan can undertake **joint research** on the rivers to study the impact of climate change for '**future cooperation**'.

The treaty offers great **potential** for **cooperation, development**, ensuring peace and stability in the subcontinent

The Treaty can be a **reference point** to resolve other **water-related issues** in the region through regular **dialogue** and **interaction**.

INDIA – IRAN RELATIONS

23. Ties reset: On India-Iran relations

Source: This post is based on the article "**Ties reset: On India-Iran relations**" published in **The Hindu** on **10th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: India – Iran bilateral ties

News: Iranian Foreign Minister's first visit to India recently has many implications for bilateral relations, but it is the multilateral context and timing that stand out.

Why the visit holds significance?

This is the **first visit by a member of the 57-member Organisation for Islamic Cooperation**, which took offence to comments made in India on the Prophet.

– The controversy has overshadowed India's other diplomatic engagements. As a result, this visit was an opportunity for India to project that it has successfully calmed the Islamic world with the actions of the ruling BJP against its spokespersons.

The Iranian visit comes **a week after that of Israeli Defence Minister**. New Delhi has always sought to run a balance in ties between the two rivals.

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It also **coincides with the meeting of the Board of Governors of the IAEA in Vienna**, which has passed strictures against Iran for its nuclear programme.

For Mr. Abollahaian, the visit would be portrayed **as a show of support from a powerful country**.

Afghanistan issue: In addition, Iran and India discussed the situation in Afghanistan under the Taliban, just days after an Indian envoy made the first outreach to Kabul.

– To this end, India and Iran have discussed further **operationalising the Chabahar port**, where goods to Afghanistan were sent before the government in Kabul fell last year.

Finally, against the backdrop of the Russian war in Ukraine, and western sanctions, **Iran has also been keen to convince New Delhi to restore its crude oil purchases**, which it cancelled in 2019, after threats of U.S. sanctions.

– External Affairs Minister of India made a statement wherein he called for the U.S. and Europe to allow Iranian and Venezuelan oil back into the international market if they want India to lower Russian oil imports. He accused the West of “squeezing” all alternative sources for India.

What are the bilateral issues b/w two countries?

Many promises of the last summit in Delhi left unrealised.

India has drastically cut its Iranian engagement due to sanctions, while Iran has looked to China for more infrastructure investment.

Bilateral trade dropped to just over \$2 billion (2020-21) from \$17 billion (2017-18).

Ties also appeared to have been hit by New Delhi’s surprise decision to join the **Israel-India-UAE-U.S. group**, portrayed as an “anti-Iran” coalition.

Way forward

Mr. Abdullohaian’s visit, and a possible visit by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, may be the start of a reset of traditionally strong ties even if it is one that is affected by developments in other parts of the world.

INDO-PACIFIC AND RELATED ISSUES

24. **Dealing with the Indo-Pacific is not easy**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Dealing with the Indo-Pacific is not easy**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **9th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations; Regional grouping

Relevance: The Indo-Pacific Region

News: Recently, the U.S. President Joseph Biden made a five-day visit to Asian countries.

What are the ongoing challenges?

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The **Indo-Pacific region** has been under pressure and **East Asia**, in particular, For example, China challenges international maritime laws in the South China Sea. It also confronts Japan over the Senkaku Islands.

South Korea and Japan face regular **nuclear** and **missile threats** from North Korea. For example, soon after the US visit, **North Korea** test-fired **three ballistic missiles**.

There are growing concerns over **Chinese military activity** in the Indo Pacific region. For example, **Chinese** and **Russian fighter jets** carried out joint flights over the **Sea of Japan** and **the East China Sea**.

Six nations, including China and Taiwan, are involved in the dispute over the Spratly Islands, having vast reserves of oil and natural gas.

China has vigorously militarised some portions of the disputed isles, islets and coral reefs.

Outcomes of the Biden's Asian visit

The South Korean government showed willingness to expand the presence of a U.S. missile defence system in the country.

The Japan government promised to do away with its long-standing 1% GDP ceiling on **annual defence spending**.

The U.S. President promised to intervene militarily to defend Taiwan if it came under attack from China. However, **American foreign policy** is governed by the **Taiwan Relations Act**. Which mandates the U.S. to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character” so that it can defend itself, not step in militarily to defend Taiwan in the event of an invasion by China.

The IPEF framework

The Biden administration has sought to counter the **assertiveness** and **aggressiveness** of Beijing, by establishing an **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)**.

Members

The IPEF will function with Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Focus Areas

The IPEF will work on fine-tuning **four major pillars**: standards and rules for digital trade; resilient supply chains; green energy commitments; and fair trade.

Issues in the IPEF

There is discontent that the framework does **not** address issues of **trade** and **tariffs**.

The IPEF framework is lacking in the **trade component**. The framework aims to offer money for clean energy, supply chain resilience, and anti-corruption. But the Asian partners want **trade** and **market access**.

The Way Forward

The US administration must pay attention to two facets in the Asia Pacific/Indo-Pacific.

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One is that China's neighbours would rather balance relations between Washington and Beijing. Just like in Europe, where Russian aggression has led to uniting the rest of the region against Russia. Similarly, circumstances may also arise in Asia due to Chinese aggression.

On the other hand, the countries in the region will not want to get on the **anti-China bandwagon**. Every country in East, Southeast or South Asia, has its own unique relationship with Beijing. For example, despite South Korea and Japan being part of a strong **American security/strategic partnership**, they are keen to maintain their economic status with China. This is also true for the **Association of South East Asian Nations**. Similarly, India, being the Quad member, also shares a land border with China which is laced with disputes.

In response to **geopolitical tensions**, countries have increasingly emphasised **resilience** and **national security considerations** over the economic gains from free trade and investment flows. However, they should be very careful about taking extreme measures.

The countries should not adopt **protectionist measures** such as disconnecting from global supply chains. This may shut off avenues for regional growth and cooperation. Such measures will **deepen divisions** between countries, and may lead to conflicts that we all hope to avoid.

INDIA – GULF RELATIONS

25. [Explained: Why the Gulf matters for India](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Explained: Why the Gulf matters for India**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: India's relations with the Gulf countries

News: Recently, the ruling BJP **suspended its national spokesperson** and expelled its Delhi spokesperson Naveen Kumar Jindal, following comments they had made about Islam and the Prophet.

The move came after three countries in the Gulf region had summoned the Indian ambassadors to their nations to register their protest, and demanded a public apology from India.

It underlines the significance of the Gulf region for India.

Why is the Gulf region important to India?

Barring the Jewish state of Israel, the 10 other countries of the Gulf region together account for one-fifth of the world's Muslim population, and are among the strongest voices of the Muslim world.

- Gulf countries – **Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Jordan and Yemen**

India shares good relations with most of the countries in the Gulf.

– The two most important reasons for the relationship are – **oil & gas**, and **trade**.

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– Two additional reasons are the huge number of Indians who work in the Gulf countries, and the **remittance** they send back home.

How much trade does India do with countries in this region?

According to India's embassy in Riyadh, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes **UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait** has emerged as a major trading partner of India.

UAE: The UAE was India's **3rd largest** trading partner in 2021-2022, and **2nd largest** for both exports (\$28 billion) and imports (\$45 billion) when these are counted individually.

Saudi Arabia: At a total volume of \$42.9 billion in 2021-22, Saudi Arabia was India's **4th-largest** trading partner.

Iraq: It was India's **5th-largest** trading partner in 2021-22 at \$34.3 billion.

Qatar: The total trade was \$15 billion, accounting for just 1.4% of India's total trade, but the country is India's most important supplier of natural gas. Qatar accounts for **41% of India's total natural gas imports**. The UAE accounts for another 11%.

How much oil does India import?

According to an analysis by the Observer Research Foundation in April, more than 84% of India's petroleum demand, which included crude oil and petroleum products, was met with imports.

The share of Persian Gulf countries in India's crude imports has remained at around **60%** over the last 15 years.

In 2021-2022, the largest exporter of oil to India was **Iraq**, whose share has gone up from 9% in 2009-2010 to 22%. **Saudi Arabia** has accounted for 17-18% of India's oil imports for over a decade.

Kuwait and UAE remain major oil exporters to India. Iran used to be the **second-largest** oil exporter to India in 2009-2010, its share went down to less than 1% in 2020-21, due to US sanctions.

How many Indians work in the Gulf, and how much remittance do they send?

According to Ministry of External Affairs data,

– **more than 13.46 million Indian citizens work abroad**. If Persons of Indian Origin (those who have taken up citizenship of other countries, and their descendants) are added, this number goes up to **over 32 million**.

Counting only the 13.4 million non-resident Indians (NRIs), the **Gulf has the largest numbers**. The UAE (3.42 million), Saudi Arabia (2.6 million) and Kuwait (1.03 million) together account for over half of all NRIs.

In terms of remittances from abroad, **India was the largest recipient in 2020 at \$83.15 billion**, according to World Bank data. This was nearly twice the remittances to the next highest recipient, Mexico, at \$42.9 billion.

The largest contributor is the huge Indian diaspora in the Gulf

INDIA-TALIBAN RELATIONS

26. Vivek Katju writes: Why India must engage Taliban

Source: This post is based on the article “**Vivek Katju writes: Why India must engage Taliban**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: India – Taliban relations, Engaging with Taliban

Context: On June 2, the Ministry of External Affairs announced that a team led by J P Singh, Joint Secretary (PAI) is currently on a visit to Kabul to oversee the delivery operations of India’s humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

The government clarified that although the delegation would meet senior members of Taliban, this engagement should be seen only in limited context of assistance to the Afghan people.

What are the Taliban’s views on this visit?

A Taliban spokesperson tweeted that diplomatic relations between the two countries, and trade and humanitarian assistance were discussed.

Singh’s visit was branded as **a good beginning in the ties** between the two countries.

The Taliban stressed that **bilateral ties would not be influenced by rivalries** with other countries. This was an obvious indication of the Taliban’s desire to **develop independent ties with India** despite its bonds with Pakistan.

Why India must engage the Taliban?

