

9 PM

Compilation

11th to 16th July, 2022

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General Studies Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

1. [India in 2023: The challenge and opportunity of being the most populous country](#)

Source: The post is based on the following articles

“UN projections on population underline opportunities and challenges, addressing which will require long-term vision and imagination” published in the **Indian Express** on **12th July 2022**.

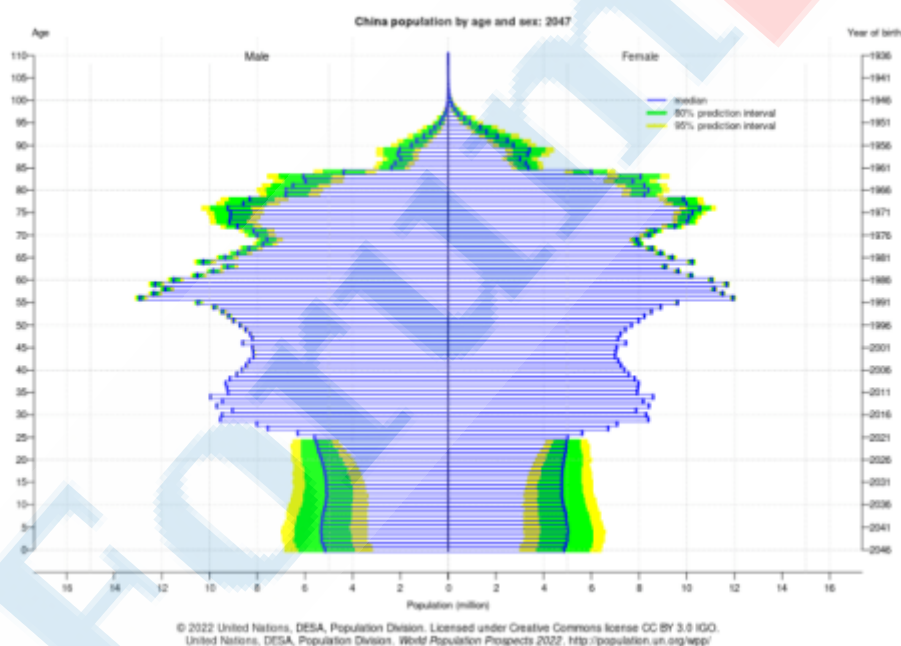
“Sonalde Desai writes | India in 2023: The challenge and opportunity of being the most populous country” published in the **Indian Express** on **12th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Population and associated issues.

Relevance: About the recent UNPD report on population.

News: The United Nations Population Division (UNPD) released a new set of population projections on July 11, World Population Day. These projections show that India will become the most populous country in 2023, earlier than the year 2027, as expected.

What is the reason for such an advanced projection?



Source: IE

According to the UNPD, a sustained total fertility rate of 2.1 is necessary for a country to achieve population stability. The latest National Family Health Survey puts this figure at 2. In other words, India is on course to achieving population stability if it maintains this rate in the next few years.

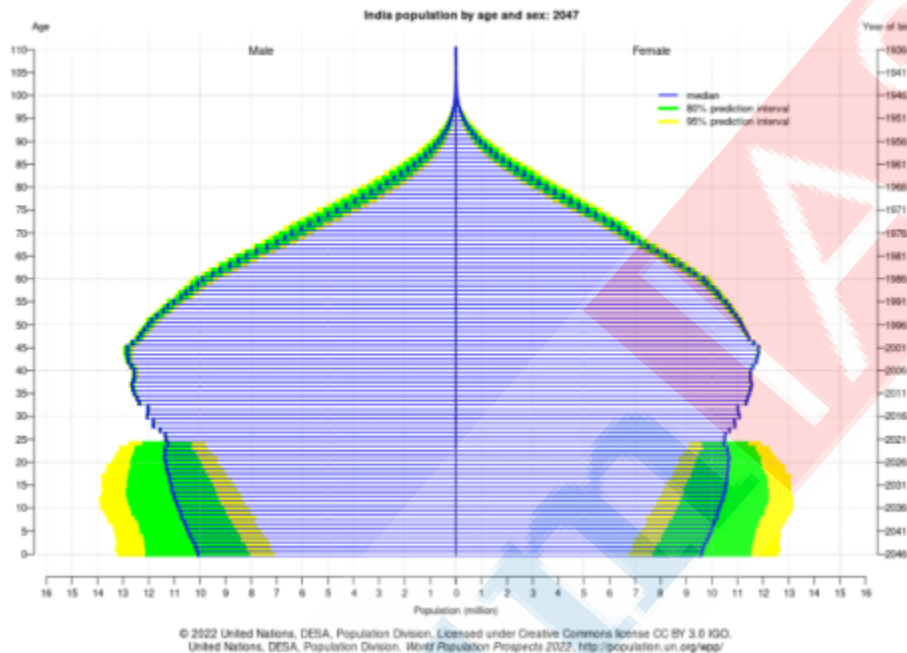
However, India will overtake China because China’s fertility is lower than anticipated. Following years of stringent population control, in 2016, China relaxed its one-child policy to allow two children. Then, in 2021, it was further relaxed to allow a third child.

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However, Chinese couples seem to have adjusted to life with a single child, and the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in China is barely 1.16.

Read more: [Elderly population in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the challenges associated with the increasing population?



Source: IE

For the next 25 years, globally, one in five working-age persons will live in India. However, a sizeable working-age population does not mean many workers.

Low women participation: The size of India's labour force is constrained by the absence of women from the workforce. The absence of women in factories, the transportation sector and skilled blue-collar work is huge.

Only about 30% of women aged 15 and above are employed either in wage work on family farms and businesses.

Population distribution between states: With fertility transition beginning in southern states and slowly spreading to central India, future workers will come from the central part of the country.

Challenges in interstate migration: With industrial growth concentrated in coastal regions and the bulk of India's workers coming from central areas, India will also need to figure out how to deal with interstate migration.

Changing inter-generational relations: In 2047, a large proportion of the Indian population will be of working ages. However, after 2050, the older population will rise sharply; by 2100, about 30 per cent of the Indian population will be 65 and above.

This will make it difficult for Indian parents to rely on their traditional mode of survival, living with one or more sons.

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Must read: [Population control measures in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

What should be done?

Firstly, with declining fertility and rising education, many Indian women would like to work if they can find suitable jobs. **Making occupations female-friendly** is essential if India needs to reap a gender dividend.

Secondly, the youth will have to be equipped with skills that are indispensable to the knowledge economy. India needs to ensure that the **education system in central India** is improved so that they can create a proper workforce.

Thirdly, India needs better policies to **integrate and support migrant workers** in their new homes if India wants to adjust to changing demographic realities.

Fourthly, India must **develop more robust systems of old-age support**. This should include a combination of private savings, public social security programmes and an increase in retirement age, allowing the older population to be economically active for a longer time.

In addition, since most of the elderly will be women, India will also need to increase women's control over family's savings, land and residence.

Terms to know:

- [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS\)](#)
- [National Human Rights Commission](#)
- [National Population Policy](#)
- [Total Fertility Rate \(TFR\)](#)
- [Dependency ratio](#)

2. [India's biggest challenge](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**India's biggest challenge**" published in the Business Standard on 14th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS1 – Population and Associated Issues; GS 3 Indian Economy; Inclusive Growth

Relevance: Population; Employment; Demographic Dividend

News: In the recent past, the **population division** of the **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs**, has released its population projections related to China and India..

The population projections

In 2022, India's population will converge on China's with both having a total of just over 1.4 billion people.

Further, India is set to become the **world's largest country** by population in 2023. Further, India's population will continue to grow. But China's population will begin to shrink from now onwards.

According to the same projections, India's population will be around 1.7 billion and China's around 1.3 billion by 2050,

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What are the challenges in front of India?

India has not been able to prepare the workforce for the job market. It is unlikely to represent any “demographic dividend”. This has been due to laggard **educational attainments** and lack of focus on **school quality**. For example, a third of high school students in urban and peri-urban Delhi have no basic mathematics and language skills

There is a lack of jobs in the **job market** in India. Although, the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2020-21 states the number of unemployed youths has come down compared to previous years. But, The data remains inadequate to give a full picture.

Therefore, India cannot afford to have the **largest population in the world** with one of the **world’s lowest employment ratios**.

India will face **a lot of problems**. The problems will not be **restricted** to just economics like **missing jobs** and **growth**. It will also translate into **social problems** like riots.