Security concerns

– Afghanistan impacts India’s security. It has, in the past, provided space to **al-Qaeda** with which the Taliban had a special relationship. Afghanistan has an **ISIS presence** too, though the Taliban is at odds with it.

– Of special concern to India are the **Taliban’s ties with the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed**. A recent United Nations report has emphasised that the Taliban’s connections with these groups have not been severed. Indeed, it is unlikely that the Taliban would entirely turn its back on them.

An engagement with the Taliban would at least **give an opportunity to convey Indian concerns directly** and encourage those elements within the group who wish to open up its diplomatic choices.

India should not leave the Afghan arena entirely to Pakistan and China because of the social manifestation of Taliban theology on the Afghan people.

Way forward

It is good that India has extended humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan at this time through international agencies and not let its unhappiness with the Taliban’s policies come in the way.

There are indications of the development of some opposition to the Taliban in the Panjshir valley. However, it would be futile for Indian policymakers to consider this as becoming effective. At

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most, it will remain an irritant to the Taliban. There is also no indication of a popular countrywide upsurge which could push them out. Thus, the **Taliban is here to stay and for India, there is no alternative but to deal with it.**

There would also be **nothing wrong in maintaining contacts with some of the leaders of the ousted Republic**, especially as the Taliban itself wants them to return to the country.

All in all, the sooner **India establishes a permanent presence in Kabul**, the better for the pursuit of national interests in the external sphere.

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

27. **Vicious domestic politics, foreign policy shocks**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Vicious domestic politics, foreign policy shocks**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **9th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations; Bilateral Relations, Multilateral Relations

Relevance: Look West Policy; Issues and Challenges in India's Foreign Policy

News: Recently, India has faced unprecedented diplomatic backlash over the derogatory remarks made by the political leaders against Islam

What has been India's foreign policy with respect to the Middle East?

India has been trying to build good relationship with the Muslim-majority states in the West Asian region, despite the growing **anti-Muslim sentiments** in the country.

Nature of India's Foreign Policy

There is a **larger binary** that has been at the heart of the conduct of India's foreign policy in the recent past.

India has been facing **external criticism** about **shrinking democratic space** and rising **religious intolerance** in the country while at the same time being a champion of democratic values at global platforms like Quad and Summit of democracies.

Implications of such incidents of extremism in India

Such extremism causes shrinking of India's ability to manage its **international normative identity** along with ability to dismiss criticism against its own domestic failings.

Domestic extremism cannot prevail without **external consequences**. Interfering with extremism in India or anywhere is counterproductive. For example, India has learned important lesson from India's relations with the **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**.

At present, there is an increasing number of 'fringe' but **extremist groups** in India working against Indian Muslims.

How extremism in India is different from extremism in Pakistan?

Unlike **Pakistan's home-grown extremism** which have spilled over as state-sponsored terrorism in India, extremist elements in India have focused domestically and contained within the country

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Manifestations of extremism in India have never received any **state patronage** barring occasional tolerance by the ruling party. But, occasional tolerance boils over into spaces outside the borders. Therefore, it brings into picture **foreign policy consequences**. For example, India has received criticisms from the Islamic countries on its Kashmir policy.

There are various domestic checks and balances between various forms of extremism in India.

Why has India reacted differently to the criticism from the Muslim Majority States in the West Asia, from the US/West criticism on the treatment of Muslims in India?

Although, the Muslim-Majority states play more hypocrisy than the U.S./West. But still, India did not respond in the same manner

India's refusal of the **western/U.S. criticism** does not attract much **material consequences** because these are advanced democracies. However, If India pushes back the criticism from the Islamic countries, these countries are more likely to impose **arbitrary material costs** on India or Indian citizens living in those countries. And India needs the middle east region for remittances, energy, and the well-being of Indian diaspora.

India and the West/U.S. need each other for a variety of reasons. For example, containing the China challenge. However, such **inter-dependence** does not really exist when it comes to India-West Asia relations. It can be said that India needs the West Asian states more than they need India.

Way Forward

The religious tolerance or pluralism forms important virtues in India as well as the Muslim-majority states in West Asia.

The **vicious domestic politics** has foreign policy implications. For example, in the present case, the government is now struggling to contain the diplomatic fallout. Therefore, domestic politics should be kept below **boiling point**, otherwise, it can have foreign policy implications.

The **bilateral relationships are** carefully built over decades by professional diplomats. These efforts are undermined by domestic **communal politics, electoral calculations, hate speech**. Thus, our internal matter becomes a matter of national interest.

There should not be any derogatory remarks against one religion or other, like Islam in this case.

India's foreign policy has registered a number of achievements to its credit. But, the Indian leaderships should learn that India's **unconstrained domestic extremism** can harm India's foreign policy objectives.

28. [7% Growth Is India's Best Foreign Policy Strategy](#)

Source: This Post is created based on the article "**7% Growth Is India's Best Foreign Policy Strategy**" published in **The Times of India** on **6th June 2022**.

Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 2, International Relations

Context: Countries from around the world like the US, Israel, Iran, etc. are trying to build good relations with India. However, India is still not free to make strategic choices.

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How economic development determines freedom to make choices for countries?

In 2010, Professor Michael Beckley analyzed the relationship between military effectiveness and economic development. In the study, he analyzed hundreds of battles over a nearly 100-year period (between 1898 and 1987).

His study found that military effectiveness is primarily a function of economic development. Other political and social factors are marginal in effect.

The reason is simple, economically developed states have a greater surplus of wealth. Thus, they could sustain larger investments in technology, production techniques, and military development without draining the economy of resources.

For example; China has used its spectacular economic growth to fund the fastest military expansion seen since World War II. In 2011.

How India has fared in this domain?

After the 1991 reforms, India's **economy was in a high growth orbit till 2008**. During this period, India entered into the **landmark nuclear deal** with the US **without any objection from China** in the Nuclear Suppliers Group. China was 2 times the size of the Indian economy then.

However, **now China has become 5 times of Indian economy, and** it is not willing to make the same adjustment for India in NSG (for membership).

Similarly, India's ability to purchase cheap Russian oil while maintaining great relations with major European powers is **based on the possibility of India becoming a bigger economy**. An economically anaemic India won't provide the same attractions, and choices will become harder.

Furthermore, India's ability to push back the most proximate national security threat, from China, is **weakened due to low spending on defence**. The problem is not the percentage of GDP spent on defense, but the total GDP itself. If GDP is small, the percentage won't make much difference.

A growth rate of 7% will give all the flexibility the country needs on funding the military, getting seats in crucial global alliances, and enforcing the principle of Indian Exceptionalism in the world.

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

ROW OVER COMMENTS ON PROPHET MOHAMMED

29. [The gulf of sensitivity that India will have to cross](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **“The gulf of sensitivity that India will have to cross”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **11th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International Relations, Regional Grouping, Multilateral Grouping

Relevance: India's Criticism in international forums

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News: Over the past few days, the **Islamic governments** including **the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** has criticized the Indian state regarding remarks made on the Prophet Mohammad.

Success of India's Foreign Policy in this regard

Some Islamic states have not been swayed by Pakistan's consistent portrayal of the Indian Government as fascist and anti-Muslim.

Despite criticism from OIC, the criticism has not been reflected in the **member-states' bilateral ties** with India.

India's relations with some significant Muslim countries such as **Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** have strengthened since last few years.

Implications on India's Interests

It will lead the middle-east countries to do greater scrutiny of the Indian government's policies towards the country's Muslims.

It was a great offence that was constituted to all **Muslims worldwide**. Furthermore, it would be perceived as a **disrespect towards** the Prophet.

When the Vice-President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu was on a three-nation tour of Gabon, Senegal and Qatar, he faced **embarrassment** on foreign soil. For example, the **ceremonial banquet** of the Vice President's host, the Deputy Amir of Qatar, was called off.

India's Response

India has rejected the statements of the OIC and Pakistan for they reeked of political considerations.

What is the root cause of the problem?

The **Indian intellectual tradition** that has evolved after Independence does not pay sufficient attention to faith. It has led to a **lack of knowledge** of other religions, leading to misperceptions.

Way Forward

The governments of **Islamic countries** would not want their **Foreign Policies** on India to be determined by theological considerations. This is because they have an array of interests at stake in their India ties.

There is a distinction between criticising some **social practices** of Muslims and what is perceived to be an attack on the **personality of the Prophet**.

There is a need to foster an understanding in society at large of other faiths and their sensitivities. It is important for our **multi-faith society** at a time when religiosity is rising sharply across the world.

The Arab states and India have **mutual interest**. Therefore, all faiths should be respected. It is important for social harmony and promotions of India's external interests.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

30. The Ukraine conflict has raked up old dilemmas

Source: The post is based on an article “**The Ukraine conflict has raked up old dilemmas**” published in the **Indian Express** on **6th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International relations

Relevance: Impact of Ukraine-Russia war on Energy security

News: The Ukraine Conflict has caused a resurfacing of the deepest dilemma related to the energy sector, i.e.

- whether to ensure there is affordable, secure, and accessible energy at present, or
- to secure the longer-term imperatives of **economic growth** and **sustainable** development.

Situation Prior to the Ukraine Conflict

Oil market

It was globally integrated. There was one internationally acknowledged **benchmark price**. The OPEC was expanded to include Russia amongst its de facto members.

Gas Market

The market was bounded by **regional pipelines** and inflexible **long-term LNG supply contracts**. Further, the prices were quoted regionally in the US, Europe and Asia.

However, **destination flexibilities** have been introduced in the recently concluded LNG contracts. Also, the LNG spot trade was gaining in market share and prices were converging.

Problems, dilemmas and consequences due to the Ukraine Conflict

Global

The petroleum market is now **fragmented, fractious** and **volatile**. Europe and the US have sanctioned 90% of the Russian crude. This has tightened the crude oil and products market further.

At present, **Russian gas** has **not** yet been **sanctioned**. But there are chances that Europe may also sanction Russian gas. For example, Europe has published a road map for eliminating all energy imports from Russia by 2027.

OPEC has refused to remove Russia from OPEC plus. They have refused to bow down to US pressure to increase production to cool the oil market. They want to keep **control** over the oil market and also **benefit** from the fact that Russia cannot meet its OPEC determined export quota.