Way Forward

It is all very well, in addition, to talk of skilling this generation after their school education. But unless they are given a solid grounding in the basics, attempts at vocational training may not work.

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General Studies Paper – 2

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General Studies - 2

1. [What ails the current approach to Ayurveda](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**What ails the current approach to Ayurveda**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Relevance: Issues associated with Ayurveda.

News: Ayurveda has been in practice for close to three millennia. Even today, India’s traditional medicine serves the healthcare needs of millions of Indians. But the Ayurveda faces a few challenges that need to be addressed.

What are the challenges associated with Ayurveda?

Has few obsolete treatises: Ayurveda’s ancient treatises contain useful portions alongside obsolete ones. Hence, valuable health promotion and illness management observations need to be carefully filtered from outdated theories and socio-religious superstitions.

Many experts admit that the anatomy and physiology contained in the Ayurvedic classics is mostly outdated and that the official approach to this subject is misguided.

For instance, On urine formation, the text posits that tiny ducts from the intestines carry urine to fill the bladder. This simplistic scheme of urine formation has no role for the kidneys at all.

Read more: [Explained: Surgery as part of Ayurveda](#)

Philosophical superiority: The belief in the philosophical superiority of Ayurveda has destroyed ancient medical writings from being revisable scientific treatises. The idea of Ayurveda being antithetical to the yukti-vyapashraya (reason-based) character of classical Ayurveda has made the reforms long overdue in Ayurveda. This is highlighted by Usman Committee (1923) and the Chopra Committee (1948).

Misinterpretations in practices: There is a flawed approach of making ancient concepts sound relevant by super-imposing current scientific findings upon them. This will lead to dangerously wrong clinical choices.

Read more: [First of its kind phase 3 clinical trial in Ayurveda for Rheumatoid Arthritis](#)

What should be done?

Revise Ayurvedic treatises: A century ago, P.S. Varier of the Arya Vaidya Sala Kottakkal noted that the “Sareerasthana (section on body structure and function in the Ayurvedic classics) must firstly be revised and made clearer and the remaining parts must be suited to it.

After this, the other important works should also be corrected. Further, necessary additions must be made either by translations or by collaboration with experts in portions still deficient.

As a medical system, Ayurveda is valuable immensely for its observations. Ministry of AYUSH must take cognisance actions to revive Ayurveda.

Read more: [Making Ayurveda a real science](#)

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2. [Suman Bery writes: NITI Aayog's role in ensuring collaboration between states and centre](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Suman Bery writes: NITI Aayog's role in ensuring collaboration between states and centre**” published in **The Indian Express** on **12th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity – Relations between Centre and States

Relevance: NITI Aayog and improving Centre-State relations

Context: The Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog lists out seven propositions centered around his understanding of NITI Aayog's role in enhancing alignment between the Centre and states.

How has NITI Aayog helped in improving federalism?

Since its inception in 2015, NITI Aayog has been instrumental in promoting competitive and cooperative federalism.

– NITI Aayog organises the **annual meeting of the Governing Council (GC) under the leadership of the PM**. It brings together chief ministers/Lieutenant-governors of the states/UTs to discuss inter-sectoral, inter-departmental and federal issues. The aim is to accelerate the implementation of the **National Development Agenda**.

How can NITI Aayog help improve alignment b/w Centre and States?

States must identify their strengths: States are the Indian economy's growth drivers. They control urban governance, agriculture, power distribution, land records modernisation, labour law simplification and pollution control.

– For India to remain one of the fastest-growing major economies, states must identify their strengths. NITI Aayog must ensure productive engagement and dialogue with the states to develop a growth roadmap.

Income convergence across states: Despite country-wide economic growth, the less developed Indian states are not catching up.

– NITI Aayog must address this crucial issue through improved governance structures, adequate financial development and infrastructure.

Performance on social indicators is a sound metric for assessing a state's performance. Social outcomes are de-linked from income in several states. Mizoram's performance on the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is one example. Despite being a middle-income state, its IMR is the lowest at 3 deaths per 1,000 live births, whereas the national average is 28.

– NITI Aayog has developed several social sector indices and dashboards for effectively tracking and monitoring outcomes. Regular monitoring and performance evaluation will incentivize states to achieve better social outcomes.

Growth at the grassroots: We must focus on ensuring that growth originates from the grassroots, while addressing significant inter-state and inter-district variations. The PM launched the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) to address these challenges through data-driven, outcome-based governance. While lauding the ADP during the conference, the PM emphasized the need to convert the Aspirational Districts into “**inspirational districts**”.

– NITI Aayog must focus on guiding state governments in replicating the ADP template at the block level and for districts not categorised as aspirational.

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Better managed urbanisation is crucial. Cities face challenges such as affordable housing, water supply and waste management. Further, there is a need to tap into resources other than government budgets, such as monetising land assets and engaging private capital in service delivery.

– Efforts to empower and make large urban local bodies atmanirbhar are the needs of the hour.

Sharing of best practices: Several best practices are already being implemented by states across India. NITI Aayog must act as an **intermediary** between the Centre and states to ensure cross-sharing of these best practices, insights and perspectives.

– Some areas that merit particular focus are the use of advanced technology using blockchain and AI, development of social registry and reducing compliance burden etc.

Conversation around climate change challenge: The world has so far witnessed two models of development— the Industrial Revolution and the rise of East Asia. Both depended on cheap, fossil-fuel energy. India aspires to grow equally fast but is now subject to a carbon constraint.

At the state level, it is critical to understand how the challenges facing states might be affected by decarbonisation, both with regard to mitigation and adaptation.

India needs to continue its national debate around this challenge. Using its convening power, NITI Aayog is well-positioned to generate such a conversation and guide states to catalyse climate action.

3. [Saving Sri Lanka](#)

Source: This post is based on the following articles

“Read Lanka right: Structural economic weakness, not illiberalism, caused the crisis. And that weakness doesn’t apply to India” published in **The Times of India** on **11th Jul 22**.

“Saving Sri Lanka” published in **Business Standard** on **12th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2- India and its neighborhood

Relevance: India-Lanka relations

Context: The prevailing economic crisis in Sri Lanka, pre-crisis problems and how can India help in improving the situation.

Problems with Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has been a South Asian epitome for many decades on Human Development Indicators (HDI). Health, education have been at near-European levels.

Average income has been above the rest of the subcontinent – with a pre-crisis per-capita income nearly double that of India.

But there were always problems in the island nation.

– Sri Lanka received IMF bailouts 16 times since 1965.

– There hasn’t been a single decade since the 1960s when Lanka did not receive at least 2 IMF bailouts.

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- With time, size of the bailouts has gone up, but essential bug has persisted.
- During this time, Lanka has endured civil war, political instability and long periods of presumptively “liberal, tolerant” governments – but frequency of bailouts needed didn’t change.

What led to present economic crisis in Sri Lanka?

First, the **lack of domestic savings** to fund government debt and the lack of stable capital flows to fund the shortage of dollars created every year with a persistent CAD.

Second, since the 1960s, Lanka has depended on **multilateral borrowings** to finance its Current Account Deficit (CAD) as well as undertake key development projects.

Third, lack of a development bank infrastructure and local savings meant that the bulk of Lanka’s famed HDI achievements came to be funded by the likes of World Bank.

Fourth, despite large concessional foreign loan flows, Lanka had to **periodically resort to IMF bailouts** in order to bridge its foreign exchange deficits.

Fifth, aided by the optimism around the end of the civil war, Lanka started **issuing International Sovereign Bonds (ISBs)**.

– By 2019 short-tenure ISBs became nearly 50% of government borrowings.

– ISBs, in the absence of drastic improvement in government finances and/or ability to raise local savings, need to be refinanced by raising further ISBs. All of this, in a country that has struggled to raise any meaningful non-debt capital inflows over the years, is close to a casino musical chair game.

Sixth, Loans by China: Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) loans fund large infrastructure projects (often unviable, like the Hambantota port) where bulk of the funding is to Chinese contractors executing the project.

This has resulted in a project with little cash flows, limited benefit to the local economy, but a funding liability of the Lanka government.

Seventh, the last and the final reason was likely the sudden wholesale switch to organic farming.

Why such a crisis isn’t possible in India?

India issues zero ISBs, and has negligible dependence on foreign flows to fund its budget.

As a large, sophisticated economy, it attracts enough non-debt capital flows to fund its CAD.

It has a world-class regulatory framework to manage external risks.

Way forward

Short term

Humanitarian suffering and a political vacuum must be avoided.

Money to pay for immediate and essential imports must be found, and New Delhi must support a peaceful transfer of power.

Long term

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Sri Lanka's debt, as currently structured, if unsustainable, will need to be restructured. This is critical as it will set precedents for other sovereign debt restructuring that appears inevitable, from Ghana to Laos.

India's role

India must now take up a leadership role in addressing Lanka's problems, without waiting for the global community.

Also, Sri Lanka is small compared to most Indian states, and so a bailout cost will not be prohibitive. Plus, bailing out a fundamentally productive neighbouring country is clearly in the national interest.

There was talk of the outgoing prime minister convening a conference of the country's creditors, including India, Japan, and China. Such a meeting should certainly go ahead even if the current prime minister himself is not around to conduct it.

4. [C Raja Mohan writes: India's new West Asia approach is a welcome break with past diffidence](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "India's new West Asia approach is a welcome break with past diffidence" published in the Indian Express on 12th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations; Regional Grouping

Relevance: I2U2 Forum; Middle East Region

News: The first summit of a new forum known as I2U2 is expected to take place soon during Joe Biden's visit to Israel.

About I2U2

The forum was launched in 2021. It brings together four countries, namely, **India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates** and **the United States**.

How is this forum important for India, in terms of relationship with the Middle East Region?

The I2U2 sets the stage for a new and dynamic phase in India's relations with the Middle East. The US bet that India can contribute significantly to peace and prosperity in the Middle East region.

It indicates India's new trends in its **Middle East policy** since 2014 because India is now ready to engage with those countries with which India had traditionally kept a **safe political distance** from in the Middle Eastern Region.

India's relations with the Middle-Eastern Countries and the US

India-Israel Relations

Although India was one of the first countries to recognise Israel in 1950, India did not establish full diplomatic relations with it. For example, India has hosted the Israeli PM in 2003, and there were no prime ministerial visits in either direction during the **decade-long period of 2004-14**.

India feared that an **open engagement** with Israel might complicate its relations with the Arab partners.

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India-Arab World Relations

Traditionally, India preferred to engage with the **republics** in the Arab world. However, in the 1970s, India's ties to the monarchies improved because they became the main source of hydrocarbons, the main destination for Indian labor exports, and a major source of hard currency remittances.

However, despite improvement in **India's economic engagement** with the Arab world, India remained wary of engagement with the monarchies in the Arab World as India believed that they were **pro-Pakistan**.

No Indian PM visited Saudi Arabia between 1982 and 2010 and UAE between 1981 and 2015.

The US

India has opposed its policies in the region undertaken in the name of promoting an **"area of peace"**. Therefore, I2U2 marks a big break from the anti-Western tradition in India's approach to the region.

What developments made India to join the new forum?

India-Israel

India is engaging with Israel because various Muslim countries are improving ties with Israel. For example

- (1) Turkey, now a champion of political Islam, had diplomatic ties with Israel since the year 1949.
- (2) Egypt normalised its relation with Israel in 1980.

The UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco set up formal ties with Israel in 2020 Under the (3) Abrahamic accords, promoted by the Trump Administration.

India-Arab World

India is also deepening its ties with the Arab world. For example, PM Modi, while on his first visit to Israel in 2018, also became the first Indian PM to visit Palestine.

Since 2014, India has transformed its relations with the **Gulf Kingdoms**, especially the UAE and Saudi-Arabia based on **a personal rapport** of the Indian PM and without a reference to Pakistan.

India has negotiated **a free trade agreement** with the UAE. The UAE has also backed India's 2019 constitutional changes in Kashmir and is ready to invest in India's Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

India-the US

India has increased its engagement with the US in the **Indo-Pacific** through the **Quad** in recent years.

India is participating in the **West Asian Quad**. This has brought India in line with other major powers- including Europe, China, and Russia which are trying and engaging with all parties in the region.

5. [The new 'normal' of political splits and shifts](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**The new ‘normal’ of political splits and shifts**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on 12th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Relevance: Anti-Defection Law in India

News: Recently, the States of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have seen splits in the ruling party. Subsequently, there has been realignment of legislators which inaugurated new governments.

Trends of splits and switches in India

Splits and switches are commonplace in legislatures across the globe. India has also witnessed at least three distinct waves. These were:

(1) In the latter half of the 1960s, there were a number of **free movement of legislators** across political parties which led to quick turnover of governments in India.

(2) In late 1980s, the anti-defection law was enacted to end the menace and regulate the behaviour of legislators. The law discouraged **individual movement** and incentivised a **collective movement** of legislators (mass defection). This happened because the law **legitimized** the defection of a **specific number of legislators**.

(3) Since 2014, there have been a number of splits and switches aimed to establish the governments. For example, such happenings were seen in Arunachal Pradesh (2016), Bihar (2017), Karnataka (2019), Madhya Pradesh (2020), and Maharashtra (2022).

What are the problematic aspects with the third phase of the splits and switches in India?

There is no respect for the **basic rules** of the game. The dominant parties are promoting splits and shifts.

The dominant parties have weaponized the **anti-defection law** and **institutions**. For example, these are used to **intervene** in the internal working of the opposition parties, etc.

Furthermore, legislators are also switching their support even if it does not lead to the making or maintenance of governments.

What are the associated issues?

It could have repercussions in terms of government formation, maintenance, and termination. Therefore, it is immoral and damages the foundations of **representative democracy** in India.

First, switchers violate the trust of those who voted in their favour on certain grounds.

Second, if it is assumed that voters vote for parties and not candidates, then it makes it difficult for voters to hold **party governments** accountable for their actions during elections.

Why do legislators split from and switch parties without fearing the negative connotations?

First of all, the notion of political parties is not static, it has changed with time and transformed. For example, Parties constantly adapt new modes to sustain and find success for themselves.

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Today's parties are not **classical mass parties**, which rise from societal movements and are internally democratic and share a common goal encompassing different dimensions of societal life.

Today's parties are **centralised vote-getting machines** which primarily work to ensure the return of **political leaders** to office. They are working without internal democracy. There is lack of link with the society and mass organization. It is the **central leadership** that counts and matters. All party activities begin and end with elections.

In this model, the **traditional campaign modes** have been replaced by **new forms of communication and campaign methods**. For example, **paid professionals** are hired to frame strategies, run campaigns and distribute tickets. Therefore, traditional voter bases like labour etc. don't form the backbone of parties and linkage between parties and the grassroots.

The voters see elected representatives or parties from the perspective of a **supplier of goods and services**. Therefore, the elected representatives are expected to be in government or at least close to the government. Therefore, the MLAs/MPs switch parties, and defections are not punished by voters.

6. [Concerns of Indian players should be taken care of while crafting FTAs](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**Concerns of Indian players should be taken care of while crafting FTAs**" published in **The Indian Express** on **13th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Relevance: Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

News: A well-crafted trade agreement could help India enhance its share in global trade and help attain the government's target of making the country a \$5-trillion economy.

Signing FTAs with multiple countries

Recently, India has signed trade agreements with [Australia](#) and the [UAE](#).

In the last week of June, New Delhi began talks for a [similar agreement with the EU](#). These talks could have a bearing on tariff-related matters in agriculture and industry. India's successful sectors like textiles, pharmaceuticals and leather could benefit from these deliberations.

Why an FTA with EU is significant to India?

In the last decade, India's exports to EU countries have grown at a faster pace than the country's overall exports.

The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and France have emerged as key markets for Indian products.

Hence, a successful free trade agreement (FTA) with the EU could **help India to expand its footfall** in markets such as Poland, Portugal, Greece, the Czech Republic and Romania. India's exports have registered a double-digit annual growth rate in these countries in the last decade.

What are some concerns associated with signing of FTAs?

Before entering into trade agreements, India needs to take care of a few key concerns.

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– **Competing on equal terms:** It has been observed that when India is an importer, the preferential tariffs under the FTA are significantly lower than the rates charged from countries given Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status by New Delhi. But when the partner country is the importer, preferential tariffs on Indian goods, in most cases, are closer to the MFN tariffs.

- As a result, Indian exporters do not get the same returns as their counterparts in the partner countries — India's trade with South Korea is a case in point.

Hence, before entering into a trade agreement care should, therefore, be taken to ensure that the domestic industry is not made to compete on unequal terms with the partner countries.

Rules of Origin: The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement includes a strong clause on the **rules of origin**. 40% value addition or substantial processing of up to 40% in the exporting country is required to qualify for lower tariffs. Rules of origin have been a bone of contention in most Indian trade agreements.