The US President aims to disallow **petroleum companies** from drilling for oil and gas on federal lands. He has approved the issuance of fresh leases.

The US and Italy are proposing to create an **oil consumers cartel** because the oil consumers have been facing difficulty. For example, the retail price of gasoline is very high, and American consumers are currently paying historic high prices.

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European leaders are facing a dilemma between the **rock of energy geopolitics** and the hard place of **energy economics**.

Some countries have given the **green signal** to reopen **coal mines**. This could enhance GHG emissions and prolong the life of fossil fuels.

India

In India, the rise in the price of oil has “forced” the government to **reintroduce de facto administered pricing**. The public sector oil companies could not pass on the higher prices to retail customers but instead would bear the loss. This will impact their balance sheets and investment plans.

The India government is interested in buying the assets of **Shell LNG** in the **Siberian port of Sakhalin**. The deal can enhance **India’s security** cover.

What are the challenges for India?

India’s investment may be subject to sanctions. Also, India may attract criticism for purchasing **“contaminated” assets**.

Way Forward

In order to reduce energy **“independence”** on Russia. Europe needs to invest in **solar** and **wind generation**, gas storage, LNG import infrastructure and intra-Europe gas pipelines. This can lead to generation of **carbon emission certificates**.

EU leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to cut GHG emissions by 55 per cent in 2030 over the levels in 1990.

The Ukrainian conflict should end. Further, Russia’s energy industry and the Russian people cannot be indefinitely ghettoised.

There should be a transition to **clean energy** with **Political expediency** because global warming presents an existential planetary threat.

GS2 – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS – BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS

INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

31. What IPEF offers India: Opportunities, tough negotiations

Source: The post is based on an article **“What IPEF offers India: Opportunities, tough negotiations”** published in the **Indian Express** on **11th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 International Relations, International Forums

Relevance: Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)

News: Recently, the US Administration launched the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)** as its de facto foreign economic policy for Asia

Features

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It empowers the US administration to shape rules across several critical pillars that will condition **America's economic engagement** in the Indo-Pacific amid competing with the Chinese BRI.

What is the importance of the IPEF?

Overall

It aims to address constraints that have been caused by Covid-19, inflation and supply chain shocks, and devise new standards.

It is the first **multilateral attempt** to boost **supply chain resilience**, to ease global inflationary pressures and mitigate effects of future disruptions in key raw materials, critical minerals, and semiconductors.

It will negotiate "**high-standard**" rules to govern **the digital economy, climate mitigation, workers empowerment, equitable global tax, anti-money laundering and anti-bribery provisions.**

It is the economic agenda of the US, to protect and prolong America's economic leadership across Asia.

For the US

It will service the domestic **economic agenda** of the US through 21st century economic arrangement. It is aimed to retain **America's technological primacy.**

It will deal with issues like climate change, tax evasion, worker rights, labour rights, productivity. This will be done using **market incentives** and **fiscal spending**. It will be aimed to reduce inequality, deter environmental damage, foster digital openness and connectivity, and expand tax compliance.

Importance for India

It is flexible and is open in nature. The US and India can jointly shape the rules governing the **Indo-Pacific's economic future.**

It can counter China which is spreading its economic footprint across Asia. It is proposed as an alternative economic paradigm that emphasises openness, flexibility, and integration.

What are the challenges for other member countries, including India?

There are doubts over whether the US administration could **sustain** its focus in Asia as war broke out in Europe.

The IPEF is **not** a **trade** or **investment agreement**. It's a framework to regulate trade and commerce across **four key pillars**: Digital economy, supply chains, clean energy, and governance.

It can impact the signatories on how they will regulate their **domestic economies**. For example, the signatory will have to internalize the standards domestically.

It will facilitate **US MNCs'** access to Asian economies at the expense of domestic preferences.

The IPEF's pillars could clash with and supersede the member countries' **policy preferences** on such issues. For example,

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(1) Proposed **free and open data flows** will impact India's interest to regulate data for domestic purposes. India has been working on **data protection legislation** in the last few years.

(2) The Indian government is not open to sync its tax policies with the US Proposal of global tax standard to mitigate tax avoidance and evasion.

The IPEF does not grant **market access** to the United States or include **tariff reduction provisions**.

Way Forward

The IPEF modalities has to be negotiated amongst partners that share interests and some values.

32. [The IPEF holds promise but there are perils too](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**The IPEF holds promise but there are perils too**" published in the "**The Hindu**" on **6th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS2 International relations; regional grouping; and GS 3 Indian Economy, Issues and Challenges pertaining to growth and development; effects of liberalization on Indian Economy

Relevance: The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)

News: Recently, the US President Joe Biden has established the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) which is said to be a new version of a "pivot to Asia".

Background

The US President had first spoken about it in October 2021 during the East Asia Summit, in the presence of all IPEF signatories except Fiji.

Objectives

To bring together the US allies in **the Indo-Pacific region** and enhance **economic cooperation** on the lines of the former U.S. President Barack Obama's pet project called as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP),

The US can fulfil its **twin ambitions**, to provide **economic leadership** and to challenge **China's hegemony** in the region.

Features

The IPEF has been proposed as an **elaborate framework** of rules covering **four pillars**: (1) fair and resilient trade, (2) supply chain resiliency, (3) clean energy decarbonisation, and (4) tax and anti-corruption.

In the Fair and resilient trade pillar, the IPEF "aims to develop **high-standard, worker-centred commitments**" covering labour rights, the environment and climate, the digital economy, agriculture etc.

Significance

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The intellectual property rights (IPRs) have been excluded from the list, which used to be at the heart of the U.S.' economic engagements with its partner countries. The possible reason could have been it acting as constraining forces in the universal coverage of the COVID-19 vaccine

It has been designed differently from the free trade ideal. It has been proposed as a “**fair and resilient trade**”, not like a **traditional trade agreement**. The primary objective is to ensure a high degree of **regulatory coherence** and **market access** between the member countries.

What are the associated issues?

Overall

The representatives of the pharmaceutical, and electronics sectors could pitch for the inclusion of the IPRs in the IPEF negotiations.

Enforcement of **labour** rights have often been rejected by the **World Trade Organization (WTO) members** in the trade deals on several occasions. They argue that “internationally recognized core labour standards” of the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** should be used to deal with issues pertaining to labour rights. They had also rejected the use of **labour standards for protectionist purposes**.

The **environment** and **climate change** have been duly included in the list of the IPEF. In this connection, the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** has cautioned that measures taken by the countries to combat climate change should not be used to discriminate or cause disguised restriction on international trade”.

The **standards** on **cross-border data flows**, **data localisations** and **data portability** has been included. This can have ramifications on the future of the **digital economy** because there are contrasting views on the control over data, which is the driver of the digital economy.

Although the U.S. wants its **manufacturing giants** to shift their bases from China to the other countries in the **Indo-Pacific**. But ensuring the **supply chain resilience** from new destinations will also remain a challenge.

For India

On this issue of **data localisation**, based on the inputs from **the Draft National E-Commerce Policy**, the Government of India aspires for restrictions on cross-border data flows. This goes against “high-standard rules on cross-border data flows and data localization”.

India may also worry about rules on **strengthening labour rights** in the IPEF. India prefers for a “**flexible labour market**” unlike the regime that the U.S. is proposing for the IPEF

General

Studies

Paper – 3

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND RELATED ISSUES

1. **New WHO report on assistive technology for disabled provides a roadmap for India**

Source: This post is based on the article “**New WHO report on assistive technology for disabled provides a roadmap for India**” published in **The Indian Express** on **6th June 22**.

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

Relevance: Assistive Technology (AT) and related issues

News: The World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) jointly launched the **first Global Report on Assistive Technology (GReAT)** on May 16.

What is Assistive technology (AT)?

It may include any item, piece of equipment, software programme or product system that is used to **increase, maintain, or improve** the **functional capabilities** of persons with disabilities.

These aids could also be

- **Physical products** such as wheelchairs, eyeglasses, hearing aids, prostheses, walking devices or continence pads;
- **Digital products** such as software and apps that support communication and time management; or
- **Adaptations** to the physical environment, for example, portable ramps or grab-rails.

Different disabilities require different assistive technologies, and these are designed to help people who have difficulty speaking, typing, writing, remembering, seeing, hearing, learning, or walking.

A billion people globally are currently estimated to be in need of assistive technology (AT); this is projected to double by 2050.

What are the findings of the GReAT report?

The GReAT report draws upon surveys conducted in 20 countries. Some key findings:

- Proportion of the population currently using **at least one assistive product** ranges from **less than 3% to about 70%**.
- Those reporting that they **use or need at least one assistive product** range from about 10% to nearly 70%; the extent to which these needs are met varies from about 2% to nearly 90%.
- Universal assistive technology coverage implies that everyone, everywhere receives the AT that they need without financial or any other hardship.

What are the challenges regarding access and coverage wrt AT?

These are best understood when seen from the following five parameters.

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People: This is related to the age, gender, type of functional difficulty, location and socioeconomic status of those in need of AT.

Products: The range, quality, affordability and supply of assistive products continue to pose considerable challenges. Quality and standard issues such as safety, performance and durability are key concerns.

Provision: The information and referral systems remain complex and **services are not available across all geographies** and populations. The range, quantity and quality of assistive products procured and provided, as well as the efficiency of delivered services, remain **below par**.

Personnel: The **workforce gaps** are not just about numbers, but also about adequate training and education too.

Policy: A survey of more than 60 countries reported that they have at least one government ministry or authority responsible for access to AT. Even then, the current levels of access imply a long road to universal AT access.

India

Disadvantaged groups and communities face hardships in their **search for affordable quality healthcare** in India. This is more so wrt obtaining ATs and associated services — the estimated **unmet need is about 70%**.

ATs handed out in camps or as a part of social service initiatives are a **sporadic activity** without the use of statistics as a basis for unmet needs. Products are often **sub-standard** and lead to poorer health outcomes.

Way forward

Including assistive technology in **universal health and social care** services is a critical imperative.