Way forward

Offset clauses should be built into trade agreements, especially for technology intensive sectors.

– Under such clauses, the exporter is obliged to undertake activities that directly benefit the importing country's economy.

An **emergency action plan** could be another useful ingredient of trade agreements.

– In February 2020, the US made India ineligible for claims under GSP, America's oldest preferential trade scheme. A contingency plan should be in place to tackle such situations.

Sunset Clause: India should also take a hint from the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, to incorporate a "sunset" clause in trade agreements. The pact between the three North American nations provides for periodic reviews and the agreement is slated to end automatically in 16 years unless the countries renegotiate it.

Finally, **India should negotiate for parity between services and merchandise**. India's trade in services is low, and its overall score in the OECD's Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI) exceeds the world average. It is especially high in legal and accounting services due to the licencing requirements in both these segments.

7. [Courts must safeguard common spaces online](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**Courts must safeguard common spaces online**" published in **Livemint** on **12th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity – Fundamental Rights, Govt policies and interventions

Relevance: Freedom of speech and related issues

News: Recently, Twitter moved the Karnataka high court, asking it to overturn government orders to block tweets and handles.

Twitter has argued that the Centre's demands are arbitrary and aimed at speech protected by Indian law; and complying with them would violate the right to free speech of its users.

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Last year, WhatsApp went to court against internet rules that demand it to break end-to-end encryption, a challenge that's still pending.

What is the Centre's stance?

The Centre insists that foreign companies with operations in India must follow Indian law.

Under the Information Technology Rules, 2021, the chief compliance officer of a social media platform is criminally liable if it refuses official orders.

Is the demand for oversight of social media platforms justified?

Yes.

Such platforms now constitute public spaces, but are owned by overseas corporate entities. Unlike democratic governments, they are not accountable to citizens, only their shareholders and regulators, but wield power over people's minds.

Their opaque algorithms and role in enabling fake news have come under scrutiny. As decisions taken by closely-held foreign firms cannot always serve our collective interest, sovereign administrations are justified in pressing for oversight of these platforms.

What are some associated concerns?

The need to impose oversight on these platforms should not ignore the necessity to **protect basic freedoms** enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Hyper-vigilance and political overreach

– An analysis by The Indian Express of Twitter's global transparency reports shows that takedown demands in India soared 48,000% between 2014 and 2019.

– The government stated in Parliament that content blocking orders to social media companies went up nearly 2,000% in that period.

Typically issued under Section 69(A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000, these orders often come wrapped in layers of secrecy; users aren't informed or given prior notice, let alone an explanation of why their post was dropped.

The arrest of an AltNews co-founder for a tweet is but one among many examples of stiff action following a post, slogan or imaginary toolkit. While extant laws must apply, the limits of free speech need to be judiciously determined.

Way forward

The judiciary, as the guardian of our Constitution, must step in.

– It must hold both social media and the government to democratic principles. Voices of dissent that don't incite violence must be shielded.

– Since what speech endangers lives can be a close call in some cases, the country needs to hear from judges rather than cops on what is broadly legitimate.

A massive chunk of our population now has an online life, with a stake in a free and open Digital India. People need clarity on liberties. It's for the legal system to safeguard common spaces from violations of Article 19(1)(a).

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8. [Bail's in our courts: SC's idea on new bail law must be taken up by GoI. But judicial officers need reforming too](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Bail's in our courts: SC's idea on new bail law must be taken up by GoI. But judicial officers need reforming too**” published in **The Times of India** on **12th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Judiciary

Relevance: Criminal justice system reform and related issues

Context: SC recently took note of CrPC's colonial biases that continue till date and issued directions.

GoI must follow through on the Supreme Court's suggestion that India needs a comprehensive bail legislation, on the lines of the UK Bail Act.

What is the inequity that SC mentioned?

Police is quick to arrest citizens, and this puts poor and/or poorly educated citizens at a huge disadvantage as they are unable to take advantage of the legal system, unlike those with education and affluence and/or influence.

Around 70% of the prison population are undertrials, most of them poor and therefore unable to secure monetary bail.

What are the issues pointed by the SC?

Currently, provisions related to arrest and interrogation, issue of warrants and summons, execution of bonds and sureties, powers of police and courts, are **dispersed across CrPC** and various binding SC guidelines.

A law collating these in one place can check arbitrariness. But a problem, which SC notes too, is the attitude of judicial officers.

SC wondered whether the low rate of conviction tends to make judges adopt a **negative attitude towards bail**.

Sometimes, bail applications are kept pending for months. **Unnecessary arrest coupled with no bail** is a twofold blow.

– **Inaction on bail** happens in high courts too. Appeals by the convicted are pending for decades in some HCs.

What are the directions given by the SC?

Instead of a punitive approach to bail, SC has now directed that **bail applications should be disposed of within two weeks** in the normal course.

SC has reiterated that **arrest is a draconian measure** to be used sparingly, otherwise the “impression that it is a police state” will gain ground, which would be a disturbing description of a democracy.

Way forward

SC's scepticism over the compliance with its 2014 **Armesh Kumar judgment** reveals how well-intentioned verdicts are being subverted.

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– The judgment had directed cops to diligently record specific reasons necessitating arrest, and magistrates to grant bail if the reasons don't make a persuasive case.

Disciplinary action against errant officers – in police, judiciary or executive – may produce beneficial changes. But quick bail is a good corrective against unnecessary arrests.

9. [A new judicial device for 'complete justice'](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "A new judicial device for complete justice" published in the "The Hindu" on 13th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 – Important Provisions of the Constitution of India

Relevance: Powers of the SC and Individual Liberty

News: In recent, **Mohammed Zubair**, the co-founder of Alt News was arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Police, under **Section 295A** and **Section 153-A** of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for outraging **religious feelings** and promoting **religious enmity** respectively.

The **Supreme Court (SC) of India** granted him interim bail, but he will continue to be in jail because he is on remand in another case registered by the Delhi police. The court was aware of this, but didn't grant bail in the other case.

SC cannot be seen helpless in cases involving personal liberty.

Powers of the SC of India

The SC of India is regarded as the **world's most powerful top court**, on account of its wide power of **judicial review**.

Writ Jurisdiction: It has the jurisdiction to issue writs under **Article 32** of the Constitution.

Original Jurisdiction: It also has the **original jurisdiction** under Article 131 of the Constitution.

Appellate Jurisdiction: There is also wide appellate power under Articles 132, 133, 134 and 136 of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court has the power to "make such an order if it is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it", as per **Article 142** of the Constitution.

What are the challenges before the judiciary?

Many **political prisoners** languish in prison because their bail pleas have been repeatedly rejected by different courts.

The executive is able to register **multiple FIRs** in different States to ensure that the dissident is not released from prison even if bail is granted in some cases. For example, the Mohammad Zubair Case.

Thus, the **jail jurisprudence** of the executive effectively surpasses the Court's bail jurisdiction.

Way Forward

The Supreme Court cannot afford to work with **conventional legal wisdom**, which proclaims that every criminal case is a case which requires to be dealt with as such and taken to its logical conclusion.

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The SC should invoke its extraordinary power under **Article 142** in order to do **complete justice**. In **Delhi Development Authority vs Skipper Construction Company (1996)**, the SC has said that the power under Article 142 should remain “undefined and uncatalogued, so that it remains elastic enough to be moulded to suit the given situation”.

The **constitutional court** should evolve a new mechanism of its own in order to preserve the **democratic foundation** of the country, like the **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)**.

– For example, India can adopt the **new doctrine** of “**unconstitutional state of affairs**” that has been developed by the Constitutional courts in Colombia and Brazil. Under this doctrine, the court deviates from routine **procedural rigour** and is able to issue orders to address **structural deficits** or to **protect fundamental rights** with a sense of realism.

The courts should be determined to check the **executive’s excesses** and create and perpetuate a **democratic judicial atmosphere** that supports the cause of freedom like the SC’s intervention in the **Centre’s COVID-19 vaccine policy** and the **Pegasus episode**.

Treat them as a class: The SC can treat **political prisoners** and **dissenters** who are facing multiple FIRs and undergoing unjustified incarceration as a class. The SC should develop **effective jurisprudence** in which it can call for all the records pertaining to the multiple FIRs in order to do “complete justice”.

10. [The scale of municipal finances is inadequate](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**The scale of municipal finances is inadequate**” published in the “The Hindu” on 13th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein.

Relevance: Financial Issues in the ULBs

News: Recently, the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) analysed data from 80 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) across 24 States between 2012-13 and 2016-17 to understand their finance and spending, and found some key trends.

The legal regime for the local bodies in India

The **74th Constitution Amendment Act 1992** mandated setting up of ULBs as the lowest unit of governance in cities and towns in India.

Further, the constitution also mandated the devolution of powers to ULBs’, particularly ensuring their **fiscal empowerment**.

Importance of municipal finance

The health of municipal finances is a critical element of municipal governance. Further, it is also important for India to realise its economic and developmental promise.

What are the revenue sources for ULBs?

Taxes, fees, fines and **charges**, and **inter-governmental transfers** (IGTs) are the key **revenue sources** of the ULBs.

Inter-Governmental Transfers (IGTs) refers to transfers from **Central** and **State governments**. First, the transfers from the Central government are as stipulated by the **Central Finance**

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Commissions and through **grants** towards specific reforms. Second, the **State government transfers** are as **grants-in-aid** and devolution of State's collection of local taxes.

What are the key findings?

ULBs' **own revenue** was around 47% of their total revenue, in which the **largest component** was **tax revenue**. Their own revenues increased by 7% from 2012-13 to 2016-17.

(A) Own Revenue

The ULBs' own sources of revenue were less than half of their total revenue. The share of ULBs own revenue, in GDP was only 0.5% for the five-year period.

Further, the share of India's property tax, the **single largest contributor** to ULBs' own revenue, accounted for only about 0.15% of the GDP. In contrast, its share was about 0.6% and 1% in the ULBs of developing and developed countries respectively.

(B) IGTs

It accounted for about 40% of the ULBs' total revenue. It means ULBs are highly dependent on IGTs.

However, the dependence of ULBs on IGTs has dipped over the last 5 years between 2012-13 and 2016, due to modest increase in own revenue.

Further, the **scale of IGTs** in India remained at around 0.5% of GDP, which is far lower than the international average of 2% to 5% of GDP.

(C) Inter-city variations

There are considerable differences in the composition of **revenue sources** across cities of different sizes.

For example, Class I-A cities (population of over 50 lakh) primarily depend on their own tax revenue, while Class I-B cities and Class I-C cities (population of 10 lakh-50 lakh and 1 lakh-10 lakh, respectively) primarily rely more on IGTs.

(D) Operations and maintenance(O&M)

The O&M expenses refers to expenses used to upkeep of infrastructure and for maintaining quality of service delivery like water supply, solid waste management, etc.

The **share of O&M expenses** in ULBs' total revenue expenditure has increased from about 30% in 2012-13 to about 35% in 2016-17. However, these expenses remain inadequate.

Way Forward

The share of own revenue (property taxes, advertisements, and non-tax revenue from user charges and fees from building permissions and trade licencing etc.) to total revenue is an **important indicator** of **ULBs' fiscal health** and **autonomy**. Therefore, it should be improved

The ULBs can mobilise their **own revenue resources** like property taxes, other land-based resources and user charges. The ULBs can also explore **market-based instruments**.

IGTs can be improved by increasing the revenue assigned to ULBs from the State governments. Further, a share of the State and Centre's GST proceeds can be allocated to ULBs.

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– IGTs can also incentivise ULBs to deliver better service quality and maintain fiscal discipline.

11. [India-South Korea partnership: Scale up the India-South Korea bilateral partnership](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Scale up the India-South Korea bilateral partnership**” published in **The Hindu** on **14th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests.

Relevance: India-South Korea partnership.

News: The newly elected Korean President has brought about a paradigm shift in South Korean foreign and security policies. He has proposed that South Korea should step up to become a “global pivotal state, anchored in liberal values and a rules-based order.” This will create multiple opportunities for a multidimensional India-South Korea partnership.

What are the challenges in the India-South Korea partnership?

Divergence of interest: During the past five years, India and South Korea have experienced considerable divergence in their respective national objectives. For instance, South Korea drifted away from multilateral security initiatives led by the United States, such as the Quad; meanwhile, India has been actively participating in them.

Trade: Trade between the two countries was slow and there was no significant inflow of South Korean investment into India. India and South Korea also tried to upgrade their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) agreement, but it is not finalized.

Not receiving much attention from India: Unlike Japan, Vietnam and Australia, South Korea has not received the same level of attention from India.

Impact of China: Earlier South Korean administration was heavily shifted toward China. With the new policy, South Korea will face inevitable Chinese pressure.

Note: *South Korea was forced to sign the “three no’s” agreement with China. Under this agreement, Korea agreed to no additional Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) deployment; no participation in the U.S.’s missile defence network, and no establishment of a trilateral military alliance with the U.S. and Japan.*

Regional tension: South Korea’s peace process with North Korea has completely collapsed. In the coming days, as North Korea conducts more missile and nuclear tests, it may lead to regional tension. Any breakout of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula can derail South Korea’s Indo-Pacific project.

Read more: [India-South Korea Relations](#)

What are the mutual benefits of the India-South Korea partnership?

Benefit for India: With South Korea’s emergence as a leader in critical technologies, cybersecurity and cyber-capacity building, outer space and space situational awareness capabilities, South Korea can contribute immensely to enhance India’s foundational strengths in the Indo-Pacific.

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Fourth pillar: South Korea could be the fourth pillar in India's Indo-Pacific strategy along with Japan, Australia, and Vietnam. This can bring about a paradigm shift in India's position and influence in the region.

Benefit for South Korea: India can help South Korea withstand Chinese pressure and North Korean threats.

Read more: [India, South Korea seal logistics pact](#)

How to improve the India-South Korea partnership?

New avenues for cooperation: The emerging strategic alignment is creating a new convergence of capabilities and closer synergy in new areas of economic cooperation such as **public health, green growth, digital connectivity, and trade**, among others.

Defence cooperation: In 2020, India and South Korea signed a Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation. With the strategic shift in South Korea's defence orientation, advanced defence technologies and modern combat systems are the new domains for the next level of defence cooperation between the two countries.

South Korea's participation in maritime security activities: South Korea's participation in annual Malabar and other exercises with Quad countries, will further strengthen India's naval footprint in the Indo-Pacific region.

An independent, strong, and democratic South Korea can be a long-term partner with India, that will add significant value to India's Indo-Pacific strategy. This new partnership can have a long-term positive impact for both countries and the Indo-Pacific region.

[12. Approval for home-grown cervical cancer vaccine could be a game-changer](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**Approval for home-grown cervical cancer vaccine could be a game-changer**" published in **The Indian Express** on **14th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Health

Relevance: Development of indigenous vaccine against Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

News: Recently, the Drugs Controller General of India granted market authorisation to the Pune-based Serum Institute to manufacture the country's first indigenously developed vaccine, **Cervavac**, against the human papillomavirus (HPV).

If things go according to SII's schedule, Cervavac should be ready for mass manufacturing by the end of the year. The government shouldn't lose time in including the vaccine in the country's **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)**.

What is the significance of the development of indigenous vaccine?

Will ease the disease burden:

- HPV is responsible for more than 95% of cervical cancer cases, and it kills more than 60,000 women in India every year.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's data show that there are more than 4 lakh cervical cancer patients in the country at any given time — it's the second-most common cancer amongst Indian women.

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Low cost: In 2018, the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recommended the inclusion of cervical cancer vaccines in the country's Universal Immunisation Programme. But the high costs of vaccines, proved to be a deterrent (*the regimen costs upwards of Rs 4,000*). The drug regulator's approval of the homegrown vaccine could prove to be a game-changer in the battle against cervical cancer.

What are the issues involved?

Lack of infra: The health ministry's guidelines recommend cervical cancer screening every five years for women above 30 at primary health centres and sub-health centres. But several studies have shown that the public health system in large parts of the country is **ill-equipped** to perform such gynaecological procedures, despite their relatively low cost.

Way forward

According to the WHO, a vast majority of cervical cancer deaths happen in middle- and low-income countries.

- The global health agency's plans to vaccinate 90% of women below the age of 15 by 2030 hasn't made much headway, largely because of global big pharma's monopoly on the vaccines.
- The SII's website notes that Cervavac will be available to developing countries in the near future.

Developments in the Pune-based manufacturer's laboratory will be keenly watched.