The health system's responsibility in providing **equitable access to ATs**, is increasingly being recognised and **country-level plans** are being drawn up with an aim to fund and provide ATs under the UHC.

Until AT solutions are integrated with the existing primary healthcare packages the current top-down approach is of limited benefit. The GREAT Report provides that roadmap.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH AND DEV

INDIA'S GDP AND RELATED ISSUES

2. **India is not the fastest growing big economy**

Source: The post is based on an article “**India is not the fastest growing big economy**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **11th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy; issues and challenges pertaining to growth and development

Relevance: India's GDP growth

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News: Recently, the Provisional Estimates of **Annual National Income in 2021-22** was released. It showed that India's GDP grew 8.7% in real terms and 19.5% in nominal terms (including inflation) which made India the **fastest growing major economy** in the world.

What are the problematic areas in the present GDP estimation?

As per data, Indian GDP has registered **no growth** since the pre-pandemic year. India has just recovered the level of GDP that was before the pandemic. It was impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown, supply disruptions following the war in Ukraine and the severe COVID-19 lockdown in China.

It also means India has been facing **high inflation**.

What are the underlying causes for the above-mentioned problem?

There is an issue in **correctness of data** used in quarterly estimates since very limited data are available for estimating it. The reasons are

(1) During 2020-21, full data could not be collected due to the pandemic induced lockdown and other measures.

(2) **Agriculture** is a part of the unorganised sector. Very little data is available for its assessment.

(3) The limited data available for the organised sector is used as a proxy for the **non-agriculture unorganised sector**. This method may have been acceptable before demonetisation (2016), however, the **unorganised non-agriculture sector** has suffered far more than the organised sector during the waves of the pandemic.

At present, the **data** used remains largely unchanged. This implies that the same error is being carried forward. It means the errors made in the quarterly data are repeated in the annual data.

If GDP data are incorrect, data used on its components like **private consumption** and **investment** are also incorrect.

– For example, according to the RBI, consumer confidence throughout 2021-22 was way below its pre-pandemic level. So, consumption could not have come close to its pre-pandemic level.

What is the possible correction in the provisional estimate?

The GDP for 2021-22 has grown by only 1.8%, and not 8.7%. Further, It would be less than the pre-pandemic GDP of 2019-20 by 4.92%. It is because the organised sector and agriculture are growing at the official rate of growth of 8.2% and 3%, respectively. However, the **non-agriculture unorganised component** has been declining due to the **closure of units** and the **shift in demand** to the organised sector.

Way Forward

Clearly, recovery is incomplete and India is not the fastest growing big economy of the world.

GLOBAL HUNGER

3. **Global hunger calls for a collective action**

Source: The post is based on an article “**Global hunger calls for a collective action**” published in the **Live Mint** on **10th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security

Relevance: Food Security

News: In a statement, the United Nations’ Secretary General, said that: Global hunger levels are at a new high. In just two years, the number of **severely food insecure people** has doubled from 135 million to 276 million.

The present situation is pointing towards a global food shortage. It may push millions of people into **food insecurity**, followed by **malnutrition**, **mass hunger** and **famine**, in a crisis that could last for years.

What are the causes of stress?

Proximate Causes

The coronavirus pandemic created **food insecurity** by disrupting agricultural production, supply-chains and livelihoods.

The cost of energy and fertilizers rose sharply due to high crude oil prices between late 2020 and early 2022.

The **Russia-Ukraine war** has disrupted world wheat exports and world maize exports, as both countries are major exporters. This has been due to blockades and economic sanctions.

Climate change has impacted wheat yield in 2022. For example, the **world’s largest producer of wheat** (China) is facing rain, the **world’s second-largest producer of wheat** (India) is facing an **unprecedented heat wave**, the US wheat belts have insufficient rain etc.

Another cause of concern is that **world prices of wheat** have risen by 60% in less than six months. In addition, energy, fertilizers and pesticides are surging which will adversely impact agricultural output.

The availability of food grains for human consumption is constrained not only by output levels, but also by alternative uses. For example,

- (a) 33% of maize produced in the US and 40% of wheat produced by the EU is fed to cows.
- (b) proportion of grains and vegetable oils are used to make biofuels—ethanol and biodiesel.

Ultimate Causes

There is a **deeper structural problem** in the world food system.

(1) production and exports are concentrated in 10-12 countries. like Eleven countries account for 70% of global wheat production. Just ten countries account for 86% of world wheat exports.

(2) A relatively small proportion of world output —25% for wheat and 15% for maize—is exported. The rich countries are the major exporters.

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(3) Similarly, just **ten countries** account for 83% of world imports. All ten are developing countries. Around 2/3rd of the world's population lives in these countries in the developing world.

(4) The regions that are dependent on wheat imports for food are North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Russia and Ukraine provide 25%-75% of their wheat imports.

(5) **Poor** is the most vulnerable section in these countries which are hardest hit. They spend at least 40%, of their income on food. As per **Amartya Sen's analysis** in Poverty and Famines, famine deaths are caused due to income shortage rather than food shortages.

Consequences

The poor countries cannot afford to buy scarce food at high prices. Therefore, poor will suffer hunger and starvation

The situation will further unleash **economic, social and political tensions** within these countries in the developing world, which could spill over across **national boundaries**.

Way Forward

Global hunger is a global problem. It requires **international collective action** instead of **national actions** in isolation. Therefore, the measures should be implemented with solidarity through cooperation.

INDIA'S TRADE POLICY

4. International trade remains important

Source: The post is based on an article "International trade remains important" published in the Business Standard on 8th June 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy, Effects of liberalization on Indian Economy

Relevance: International Trade, External Sector

News: In 2022, international trade is being impacted by a continuing global pandemic, a European war, widespread economic sanctions, supply chains disruptions and sudden national bans and caps on exports of essential commodities.

Global Trade

The World Trade Organization (WTO) estimates that global goods trade has expanded by about 40 times (in terms of volume) and nearly 300 times (in terms of value) between 1950 and 2020.

The **World Bank data** shows that the share of world trade (including services) in world GDP soared from 24% in 1960 to 57% in 2010. However, it has plateaued thereafter.

Consequently, unprecedented growth in global GDP has been principally due to the sustained surge in world trade.

India's trade

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India's trade to GDP ratio has risen from 15% in 1990 to 27% in 2000 and peaked above 50% in 2011. The total (goods and services) exports share of GDP has touched nearly 25%.

Importance of Global Trade

Trade contributed to competitiveness, productivity and technical progress.

India too benefited. India liberalised complex and restrictive trade regime after 1990 and made the exchange rate market responsive.

What were the driving forces behind the growth in world trade?

The general technological progress, rising national savings and investment, and the spread of good education played important roles.

The major causes of expansion in world commerce were the **eight "Rounds" of multilateral negotiations** for trade liberalizations under the auspices of **the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the precursor** between 1947 and 1994. These negotiations were driven by industrialised countries. The developing nations were mostly **"free riders"**.

What are the challenges?

After the formation of WTO, there has not been a single successful **Round of multilateral trade liberalisation**.

At present, there has been a shift to large and small preferential and **free trade agreements** (PTAs and FTAs) having limited member country participation.

At present, the Ukraine conflict is damaging global trade and production.

Since 2011, India's trade share in GDP had declined markedly to 39% by 2019. This has been due to the stagnation of **merchandise exports**.

What are the factors which have led to India's lacklustre performance?

First, the rupee's exchange rate (in terms of the Real Effective Exchange Rate) was overvalued for much of this period.

Second, India failed to participate effectively in the rapid increase in global value chain based trade after 2000.

Third, there has been marked rise in India's tariffs and other protective measures after 2015. This has been against **buoyant expansion** of the country's goods exports, both within and outside global value chains (GVCS).

The world trade dynamism has faltered since 2010, following the **global financial crisis** and other **deglobalizing factors** such as Brexit, the Trump protectionism, the global pandemic and the war in Ukraine and associated economic sanctions.

Broad priorities for India's trade policy

(1) Phase out the tariff increases that have occurred since 2017, because the best trade policy for any nation is to maintain an **open and unrestrictive trade policy** and as per **"symmetry theorem"** of 1936, "a tax on imports amounts to a tax on exports"

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(2) Instead of tariffs or quota restriction on imports, the government should use external payments pressures, and exchange rate depreciation as the primary instruments.

(3) The monetary and fiscal measures are preferable to export bans and duties to deal with inflation because sometimes the latter pave the way to balance of payments problems.

(4) India's concluded FTAs with Australia and the UAE are welcomed. There should be discussions with other Gulf Cooperation Council nations, Israel, the UK, the European Union (EU) and the new Indo Pacific Economic Framework.

(5) In order to improve India's currently low engagement in global and regional value chains, the government should rethink renewed engagement with the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** in our Asian neighbourhood. This has huge potential for trade expansion.

CMIE'S CONSUMER SURVEY FINDINGS

5. **How best to interpret CMIE's consumer survey findings**

Source: This post is created based on the article "How best to interpret CMIE's consumer survey findings" published in **Live Mint on 7th June 2022**.

Syllabus: **GS Paper 2, Social and associated issues**

Context: Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) has been at the forefront of providing necessary data that provide information about the average Indian household. However, some discrepancies in the survey methodology brought the CMIE data under question.

CMIE provided the surveys during lockdowns that helped to understand the scale of urban unemployment and distress migration of urban workers to rural farms. It received admiration for providing real-time data, free from state influence.

What are the discrepancies in CMIE survey?

CMIE reports **fewer women in the workforce than the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**.

Women's **labour force participation rates** estimated by CMIE are roughly half the 'official rate' estimated by the PLFS.

CMIE shows a **higher share of respondents with post-office savings**, pension (or provident fund) plans, and insurance products (life and health) compared to the All India Debt and Investment Survey (AIDIS) 2019.

What are the concerns raised against the CMIE survey?

First, Very poor, uneducated, and very rich have found less representation in the survey, compared to National Family Health Survey (NFHS, 2019-21).