13. Explained: As Uddhav Thackeray and Eknath Shinde battle over Shiv Sena symbol, how will EC decide?

Source: This post is based on the article "**Explained: As Uddhav Thackeray and Eknath Shinde battle over Shiv Sena symbol, how will EC decide?**" published in **The Indian Express** on **14th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Polity

Relevance: Political party symbol disputes and related issues

News: Following the split led by Eknath Shinde, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena has urged the Election Commission to hear its side before deciding any claims to the party's bow & arrow symbol. How does the EC decide on such disputes?

What are the EC's powers in such a dispute?

In cases of dispute, in recognized national and state parties:

- On the question of a split in a political party outside the legislature, **Para 15 of the Symbols Order, 1968**, states:

"When the [Election] Commission is satisfied... that there are rival sections or groups of a recognised political party each of whom claims to be that party the Commission may, after taking into account all the available facts and circumstances of the case and hearing [their] representatives... and other persons as desire to be heard decide that one such rival section or group or none of such rival sections or groups is that recognised political party and the decision of the Commission shall be binding on all such rival sections or groups."

For splits in registered but unrecognized parties,

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– the EC usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.

How did the EC deal with such matters before the Symbols Order came into effect?

Before 1968, the EC issued notifications and executive orders under the **Conduct of Election Rules, 1961**.

Is there a way other than the test of majority to resolve a dispute over election symbols?

In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, a clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs have supported one of the factions.

Whenever the EC could not test the strength of rival groups based on support within the party organisation (because of disputes regarding the list of office-bearers), it fell back on **testing the majority only among elected MPs and MLAs**.

What happens to the group that doesn't get the parent party's symbol?

Till 1997

In the case of the first Congress split, the EC recognised both the Congress(Old) and the breakaway faction whose president was Jagjivan Ram. The Congress(Old) had a substantial presence in some states and satisfied the criteria fixed for recognition of parties under Paras 6 and 7 of the Symbols Order.

This principle was followed up to 1997.

Post 1997

The EC now did not recognise the new parties as either state or national parties.

It felt that merely having MPs and MLAs is not enough, as the elected representatives had fought and won polls on tickets of their parent (undivided) parties.

The EC **introduced a new rule** under which the splinter group of the party (*other than the group that got the party symbol*) had to register itself as a separate party.

– It could lay claim to national or state party status only on the basis of its performance in state or central elections after registration.

14. The President is not a mere rubber stamp

Source: The post is based on the article **“The President is not a mere rubber stamp”** published in **The Hindu** on **14th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: Role of President.

News: Choosing the presidential candidate is an intensely political exercise. India is going to elect its new President on July 18. The new President will be sworn in on July 25.

About Constituent Assembly debates on the President

There was a great deal of debate in the Constituent Assembly on the President. The main question debated therein was whether India should have a directly elected President or an indirectly elected one. The Assembly opted for an indirectly elected President.

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Professor K.T. Shah argued that an indirectly elected President will be a “sort of mere gramophone of the Prime Minister.” Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said “Our President is merely a nominal figurehead. He has no discretion; he has no powers of administration at all.”

Read more: [Being Truly Presidential](#)

What is the role of the President in Indian democracy?

The Constitution of India wants the President to be vigilant and responsive and gives the freedom to him or her to take a broader view of things uninfluenced by the narrow political view of the executive.

Not a rubber stamp: The population of the country is a crucial factor in the election of the President. This means the people’s presence in the process of electing the President is very much visible.

This also gives the President a **greater moral authority**. So, the Indian President is not and cannot be a mere rubber stamp.

Caution and counsel the cabinet: He does not directly exercise the executive authority of the Union, but he can disagree with the decision of the Council of Ministers, caution them, counsel them, and so on.

The President can ask the Cabinet to reconsider its decisions. However, if the cabinet sends the same proposal back without any change, the President will have to sign it.

For instance, There were Presidents such as Rajendra Prasad and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan who openly differed with the government on certain policy issues and could exert tremendous influence on the government.

Not a gramophone of the Prime Minister: The oath of the President contains two solemn promises. First, the President shall preserve, protect and defend the Constitution. Second, the President shall devote himself or herself to the service and the well-being of the people of India. A President who makes the above promises under oath to the people cannot act as a gramophone of the PM.

Read more: [The process of electing India’s President](#)

Thus, it is possible for a President to disagree with the government or intervene on behalf of the citizenry against the tyranny of the executive and persuade it to give up its ways. Such persons alone can rise to the level of the President; others can only be presidential office holders. India needs Presidents, not presidential office holders.

15. [India Inc’s missing whistle-blowers](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “India Inc’s missing whistle-blowers” published in the Business Standard on 14th Jul 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 – Governance

Relevance: Whistle Blower Protection

News: In the recent past, there have been insider revelations in western corporations like Uber, Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Google. It raises uncomfortable questions about what is happening in India Inc.

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What are the issues in the Indian Inc.?

There have been a number of corporate scandals in India in the recent past, such as Global Trust, Satyam, IL&FS or YES Bank.

There is a **lack of whistle-blowers** in **Indian corporations**. Most of the exposure of Indian corporate scandals have been the result of **implosions** rather than **employee revelations**.

Few cases in which India Inc. faced whistle-blower incidents were related to Infosys and Ranbaxy. However, these revelations were either managed or were executed by the United States citizen.

Legal Regime for Whistle-Blowers in Indian Inc.

Internal Mechanism

As per **the Companies Act**, every listed company that has borrowed more than Rs 50 crore from banks or public financial institutions has to set up an **internal vigil mechanism** like Auditing Committee. Employees/ directors can report “genuine” concerns and grievances to such committees.

Further, it also mandates that **“adequate” safeguards** be provided against victimising the whistle-blower. For example, keeping the identity of the concerned employee confidential.

External Mechanism

In 2019, the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** allowed employees to report **insider trading violations** directly to it instead of via the **company’s internal mechanism**. In 2021, it raised the reward payable to whistle-blowers generously from Rs 1 crore to Rs 10 crore.

What are the reasons for lack of whistleblower activities in India?

Both the **Companies Act** and **the SEBI rules** cover **listed companies**. **Unlisted companies** such as **Unicorns** and the small and medium enterprise sector remain outside the purview of any whistle-blower rules.

The **whistle-blowers in India** do not enjoy **similar protections** for insider revelations as they do in the US. Therefore, a number of whistle-blowers in the public sector in India have lost their lives for doing insider revelations, for example, **Satyendra Dubey**, and **Shanmugam Manjunath**

Parliament have passed a **Whistle Blowers Protection Act 2014**. But it is limited to public servants, not private companies.

The **internal mechanism** mandated under the Company Act remains subordinate to the management of the company. A whistle-blower will remain completely prey to the management’s whims.

Way Forward

The government should **enact a law** to provide **universal protection** to the **whistle-blowers** in India.

The **Whistle-blower protection** can go a long way to enable **good corporate governance** and provide **check and balance** and an **early warning system** for potential crises, such as the one at IL&FS in India

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16. [In diversity of candidates for UK's next PM, a soft power lesson for India](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "UK's next PM, a soft power lesson for India" published in the Indian Express on 14th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: Soft Power, Importance of Indian Diaspora

News: At more than half of the **contenders** (**Nadhim Zahawi, Rishi Sunak** and others) racing to become the leader of the **Conservative Party** and **Prime Minister of the UK**, are from immigrant, non-white, and ethnic minority community. It opens up a possibility that the next British PM may be brown or black.

Important personalities with Indian roots in the western countries

(A) Political leaders

(1) **The US: Barak Obama** who was elected as the **first black President** of the United States was born to a Kenyan father. Further, **Kamala Harris** who was appointed as the first black and woman Vice-President of the United States was born to an Indian mother and Jamaican father.

(2) In addition to above, **Leo Varadkar**, whose father is Indian, became the **Prime Minister of Ireland**.

(3) There are **several senior members** of the UK government who do not belong to the white community.

Others

There are **several black** and **brown people** who have **gained prominence** in sports, media, arts, medicine, and to a lesser extent in business, in the UK. For example, **Nasser Hussain** who captained the English cricket team as far back as 1999 was born to a Tamil Muslim father in Chennai.

What is the significant change in the western countries, particularly Britain, in terms of soft power?

There has been maturing of the **British public's views** on **race, religion, and even nationality**. There is an increasingly **relaxed attitude** towards the **identity of the contenders**. Therefore, it has redefined itself as an **inclusive** and **multicultural society** over the past two decades. For example,

(1) The **British political classes, media, and public** at large, do not mind to embrace a non-white, non-native as the head of the UK Government.

(2) In addition, there is virtually no discussion on the faith or religion of the contenders. For example, most of the runners and riders belong to a Hindu, a practising Buddhist with Hindu-Catholic roots, etc.

The **ongoing development** has emerged as a **key source** of the **UK's soft power**. This will give the small island **global influence**.

What are the reasons behind such development?

British universities have attracted the **brightest mind** from around the world. Further, they are now working in the corridors of **multinational companies** and **global institutions**.

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English has become the **lingua franca of the world**, relative to other languages such as French or German. It has **absorbed** and **transformed words** and usage from other languages across the world.

What are the challenges in front of India?

Indian society has been **open and accommodative** to **multiple faiths** and **traditions**, and has remained peaceful in nature.

This dimension has badly eroded over the past decade as the world due to various incidents in India. For example, right-wing movement

India's soft power is being degraded in the context of the **growing threat** from **China** in our neighbourhood.

Way Forward

India's **global moral** and **cultural influence** is perhaps the only dimension of power where we vastly outperform our northern neighbour. For example, there are a number of Indian-origin CEOs of leading Western companies.

India should not move from its **heritage of inclusiveness** towards a **narrow, religio-cultural nationalism**. India should learn from Britain's shift towards **multifaceted identity** having **global advantage**.

17. [Crafting credible public systems](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "Crafting credible public systems" published in the Business Standard on 14th July 2022.

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

Relevance: Public Management;

News: Recently, the government has approved the New National Education Policy and the Mission Karmayogi.

These policies and missions are the outcome of **intensive consultation** at all levels. But their successful implementation will depend upon various other aspects.

What are the issues in the formulation of public policies?

The public policies, so formulated do not include detail such as

- how the policy will be carried out,
- what skill sets would be required,
- what technology use options are available,
- how financing will be planned and provided, and
- how communities will become central to the implementation process, etc.

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Most of the **implementations** are done in a **centralized way** which do not address the needs of the **vulnerable** and **deprived households**. Therefore, a number of poor households are often left behind during the process of beneficiary selection, even after using the most sophisticated technology.

Poor implementations happen due to non-availability of the **credible public system**. In reality, **public goods** and **pro-poor asset** are not available in the sufficient manner. For example, there have been **market failures** in the healthcare system, on account of information asymmetry.

While technology offers many solutions to **long pending challenges**. But technology is a means and not an end. Further, despite **technological intervention**, there is a need for **strong last-mile facilitation**.

– For example, the successful implementation of the **Direct benefit transfer (DBT)** and **Aadhaar-linked payments** required sincere **local-level effort**. The frontline workers, panchayats, women's self-help groups (SHGs) have played key roles in ensuring outcomes.

Consequences of the poor public system

Human development is integral to a person's ability to exercise **his/her freedom of choice**. Therefore, there cannot be any compromise in access to public services.

Deficiency in the **public goods** and **asset base** compromises the ability of **deprived households** to exercise freedom of choice. In addition, the **deprived household** can also not **fully leverage** the **benefit of technology**. For example, it was found that poorer communities and those living in remote regions could not access high quality online education during the Covid pandemic.

Way Forward

The government should develop **credible public systems** to provide quality **public goods** in the field of healthcare, education sector etc. For example, **Singapore's education system** is known for its excellence.

The governments can do so by ensuring **last-mile facilitation** and **public information** is available to the deprived households. For example, the states which have followed these principles implemented the **Ayushman Bharat's Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)** in a better way.

More priority should be given to **human resource challenges** in India. India needs a greater number of managers than magistrates for **human development outcomes**. The government needs to harness the best skills and capacity to make a real difference. For example, the **State Government of Tamil Nadu** has developed a robust **public health cadre**. Therefore, it is able to **operationalise** many health initiatives far more effectively than many other states due to availability of human resources.

The government should **facilitate** more than doing **regulation**. For example, there should be transparent reasons for approval or rejection, simplified compliance parameters etc. These measures will build trust.

The government needs to focus on **decentralisation** within the framework of the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Thereon, the power of elected panchayats can be harnessed.

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In addition to this, the mobilisation of women can be done through self-help groups movement etc.

18. [India Inc could play a lead role in our economy's global emergence](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "India Inc could play a lead role in our economy's global emergence" published in the Live Mint on 13th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS 2 Indian Economy. Issues and Challenges Pertaining to Growth and Development; Industrial Policy

Relevance: Role of India Inc. in Indian Economy

News: In recent years, India has emerged as one of the world's fastest growing major economies. It is expected to be among the top 3 in the next 2 decades.

In this context, the Government of India (GOI) announced its aim to move from the status of a **\$3.2 trillion economy** to a **\$5 trillion economy** within this decade.

Journey of India's growth so far

(A) Pre-Independence: The British Raj had impoverished India till India became Independent. In this context, the **Former PM Manmohan Singh** once commented, "The brightest jewel in the British crown was the poorest country in the world in terms of per capita income at the beginning of the 20th century."

(B) Post-independence: The government established a number of public sector enterprises (PSEs), especially in the heavy industries sector, which were called the **"temples of modern India"**.

(C) Post-1991: The **economic liberalization** allowed the private sector to play a pivotal role in a free market economy.

(1) The **services sector** was focused. Therefore, the sector grew and thus contributed more than half of India's **gross domestic product (GDP)** at present. The sector also attracts 55% of foreign direct investment (FDI).

(2) Initially, the **manufacturing sector** remained laggard. However, in recent years, the government has launched **Skill India, Digital India** and **Startup India** initiatives and has been focussing on **"Make in India, Make for the world"**.

(3) The government is focussing on major infrastructure and logistics projects for India to leapfrog into a new era of growth. This is because Former US President John F. Kennedy once said, **"American roads are not good because America is rich. America is rich because American roads are good."**

Key challenges remain for Indian enterprises

First, India's **ease of doing business climate** remains inadequate. For example, industrial projects find it difficult to get contiguous land parcels and timely environmental and regulatory clearances.

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Therefore, **India's manufacturing** sector could increase its share in GDP from 15.3% to 17.4% in 2 decades ago. In contrast, Vietnam's manufacturing sector more than doubled its share of GDP in the same period.

Second, the cost of doing business in India is high. There are various **regulatory and bureaucratic procedures** that ultimately hurt India's image and chances of becoming a preferred **global manufacturing destination**.

Third, India's labour productivity is very poor. For example, Manufacturing productivity in Indonesia is twice India's, while in China and South Korea it is four times higher. This happens due to '**chalta hai**' (anything goes) attitude.

Fourth, there are **inconsistencies** in the **government's** policies. For example, Court judgements had cancelled 2G licences and coal block allocations.

Way Forward

The government should ensure **ease of doing business**. For example, it can adopt a **single-window clearance system** for **regulatory approval** and other aspects.

In order to **compete globally** and move up the value chain to more **value-added categories**, there is a need that Indian firms work on scale and quality

We need to fix the **labour productivity issues**. There is a need for **upskilling of our workforce** in order to become an **attractive destination** for global manufacturers.

Indian enterprises should be given **support and encouragement** to expand their operations on a **global scale** here in India. This will encourage **global prospective investors** to look at India as a favourable manufacturing destination.

The government should make **robust policies** which remain consistent because it is fundamental to investor confidence. It is good that the government has ensured regular auctions of coal blocks for commercial use.

19. [Bridging the gap-India needs to help women get greater access to jobs and resources](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Bridging the gap-India needs to help women get greater access to jobs and resources**" published in **The Hindu** on **15th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Relevance: To understand India's gender gap.

News: Recently, World Economic Forum released Global Gender Gap Index for 2022.

What are the findings of the Global Gender Gap Index?

Read more: [Explained: How gender equal is India as per the 2022 Global Gender Gap Index?](#)

About the global gender gap

The global gender gap has been closed by 68.1%, which means at the current rate of progress it will take 132 years to reach full parity.

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Due to broad stagnation in gender parity scores, it will take the longest (197 years) for South Asia to close the gender gap.

What is the status of India on the Global Gender Gap Index 2022?

India ranks poorly among its neighbours and is behind Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan. Only Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan perform worse than India in the region.

India has fared the worst in at least one of the parameters — **‘health and survival’** — in which it **took the last spot**.

What is the status of Indian women on various parameters?

In the pandemic years, as incomes shrank, Indian women faced hurdles on every front, from food, health, and education for the girl child to jobs.

The latest NFHS data (2019-2021) show that 57% of women (15-49 age bracket) are anaemic (up from 53% in 2015-16).

Though, women using a bank account or savings account have increased to 78.6%, with schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, their participation in the labour force has shrunk.