Second, the **sampling theory** demands that surveys **select households in the primary sampling unit (typically villages or urban wards) randomly** from a list of all households in that unit. However, CMIE did not follow this theory. It asked field staff to count the number of households in the street after entering there and pick a random number, between 5 and 15, to select households. **After completing the main street, the person moves to the inner streets.**

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Thus, there was a **lack of a complete listing, the absence of a random start, and the use of an 'ad-hoc' interval (5-15)** to select households.

Third, this method is mainly **problematic in rural areas**, where **residential arrangements are not random**. Richer households often tend to be clustered on the Main Street and poorer households on the periphery.

CMIE is currently investigating its survey methods for any biases. Thus, until these reviews and corrections are done, these surveys should be used cautiously.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONETARY POLICY

INFLATION AND RELATED ISSUES

6. **The inflation spectrometer**

Source: The post is based on an article “**The inflation spectrometer**” published in the **Business Standard** on **7th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy

Relevance: Macroeconomic Conditions; Inflation

News: Inflation is a **macroeconomic phenomenon** which is under pressure at global and local level.

Major driving factors behind inflation

Inflation is caused by a number of factors which may include supply, demand, local and global factors.

Globally

The inflation started with the **US fiscal stimulus** during Covid-19. This pushed inflation. This led to increased demand when global production was impaired due to Covid-19. This resulted into **shortages** and **longer delivery times**.

The **wage-price spiral** (when higher prices lead to higher wages, which in turn drive the next round of price hikes) is now visible in the US. This may be visible across the world.

The **Russia-Ukraine conflict** has made it harder to adjust with demand and supply disruption caused earlier. The conflict and the associated sanctions have reduced the global supply of food and energy.

The countries are competing for the **remaining supplies of energy**. This has been the driving force in pushing up prices.

In addition, Higher prices have also **not** triggered **investments** in new supplies yet, as suppliers lack certainty on how long the shortages may persist.

Local drivers of inflation:

Inflation occurs when a **stimulus pushes** aggregate demand above the economy's capacity to meet it. In India, the **total government deficit** is higher than in pre-Covid times. The recent

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fiscal steps to prevent a rise in fertiliser and fuel prices may lead to spreading of inflation over a longer period.

The rise in India's **current account deficit (CAD)** suggests domestic demand, at present, is unsustainable.

The labour market is also the most important driver of sticky inflation. The NREGA work demand has reduced. It is the most reliable indicator of unemployment in India.

Some other drivers of Indian inflation are the rise in **telecom tariffs**, and the low base of cereals prices

Measures Taken

Nearly every major economy has announced energy subsidies due to domestic political compulsions as well as the need to sustain growth,

What are the issues in fiscal and monetary policy measures?

The **fiscal and monetary measures** have limited implications. They cannot offset the shortages. The above-mentioned **fiscal measures** will only prolong the period of higher energy prices.

Way Forward

The **US federal fiscal deficit** as a share of gross domestic product or GDP has declined. There is an ongoing switch between **goods-to-services** in consumption; shipping bottlenecks have been easing; global industrial production has restarted, and there is evidence of **excessive inventory** in many supply chains.

The US needs to do further **monetary tightening**.

The Monetary Policy Committee should target the inflation. Further, the consumer price index may provide a better measure of **persistent inflationary impulses** in the economy that monetary policy can try to address.

There should be **normalisation of rates** given the healthy post-Covid recovery.

Instead of using interest rates, the government can let the rupee weaken to address the BOP imbalance.

7. [How to keep inflation under control](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**How to keep inflation under control**" published in the **Indian Express** on **6th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Economy, Agriculture Sector, Monetary policy

Relevance: Food Inflation, Edible Oil, etc.

News: Recently, the GDP growth of India has been pegged at 8.7% for the fiscal year 2021-22. It seems the economy is largely out of the shadow of Covid-19.

But both GDP growth and inflation are likely to be in the range of 6.5 to 7.5 per cent in 2022-23 if bold and innovative steps are not taken.

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What are the problems in front of India's growth story in 2022-23?

India is witnessing a raging inflation that is CPI at 7.8%, food CPI at 8.4%, and WPI inflation at more than 15%

What are the proposed focused policy actions to deal with the problems?

First, the RBI should keep **inflation** at 4%, plus-minus 2%. For this, it has already started the process of **tightening monetary policy** by raising the repo rate. There should be **fine calibration** of the repo rate at least to 5.5% by the end of 2022-3.

Second, the finance ministry should go for more **prudent fiscal policy**. The fiscal deficit which soared to more than 9% in 2020-21 and 6.7% in 2021-22, in wake of Covid-19 must be tightened.

Third, the government should adopt a **rational trade policy**. There should not be a **knee jerk reaction**, like, India announced a ban on exports of wheat, and imposed restrictions on sugar exports in the name of taming inflation. In fact, the **abrupt export bans** are **poor trade policy**. A **more mature approach** requires a gradual process of minimum export prices and transparent export duties. Further, abrupt restrictions/bans on exports, cannot tame inflation visible globally.

The government can moderate inflation at home through **liberal import policy**, and **reducing tariffs** across the board. For example, the government reduced tariffs on palm oil, soya oil, and sunflower oil where CPI is very high. Similarly, the government should also reduce tariffs on **rapeseed** and **cottonseed oils** which remain prohibitively high at 38.5 per cent for crude and 49 per cent for refined despite high inflation in the last two years.

What are the challenges?

The **fiscal deficit reduction** to less than 5% is going to be **challenging** because of **enhanced food and fertiliser subsidies**, and **cuts in duties of petrol and diesel**.

Further, the fiscal policy might remain more populist. Therefore, the fiscal deficit might remain in the range of **6.5 to 7.5%** in 2022-23.

Way Forward

The **tax revenues** should be improved substantially. The government can go for **monetising land** and **assets of public enterprises**.

India must focus on two critical commodities, i.e., **crude oil** and **edible oils** to become self-reliant. For example, India is almost 80% dependent on crude oil imports and 55-60% dependent on edible oils imports for our domestic consumption.

To reduce import dependence in crude oil, **sugarcane** and **maize production** can be promoted, in water abundant states like eastern UP and North Bihar. This can lead to **massive production** of ethanol from sugarcane and maize.

To reduce import of edible oils, a large programme of **palm plantations** in coastal areas and the **northeast** is the right strategy.

To control **food inflation** on a sustainable basis, **investment** should be made to **raise productivity** and to make **agri-markets** work more efficiently.

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GS3 – SCIENCE AND TECH – INFORMATION TECH

Web 3.0 and related issues

8. Web3 is the business model of a decentralized new virtual world

Source: The post is based on the article “**Web3 is the business model of a decentralized new virtual world**” published in the “**Livemint**” on **10th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Awareness in the fields of IT

Relevance: Understanding the concept of Web 3.0, its characteristics and examples.

News: Practical examples of Web 3.0 proved that it is like going back to early human settlements, with all transactions happening peer-to-peer with easy mutual trust and locally minted currency.

Blockchains provide the decentralized foundation of trust for this new old world, and Web 3.0 is the business model driving it.

What is Web 3.0?

Web 3.0 is decentralized, owned by the user community, uses blockchain technology, and is powered by cryptocurrency.

What makes Web 3.0 unique?

Some other unique characteristics include,

Permissionless: Since one does not need the consent of a controlling entity like Facebook or Google to engage.

Ubiquitous: With the internet is available everywhere to everyone, even to machines.

Leader-free: As users participate as equals in a project’s governance and ownership through crypto-tokens as proof-of-stake.

It is also **Trustless:** As transactions and interactions can happen without the need of a central authority.

What are the real-world examples of Web 3.0?

Helium is a decentralized wi-fi network, owned by everyone and powered by cryptocurrency.

Arcade City is a decentralised taxi service, owned by a cooperative of drivers.

Israeli startup **La Zooz’** is a self-managed ride-sharing platform, that connects drivers with empty seats and riders.

Axie Infinity is a video game popular in Asia, especially in the Philippines.

How does web 3.0 evolve?

Web 1.0 was about reading static content pages on MSN, Yahoo or AOL in 1990s.

Web 2.0 burst forth in 2005 with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. This facilitated people with creating and posting their own content. This is a highly centralized model.

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Web 3.0 goes beyond active participation by letting persons own and build pieces of it through ownership tokens and blockchain enablers.

Overall, If the pre-internet/web1 era favoured publishers, and the web2 era favoured the platforms, Web 3.0 favours the next generation of innovations. Further, it is all about tilting the scales of power and ownership back toward creators assessed users.

ONDC AND RELATED ISSUES

9. **Open network for e-commerce: It's an idea whose time has come**

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Open network for e-commerce: It's an idea whose time has come**” published in **Live Mint on 7th June 2022**. **Syllabus Topic – GS Paper 3 – Science and tech**

Context: The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) was launched in few cities recently on a pilot basis. It has the potential to usher in a disruptive change.

India's potential in digital economy

India has the world's highest fintech adoption rate of 87%, as compared with the global average of 64%.

E-commerce market in India doubled between 2017 and 2020.

3 of the largest public digital platforms in the world are from India i.e.

4. Aadhaar – A unique digital identity platform
5. Unified Payments Interface (UPI) – largest digital payments ecosystem.
6. **Co-Win** – the largest vaccination platform

About ONDC

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is a globally first-of-its-kind initiative that aims to democratize digital commerce.

Read [about ONDC](#)

How ONDC would bring disruptive changes in online commerce?

It creates a **shift from a platform-centric model to open networks**. It means citizens of India would be able to make deals using any ONDC-compliant platform.

Furthermore, it will **digitize the entire value chain**, and standardize operations (like cataloging, inventory management, order management, and order fulfillment).

It will **make e-commerce more inclusive** for small retailers.

It will **give freedom of choice** to the consumer.

Not only that, but it will **enable transactions of any denomination**, thus making ONDC a truly 'open network for democratic commerce'.

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Small businesses will be able to save more as they won't have to pay deep cuts to aggregator platforms.

ONDC will be **compliant with the Information Technology Act, 2000**, and the emerging Personal Data Protection Bill. It will provide privacy protection to the users.

The development of ONDC has been very **contextual to Indian needs**, designed for a diverse society with a wide continuum of digital skills and for solutions to specific local problems.

Lastly, it **offers a vital global template for the harnessing of technology** for and as a public good at population scale in an inclusive and equitable way.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – IND POLICY AND GROWTH

REGULATION OF FINTECH

10. **Fintech challenge is a fantasy**

Source: This post is based on the article “**Fintech challenge is a fantasy**” published in **The Business Standard** on **9th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy – Money and banking

Relevance: Fintech sector and related issues

News: The government is poised to launch 75 digital banks soon.

What will be launched are **Digital Banking Units (DBUs)**. **These are a new way of making available digital products of existing banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)**.

If one thinks that a sleek set of new banks is going to challenge traditional banks, one is mistaken.

What are Digital Banking Units (DBUs)?

These are the outlets where people can avail of banking products, mostly on their own.

There will be personnel to assist them, but these will be kept to the minimum.

In other words, a DBU can be seen as a branch that operates mostly in a digital (or paperless) mode.

DBUs are one way in which digital products can be offered. In this model, the digital products stay within the bank.

What are the advantages offered by DBUs?

By eliminating paper, DBUs can **reduce processing time** and **help enhance employee productivity**.

What are the challenges?

Even highly literate customers **prefer the convenience of walking into a normal branch** to meet many of their banking needs. To suppose that in under-served areas, people will be able to help themselves to any but the most basic banking products (say, deposits) is a stretch.

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DBUs may be able to grow deposits quickly, but they are unlikely to be able to do much on the asset or fee income side.

What are Neo-banks?

Digital products can also be offered through **digital banking subsidiaries** or by **standalone digital banks (neo-banks)**

– In the late 1990s and early 2000s when online banking came into fashion abroad, banks did experiment with digital banking subsidiaries. These did not work and were subsumed into the parent. Standalone banks based on internet banking did not survive either.

Standalone digital banks have made a comeback, thanks to the mobile phone. They are part of the broader category of players labelled fintech.

What are the various ways in which fintech can happen?

Fintech, which is the provision of financial products through electronic platforms, can happen in three ways.

One, through entities that compete with banks (such as digital banks).

Two, through entities that collaborate with banks by providing a range of services, such as customer acquisition, KYC checks, loan processing and screening, loan collection, risk management, customer management and so on.

Three, through entities that eliminate the need for financial intermediation, for example, peer-to-peer lending platforms.

Are digital banks a threat to traditional banks?

Unlikely. These banks do not target traditional banks head on due to the following factors:

Digital banks take **higher risks** and are often suffer from **poor margins and profitability**.

Target different customer base: Digital banks typically target high risk customers that banks tend to avoid. These include: **a)** Individuals with lower incomes or lower credit scores, **b)** commercial real estate and **c)** unsecured lending.

Digital banks' potential for fee income is lower because they deal with lower income clients.

High marketing expenses: What they save on non-establishment of brick and mortar branches is more than offset by huge marketing expenses. Not surprisingly, most are loss-making.

Centrality of bank branches: The experience of the past two decades suggests that the **centrality of the branch to banking remains**. Digital banking cannot wholly substitute the branch when it comes to customer acquisition. It is a tool for customer retention, an added service that banks provide by way of holding on to customers.

Banks have always adapted to the challenges thrown at them by competitors, like NBFCs and fintechs. They have evolved their business model by providing high-yielding products that the competition is offering, or acquiring the competition altogether.

Hence, the notion that fintech will displace banks is a fantasy. Banks will imitate fintechs or swallow them, they aren't going to disappear.

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Way forward

Digital banks are lightly regulated at the moment. They are a threat, not so much to banks, as to banking stability on account of the systemic risk they pose. Hence, they **need to be regulated tightly**.

IPR AND RELATED ISSUES

11. Crime and copyright infringement

Source: The post is based on an article “**Crime and copyright infringement**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **8th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Intellectual property rights (IPR)

Relevance: The Copyright laws in India

News: The Supreme Court of India, in ***Knit Pro International v. The State of NCT*** has ruled that the copyright infringement is a cognisable offence under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973.

Legal framework for copyright in India

The Indian Copyright Act makes a distinction between **commercial** and **non-commercial infringement**.

It allows the courts to impose a sentence of less than six months or a fine of less than Rs. 50,000. The imprisonment may extend up to three years.

The law criminalises those acts which grossly violate a copyrighted work. For example, Bollywood production house faces criminal investigations on the criminal complaints filed by scriptwriters.

What is a cognisable Offence?

It means that the police can begin investigations into allegations of copyright infringement on receiving a complaint. However, in a **non-cognisable offence**, the police start an investigation only after a judicial magistrate had taken cognisance of the offence and directed the police to initiate an investigation.

Implication of the judgment

Since the offence would be cognisable and non-bailable. Therefore, the copyright owners, especially in the software and music industries, can extort disproportionate **licence fees** in the name of **police threat** against **potential infringers**.

This will take away the right of the accused to post a bail bond with the police. This prevents shifting the responsibility on to the courts for **judicial determination** on a case-by-case basis.

The decision can pave the way for the police to impinge on **civil liberties**, like it can have **chilling effects** on free speech. Further, it can lead to impeding the ease of business and have

What are issues in allowing the police to begin criminal investigations into copyright infringement?

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Unlike trademark law, it is **not mandatory** under the Copyright Act to register copyrights as a necessary precondition in order to enforce the same. A copyright is created the moment a piece of art or music or literature is fixed on a medium, provided it is original.

There can be issues on asserting whether the said piece of art or music or literature is in fact 'original'.

In case of original content, the use of the copyrighted work is permissible or not, is another question.

If a copyright work is qualified for protection under the Designs Act of 2000. In that case, the copyright protection cannot be claimed under the Copyright Act.

Further, In the very question of determination of copyright infringement, the require the court applies the test of **substantial similarity** (both qualitative and quantitative) on a case-by-case basis.

The present levels of **training** and **funding** of the investigation officers like the average police sub-inspector, to conduct an **efficient investigation** into **copyright infringement** is limited.

Argument against making copyright infringement a cognizable offence

The criminalisation of copyright infringement in India should be re-looked. In 1914, the copyright infringement only attracted a **monetary fine** under the **Imperial Copyright Act, 1911**. Later, one-year imprisonment was introduced in 1957. Further, the term of punishment was tripled to three years.

The TRIPS do not require criminalising all kinds of copyright infringement. It differentiates between **copyright infringement** and **copyright piracy**. All piracy of copyrighted works is an act of infringement, but all infringement cannot be termed as piracy. For example, the criminal measures can be applied against "**wilful copyright piracy**" on a "**commercial scale**".

It is difficult to establish guilt beyond **reasonable doubt** in copyright infringement cases.

Way Forward

The law should be amended to **differentiate** between the different acts of copyright infringement and to include the requirement of **prior judicial cognisance** to start criminal investigation by the police.

GS3 – INDIAN ECONOMY – MONEY AND BANKING

BAD BANK AND RELATED ISSUES

12. Of what good is a bad bank?

Source: This post is based on the article "**Of what good is a bad bank?**" published in **The Hindu** on **7th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy

Relevance: Bad bank and related issues

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News: Union Finance Minister recently announced that the [National Asset Reconstruction Company](#) (NARCL) along with the India Debt Resolution Company (IDRCL) will take over the first set of bad loans from banks and try to resolve them.

The decision to set up a **bad bank** was taken by the Union government during the Budget presented last year in the aftermath of the nationwide lockdowns, and the moratorium was subsequently extended to borrowers by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio of Indian banks has declined from a peak of 11.2% in FY18 to 6.9% in Q2FY22.

What is a 'bad bank'?

A bad bank is a financial entity set up to buy non-performing assets (NPAs), or bad loans, from banks.

The aim of setting up a bad bank is to help **ease the burden on banks** by taking bad loans off their balance sheets and get them to lend again to customers without constraints.

After the purchase of a bad loan from a bank, the bad bank may later try to **restructure and sell the NPA to investors** who might be interested in purchasing it.

How does a bad bank generate profit for itself?

A bad bank makes a profit in its operations **if it manages to sell the loan at a price higher than what it paid to acquire the loan** from a commercial bank.

However, generating profits is usually **not the primary purpose of a bad bank** — the objective is to ease the burden on banks, of holding a large pile of stressed assets, and to get them to lend more actively.

What are the pros and cons of setting up a bad bank?

Advantages

– A supposed advantage in setting up a bad bank, it is argued, is that it **can help consolidate all bad loans** of banks under a single exclusive entity. The idea of a bad bank has been tried out in countries such as the U.S., Germany, Japan and others in the past.

Disadvantages

Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan has been one of the fiercest critics of the idea.

– He argued that a bad bank backed by the government **will merely shift bad assets** from the hands of public sector banks, which are owned by the government, to the hands of a bad bank, which is again owned by the government.

Other analysts believe that unlike a bad bank set up by the private sector, a bad bank backed by the government is **likely to pay too much for stressed assets**.

– While this may be good news for public sector banks, which have been reluctant to incur losses by selling off their bad loans at cheap prices, it is **bad news for taxpayers** who will once again have to foot the bill for bailing out troubled banks.

Will a 'bad bank' help ease the bad loan crisis?

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A key reason behind the bad loan crisis in public sector banks, is the **nature of their ownership**.

– Private banks are owned by individuals who have strong financial incentives to manage them well. On the other hand, public sector banks are managed by bureaucrats who may often not have the same commitment to ensuring these lenders' profitability.

– To that extent, bailing out banks through a bad bank does not really address the root problem of the bad loan crisis.

Further, there is a huge **risk of moral hazard**. The safety net provided by a bad bank gives banks more reason to lend recklessly and thus further exacerbate the bad loan crisis.

Will it help revive credit flow in the economy?

Read [here](#).

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS AND SURVEYS

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX (EPI) 2022

13. [Explained: What is the environment index, and why has India questioned it?](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “[Explained: What is the environment index, and why has India questioned it?](#)” published in **The Indian Express** on **11th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment

Relevance: India's poor performance on the Environment Index

News: The newly released [Environmental Performance Index \(EPI\) 2022, measured by Yale and Columbia universities](#), ranks India at the bottom position among 180 countries.

The Environment Ministry has issued a rebuttal, saying the indicators used in the assessment are **based on “unfounded assumptions”**.

What is the Environmental Performance Index (EPI)?

The EPI is an international ranking system of countries based on their environmental health.

Read [here](#).

How poor is the EPI assessment of India?

With a rank of **180** and a score of 18.9, India has fallen from rank **168** and a score of 27.6 in 2020.

India comes after Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Myanmar, the poorest performers.

Denmark tops the list with a score of 77.9.

India ranks close to the bottom on a number of indicators including ecosystem vitality (178th), biodiversity (179th), biodiversity habitat index (170th), species protection index (175th), etc.

What are the objections raised by India?

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In a statement, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change stated that some of the indicators used for assessing performance are **extrapolated** and based on surmises and **unscientific methods**.

Two major concerns have been cited

- Baseline data does not seem to have been used, and
- There has been no explanation for the weightages assigned to certain indicators.

The Ministry said the **shifting of weightage on many indicators** has resulted in India's low ranking.

- For example, for **black carbon** growth, India's score actually improved from 32 in 2020 to 100 (the top score) in 2022, but the weightage of this indicator has been reduced to 0.0038 in 2022 from 0.018 in 2020.

What is the objection with the projection?

The government has objected to calculations of greenhouse gas projections for 2050.

The government said the projection for greenhouse gas emissions has been computed based on the average rate of change in emission of the last 10 years rather than modelling that takes into account a longer period, extent of renewable energy capacity and use, additional carbon sinks, energy efficiency etc.

It said crucial **carbon sinks that mitigate GHG, such as forests and wetlands, have not been taken into account**.

India's **low emissions trajectory**, unlike high historical trajectories of developed countries, **has been ignored**, it said.

The government has objected to the **low weightage given to per-capita GHG emissions**.

Among other objections raised:

- the index emphasises the extent of protected areas rather than the quality of protection that they afford
- the computation of biodiversity indices does not factor in management effectiveness evaluation of protected areas
- indicators such as agro biodiversity, soil health, food loss and waste are not included even though they are important for developing countries with large agrarian populations.

Do environmental scientists agree with the report?

As per experts, the climate change parameter of the EPI report is "**highly problematic**".

- The EPI 2022 makes an assumption that every country has to reach net-zero by 2050 — whereas the understanding is that developing countries will need more time.
- GHG emissions will continue to grow in poorer countries for a time, unlike many developed countries, which have peaked.

The EPI 2022 is **neither ethically correct nor reflects the political reality**.

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Moreover, the **low weightage given to per-capita GHG emissions** automatically reduces the ranks of countries like India and China.

– Even if air pollution declines steadily, in countries like India and China, by virtue of their large populations the overall figure of the health burden for instance, will always be high and therefore will always fall in the bottom of the pile, if per-capita GHG emissions are given lower weightage.

Way forward

Despite issues with the EPI, India does have severe local environmental issues, which have been highlighted in the report and need to be addressed.

14. Look at per capita: Environment reports don't do justice to better measure of India's carbon footprint

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Look at per capita:**” published in the Times of India on **8th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3- Environment

News: Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2022 was released recently.

Recently, Environmental Performance Index 2022 ranked India at the bottom of 180 countries. The findings of the index are not accurate.

EPI does not generally accept information directly from governments. Data is used from multiple sources, including government data. Thus, the ranking does not accurately reflect India's performance.

EPI shows that India's performance on air quality is abysmal.

Why EPI findings about India, are not accurate?

EPI report must consider the following aspects in its findings:

First, almost one in six humans live in India.

Second, India's cumulative CO₂ emissions till 2019 were a mere 3% as against 47% of the US and EU combined. The industrialised nations, which have emitted most of the greenhouse gases are among the best performers in EPI.

Third, in terms of per capita GHG emission, India is at 53 and ahead of Norway.

Fourth, India's per capita energy consumption in 2019 for air-conditioning was just 25% of the world average of 272 kWh.

What steps India should take?

First, as per Pollution Control Board data poor air quality is mainly on account of post-harvest practices in agriculture and natural causes. But, not all farmers burn their stubble, where stubble has an economic value, stubble is not burnt.

Second, cost-effective solutions to reduce the impact of natural causes such as dust need attention right away.

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Finally, rethinking the role of public transport is indispensable.

GS3 – INTERNAL SECURITY – VARIOUS SECURITY FORCES AND THEIR MANDATE

INDIAN AIR FORCE

15. **How India Got Her Top Guns**

Source: The post is based on an article “**How India got her top guns**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Indian Security; Indian Security Forces and Their Mandate

Relevance: Indian Air Force

Context: In 1940/50s Indian Air Force (IAF) undertook air combat tactics and training through **the Royal Air Force**.

Evolution of IAF Training

In the post-independent India, The Indian Air Force (IAF) has sent pilots abroad (like the UK) to undergo the **Pilot Attack Instructors (PAI) course**. These pilots were required to pass on their knowledge to squadron pilots.

Although, **Maharajpur, Jamnagar, Bhopal, Amarda Road & Cholavaran** were established as centres. But, **training courses** like **air to ground weapon delivery, air to air combat and tactics** were continued to take place overseas.

During the 1960s, no IAF Fighter Leader was trained for nearly 15 years, till 1972 due to **lack of funds** and **approvals** coupled with the 1962 and 1965 wars.

Measures Taken to develop tactics and training more suited to Indian needs

The Directorate of Offensive Operations was established to give a fillip to training and tactics in the IAF

The **Tactics and Combat Development and Training Squadron (TCDTS)** was set up as a one-year experiment. Initially, it was moved to Ambala. Later it was renamed as **the Tactics and Air Combat Development Establishment (TACDE)**.

Further, the establishment was moved to Jamnagar. In 2000, TACDE was moved to **Gwalior** because the location was geographically better.

The TCDTS has been given the task of conducting **low-level night strikes** on Pakistani Air Force (PAF) bases. Therefore, TCDTS has executed **night-time raids** at major PAF bases.

In 1973, the course for the **first Fighter Combat Leader (FCL)** was started. It had three pilots each from **MiGs** and **Sukhois fleets**, who were all Flight Commanders of their various squadrons and qualified PAIs from the pre-TACDE era.

The **PAI course** was reintroduced at TACDE. It was instituted as a subset of the broader **FCL Course**.

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The **Fighter Strike Leader** and **Master Fighter Controller** courses were added in 1989. Further, Surface to air guided weapons (missiles) combat crew were also integrated.

In 1997 the Helicopter Combat Leader course was added.

Outcomes

More than 500 pilots and over 100 Fighter Controllers had graduated from the above said unit.

What are the challenges?

The MiG-21 would remain the only aircraft at TACDE for the next 12 years.

CDS AND OTHER ARMED FORCES REFORMS

16. CDS: Unsettled questions

Source: This post is based on the article “**CDS: Unsettled questions**” published in the **Business Standard** on **9th Jun 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Various Security Forces & Agencies & Their Mandate

Relevance: The office of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

News: The government has recently announced eligibility conditions for the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

There is a **noticeable difference** between the CDS the government wanted in 2019 and what it seems to want today.

It is disconcerting that the government has modified the eligibility criteria for appointment as CDS so early in the life of the institution. This raises the question: Was the structure of the CDS, as conceived by the government’s top decision makers, flawed?

What changes have been introduced in the eligibility conditions?

Post opened for retired officers: The most obvious difference between the 2019 eligibility conditions and the ones the government has promulgated now is that a lieutenant general, vice admiral or air marshal (*referred to collectively as lieutenant generals hereafter*) who has retired up to two years ago can now be recalled to serve as CDS for up to three years until he reaches the age of 65.

It is unclear why the defence ministry is opening the post for retired officers.

Do the three serving chiefs and 17-odd serving army commanders, all of them senior lieutenant generals, not provide the government with adequate options?

Issues with the conditions

– A service a lieutenant general who has retired as far back as two years ago will be **rusty in his knowledge of current developments**

– Appointing a retired lieutenant general as CDS would only **give rise to suspicion** that the eligibility criteria were framed in order to elevate that particular individual.

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Experience has shown that allowing retired officers to return to service in elevated positions usually **does not turn out well**.

Nor would recalling to service a retired lieutenant general, to tenant the post of CDS, provide an answer to the contentious questions relating to the **CDS's precedence and seniority**.

– Currently, the three service chiefs, all the equivalent of full generals, are senior to the defence secretary. Army commanders (*who hold the rank of lieutenant general*) are the equivalent of secretaries.

The 2019 order creating the CDS appointed him “secretary” and the head of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA). That created a conundrum: *If the service chiefs are senior to the defence secretary, how can the CDS— by virtue of being secretary heading the DMA — be the equivalent of the defence secretary and, therefore, junior to the three army chiefs?*

There would be rough edges to the policy even within the three services since, technically, an army commander, who is junior to the service chiefs, could supersede them to become CDS.

The new CDS policy must address these issues.

Way forward

There is an **inescapable need to appoint the CDS** to take forward the military's agenda of equipment modernisation, manpower rationalisation and, perhaps most urgently, the creation of integrated, tri-service theatre commands.

Other CDS responsibilities that warrant no delay are his role as advisor to the Nuclear Command Authority and implementation of the Five-Year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan and the Two-Year Roll-On Annual Acquisition Plans.

INDIGENISATION OF DEFENCE SECTOR

17. Indigenise smart: Heavy investment in R&D is needed to take Indian defence production to next level

Source: This post is created based on the article “**Indigenise smart: Heavy investment in R&D is needed to take Indian defence production to next level**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Industries and Industrial policies of India – Science and technology

News: To promote indigenization, defense ministry has given the initial approval to projects worth Rs 76,390 crore.

All the proposed capital acquisitions will be under the ‘Buy and Make Indian’ mechanism.

What are the projects approved?

Construction of eight next-generation corvettes for the navy,

Procurement of wheeled armored fighting vehicles, and

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The manufacture of Dornier aircraft and Sukhoi-30 MKI aero-engines by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited

Why India is moving towards indigenisation?

First, with 50% of India's overall military assets Russian made, War in Ukraine has brought India's over-dependence on Russia to light.

Second, the performance of Russian military platforms in the war has been poor.

What are the factors to be considered in indigenisation?

First, the competitive bidding process must be tightly controlled. The bidding process could throw up controversies that defeat long-term objectives.

Second, India has achieved 90% indigenization in the 'float' (hull and superstructure) component of warship-building. However, the 'move' (propulsion) and 'fight' (weapons) components are still at 60% and 50% indigenisation.

Third, most of our indigenisation success has been in auxiliary and spares. For example; after the failure of the Kaveri project, we are yet to develop a fully indigenous aero-engine for military aircraft.

Fourth, we need to significantly up our investment in R&D. Also, a cutting-edge military-industrial ecosystem with universities, private sector, and defence PSUs, should be developed.

GS3 – ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE – INDIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

ENERGY SECURITY

18. Avoiding the coal scarcity trap

Source: The post is based on an article "Avoiding the coal scarcity trap" published in the **Indian Express** on 10th June 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance: Power Crisis

News: In 2021, the Indian government gave instructions to generators to import coal while India was in the midst of a power crisis. It directed the power stations itself to import coal to the extent of 4% of their requirement and blend it with domestic coal.

What are the causes of the power crisis?

India has been facing high power demand due to the **sudden early onset of summer** in 2022, and the post-Covid economic recovery.

The **Russia-Ukraine conflict** has led to a **sharp increase** in the price of **imported coal**. Therefore, the average price of imported coal is about **\$140 per tonne** against about **\$60 per tonne** a year ago.

Power stations designed on **imported coal** stopped importing because it was no longer **economical** for them to generate, given their **contract price** with the distribution companies.

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The stations started hunting for domestic coal as a substitute, thus putting pressure on domestic coal.

The domestic coal supply has seen disruption due to the issue of **availability** of **railway rakes** for transportation.

Measures taken by the government to deal with the power crisis situation

First, all generators have been asked to **import coal** to the extent of 10% (as against 4% earlier). Instead of a generator, Coal India will import the coal and function as the **aggregator** on behalf of the generators. CIL can import at a cheaper cost by accumulating demand as well as standardising the coal grade to be procured.

Second, the government has directed **imported coal-based plants** to run at **full capacity**. They have been given assurance that their enhanced cost of operation would be compensated. Further, if power plants fail to import coal and curtails domestic coal entitlements, they will be penalized.

Third, in order to ease the burden on the availability of railway rakes, the **concept of tolling** has been implemented. The states can transfer their allotted coal to **private generators** located near the mines instead of transporting it to far away state generators.

Fourth, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) has to seek the consent of beneficiaries if the tariff went up by more than 30%, if some alternate fuel is used.

Fifth, a committee of officials has been set up to rework the **energy charge** for imported **coal-based generators**.

Sixth, the government has advised **REC/PFC** to arrange for the **additional working capital**.

Whether the government can really give a direction to private generators to import coal at a higher cost?

As per Section 11, the government may direct a generating company to operate and maintain any generating station in extraordinary circumstances.

Further, the Appropriate Commission may offset the **adverse financial impact** of the issued directions on any generating company in such manner as it considers appropriate.”

What are the issues the government's directions?

First, there are elements of **trust deficit** b/w the **government** and the **regulator**. For example, in accordance to Section 11(2), the **regulator** has to work out the **energy charge** rather than setting up a committee of officials to do so. Further, the **adverse financial impact** would be offset by the regulator.

Second, the **revision of the energy costs** by the committee have been done without transparency with respect to the coal cost, its calorific value, transportation cost, etc. Therefore, a major generator has objected to the energy charge, calling it an underestimation by about 33%.

Third, the coal problem has been because of the **non-availability** of **rakes** in India.

Way Forward

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There is a need for 1,000 additional rakes to ferry 38 MT of coal over five months. In addition, there should be no dip in the production of domestic coal during the monsoon season.

GS3 – AGRICULTURE – MAJOR CROPS

FALL IN PROCUREMENT OF WHEAT AND RELATED ISSUES

19. **Is the ban on wheat exports good policy?**

Source: The post is based on an article “Is the ban on wheat exports good policy” published in the “The Hindu” on 10th June 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 Marketing of Agricultural Produce and Issues and Related Constraints

Relevance: Wheat export ban

News: Over the last month, the government has banned the export of wheat and imposed quantitative restrictions on outbound sugar shipments.

The wheat export ban came within days of a push to enhance India’s wheat supplies to the rest of the world after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The government has argued that farmers have not lost out due to the ban, as most had already sold their produce this season.

The article is a discussion with experts who consider the efficacy of these curbs.

Export opportunities

Even before the Ukraine-Russia war, **global food prices** were increasing because of excess liquidity across the world.

The war gave India an **opportunity** to export more wheat. **Ukraine** and **Russia** export contributed 55 million tonnes to the global export market out of 200 million tonnes. Farmers were getting higher **Open market prices** (Rs. 2,400 a quintal) compared to the **MSP** (Rs. 2,100).

Last year, India **exported** 8 million tonnes out of global exports of around 64 million tonnes. Now, there is **no shortage** of **sugar production** this year. We are expecting **35 million tonnes**.

Argument in favour of the government decision

The government has argued that farmers have not lost out due to the ban as most had already sold their produce this season.

Almost 30 countries have implemented the policy of export curbs per se. They have a sovereign right to do so.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

WATER CRISIS IN INDIA

20. **What India is doing to tackle its water crisis?**

Source: This post is based on the article “**What India is doing to tackle its water crisis?**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th June 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment and conservation

Relevance: Water crisis and related issues

Context: Although India has 16% of the world’s population, the country possesses only 4% of the world’s freshwater resources. India is water-stressed due to changing weather patterns and repeated droughts.

But it looks like the country has finally got its act together and several measures are now in place to conserve and rejuvenate our water bodies.

What is the situation wrt water crisis in India?

In the 75 years since Independence, **annual per capita availability of water has declined** by 75%.

Due to encroachment, India is staring at depletion of groundwater and pollution of surface water, including vanishing water bodies – ponds, lakes, tanks, wetlands.

– Provisional data from the country’s first census of water bodies shows that 2% of water bodies have been encroached.

What steps are being taken to address the water crisis?

Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) was started in 2019 as a movement for water conservation, recharge and rainwater harvesting in 256 water-stressed districts.

– The JSA now covers all 740 districts in the country. States are implementing it, while the Centre provides the nudge.

The states are also preparing an **inventory of water bodies**, which should make encroachment in the name of building infrastructure or setting up industries difficult.

According to the fifth minor irrigation census, various water bodies in rural areas are not in use for various reasons such as non-availability of water, siltation, salinity etc. With water bodies vanishing or becoming unusable, the Centre has decided to build 50,000 water bodies – **Amrit Sarovar** – across the country by August 15 next year to conserve water.

– The initiative aims to develop and rejuvenate 75 water bodies in each district as part of ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’ (75 years of Independence) celebrations. The project seeks to refocus various schemes, including MGNREGS and Watershed Development Component.

Issues that need to be resolved

Experts flagged many issues – from policy gaps to legislative provisions – that have been affecting overall water management in the country.

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– **Water being a state subject** invariably leads to a political tug of war when it comes to water-sharing between states.

– **Fragmented policy environment:** There's no integration of surface and groundwater, drinking water and irrigation, and departmental coordination. The national water policy is very irrigation-centric.

– **Excessive dependence on groundwater:** Reports have flagged how use of over 85% fresh water in agriculture has led to a crisis in several states, including Punjab, Haryana and western UP, with excessive dependence on groundwater in cultivating water-guzzling crops such as paddy and sugarcane.

Indiscriminate use of water for irrigation and absence of conservation efforts have left over 10% of water bodies in rural areas redundant.

Way forward

Rainfed agriculture in the country has to be incentivised, given its high contribution to India's food and nutrition security.

Centre has urged states to focus on enumerating, geo-tagging and making an inventory of all existing water bodies on priority under the JSA so that encroachment can be prevented.

GS3 – ENVIRONMENT – BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

MICROORGANISMS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

21. Microbes cause Earth to function — from plants to humans, we all live due to microbial activity'

Source: The post is based on an article “**Microbes cause Earth to function – from plants to humans, we all live due to microbial activity**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th June 2022**.

Syllabus: GS3 Science and Technology in our day-to-day life

Relevance: Importance of Microorganism

Context: The speed of evolution in the microbial world is enormous. If there is a favorable condition, then microbes multiply in hours. These microbes are a very important part of nature.

Importance of Microbes

Their **microbial activities** are foundational for the functioning of our planet. The plants, and animals including humans **evolved** with microbes. They create **suitable conditions** for life. For example, microbes produce oxygen in the oceans, generate sulphur and nitrogen, prepare soil etc.

It is an important part of the **ecosystem**. For example, Human body is also like an ecosystem in which microbial organisms constantly interact.

– For example, microbes live on the skin surface, inside our gut tract etc.

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Microbes interact with land, oceans etc. They play an important role in **bio-geochemical cycles**. For example, bacteria generate a large part of **Earth's sulphur cycle**, impact cloud formation, the climate, etc.

The microorganism like bacteria and fungi also release important molecule likes geosmine, in the soil.

Are microbes harmful to human beings?

Out of millions of species of microbes on our planet, only a few can cause disease in humans. There are **innumerable diverse species** which are very beneficial to us.

– For example, bacteria are used for nitrogen fixation. Also, they are vital for sustaining our food chain. For instance, microbes are used for fermentation, making sanitised beverages, creating bread, yogurt, cheese and so on.

Impact of climate change on microbes

The microbial life is changing dramatically due to climate change. For example, soil depletion and degradation cause reduction in the microbial activities in soil. This cause **greater soil erosion** and decreased **food production**.

How can we help to preserve microbes?

There is a need to leave ecosystems alone. There should not be any unwarranted **anthropogenic interference**. Human beings should be respectful of the planet.