According to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, in 2016-17 about 15% of women were employed or looking for jobs; this further reduced to 9.2% in 2021-22.

Read more: [What does NFHS-5 data tell us about state of women empowerment in India](#)

How to achieve gender parity?

It is imperative to increase the representation of women in leadership positions at all levels so that women get greater access to jobs and resources. Hence, the government has to move beyond tokenism and help women overcome staggering economic and social barriers.

Read more: [\[Yojana September Summary\] SHG-led Women Empowerment – Explained, pointwise](#)

20. [The great omission in the draft disability policy](#)

Source: This post is based on the article **“The great omission in the draft disability policy”** published in **The Hindu** on **15th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: **GS2** – Govt policies and interventions

Relevance: Disability rights and related issues

News: The Department of Empowerment of Person with Disabilities (DoEPwD) recently released the draft of the national policy for persons with disabilities (“Policy”) inviting public comments till July 15, 2022.

The new policy will replace the 2006 policy.

Why a new policy on disability?

The necessity for a new policy was felt because of multiple factors, such as

– India’s signing of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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– enactment of a new disability legislation (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016) which increased the number of disabilities from seven conditions to 21.

– Being a party to the Incheon Strategy for Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022 (“Incheon commitment”).

These commitments have changed the discourse around disability by **shifting the focus from the individual to society**, i.e., from a medical model of disability to a social or human rights model of disability.

What are some associated issues?

Political participation: Political empowerment and the inclusion of the disabled are an issue that has not found traction in India’s democratic discussion. India does not have any policy commitment that is aimed at enhancing the political participation of disabled people.

Accessibility issues: Section 11 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act prescribes that

- *“The Election Commission of India and the State Election Commissions shall ensure that all polling stations are accessible to persons with disabilities and all materials related to the electoral process are easily understandable by and accessible to them”.*

Although this mandate has been in existence for a few years, the disabled people still report accessibility issues before and on election day.

– There is often a **lack of accessible polling booths** in many locations.

– There’s still no widespread adaptation of braille electronic voting machines and even wheelchair services at all polling centres.

Political parties in India still do not find the disabled as the large electorate to specifically address their needs.

The **lack of live aggregate data** on the exact number of the disabled people in every constituency only furthers their marginalisation.

Inadequate representation: Representation plays an imperative role in furthering the interests of the marginalised community. Disabled people are not represented enough at all three levels of governance. Government does not maintain data on the disability aspect of members.

– The **first visually disabled Member of Parliament in independent India**, Sadhan Gupta, hardly finds mention in India’s political or disability discourse.

– Further, there has been a **failure to acknowledge disabled political personalities** who have overcome the myriad barriers in India’s political space.

Efforts for the disabled

The Election Commission of India has developed its **own procedures** for handling PwDs during the electoral process.

Few States have begun initiatives at local levels to increase political participation.

– For instance, **Chhattisgarh** started the initiative of nominating at least one disabled person in each panchayat. If a disabled person is not elected, then they are nominated as a panchayat member as per changes in the law concerned.

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Way forward

The goal of the policy document — of inclusiveness and empowerment — cannot be achieved without political inclusion.

The policy can follow a four-pronged approach: **a)** building the capacity of disabled people's organisations and 'empowering their members through training in the electoral system, government structure **b)** regulatory frameworks by lawmakers and election bodies to encourage the political participation of the disabled; **c)** inclusion of civil societies to 'conduct domestic election observation or voter education campaigns'; and **d)** a framework for political parties to 'conduct a meaningful outreach to persons with disabilities when creating election campaign strategies and developing policy positions'.

The document lays emphasis on the point that central and State governments must work together with other stakeholders to **make the right real**.

This right can be made real only when it includes political rights/political participation within it.

[21. It's what MPs do: List of unparliamentary words is not such a big deal. Quality of law-making is the real House test](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**It's what MPs do: List of unparliamentary words is not such a big deal. Quality of law-making is the real House test**" published in **The Times of India** on **15th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Parliament

Relevance: Parliamentary debates and related issues

News: A list of 'unparliamentary' words and phrases, published by the Lok Sabha secretariat, saw opposition leaders accusing the government of trying to gag them.

Why the accusations hold no ground?

Publishing such words has been happening since 1950s.

The list is not a diktat, it's based on rulings by presiding officers in parliamentary and assembly proceedings in India and Commonwealth countries.

And none of the words is banned.

Presiding officers will expunge remarks they deem unacceptable.

Also, there are easy workarounds for many words listed as unparliamentary.

Way forward

Parliamentary secretariats should not entirely take a mechanical approach.

– House discussions must also reflect the liveliness of the politics in a democracy.

MPs can also help by reminding themselves that the five minutes of news television coverage they get for using unparliamentary words do nothing for their legislative career.

Ultimately, a Parliament is judged by the quality of its debate and its law-making.

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What's needed in greater measure is extensive deliberations in smaller parliamentary committees and deeper House debates on complex issues.

22. [The Uber Files expose gaps in regulatory structures, underline need for govts to be more nimble as they regulate Big Tech](#)

Source: The post is based on the article, "The Uber Files expose gaps in regulatory structures. Underline need for governments to be more nimble as they regulate Big Tech" published in the Indian Express on 15th July

Syllabus: GS2 – Govt policies and interventions

Relevance: Issues and Challenges related to the functioning of the Big Tech.

News: Over the past few days, investigation carried out in collaboration with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, has revealed issues in the manner in which Uber has conducted itself over the years

About Uber App

It started operation in 2010. The company has expanded globally and now operates in more than 70 countries and 10,000 cities. It has also become the world's most valued start-up.

It has become popular because it provides ease in availing the cabs and that too at a competitive pricing model. For example, In India alone it has served around 9.5 crore riders.

It employs millions of drivers across the world. For example, In India alone, it has nearly six lakh driver partners.

What are the associated issues?

The company has bypassed regulators and cut corners to expand its **business** and **presence**. It operated in the **regulatory grey zones** and **blind-spots**.

The technology tools like "**greyball**" and "**geofencing**" were used to stay ahead of law enforcement or to keep Uber rides away from prying policemen and government officials on the streets.

Further, the company did not bother about the concerns of both riders and drivers who are lying at the heart of the platform.

The "**critical elements of the new safety features**" that were meant to be put in place after the rape incident in Delhi in December 2014 have still not been implemented.

There are issues related to the **classification of drivers**, and as a consequence their treatment. For example, the **UK Supreme Court** has ruled to treat them as workers rather than self-employed. This would entitle them to minimum wages and other benefits.

There are concerns over **data privacy**. For example, the ride-sharing platform holds a treasure trove of information on the ride-hailers.

Way Forward

The government, instead of imposing **draconian rules**, should frame regulation with a light touch so as not to throttle innovation.

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Also, the government should become nimbler in their approach as they attempt to regulate the new age **behemoths**.

23. [No winners in Russia-Ukraine war, but an opportunity for India](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “No winners in Russia-Ukraine war, but an opportunity for India” published in the Indian Express on 15th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: India’s Role in the Global Geopolitics

News: In the recent past, Russia started a “**special military operation**” against Ukraine. Since then the western media is full of solidarity with Ukraine and resistance against the incursion of Russian forces into Ukrainian territory.

Developments So Far

The US, the UK, NATO, EU and G-7, are not directly involved in the war. But they have been offering various kinds of support to Ukraine.

Like the supply of arms, intelligence, cash and logistics and training of Ukrainian troops, severe economic sanctions to cripple the Russian economy and weaken Russia.

Causes behind Russia aggression towards Ukraine

At the end of the Cold War in 1989-1990, it was agreed that NATO would not expand to the east. However, since then NATO has continued to expand in the east.

Russia has seen the emergence of a more **resolute leadership** in the Russian Federation under the command of the Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Russian President articulated these apprehensions in his speech to the **Munich Security Conference in 2007**. However, the West ignored Russia and did not accommodate the apprehensions.

Why is there no winner in the Russia-Ukraine war?

The West has been at **war** before, in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. But this is different. This is a war on **European soil** and a **war of attrition** that has pitted Western firepower against Russia.

The war that most expected to come to a **quick resolution** has turned out to be a **war of attrition**, reminiscent of the **brutal trench warfare** and **artillery duels** of the First World War.

The war in Ukraine has rung the **death knell** of **globalisation**. Unlike other wars, this one has snapped the **flow of global trade**, sports and cultural and scientific exchanges between the West and Russia.

Countries have started increasing **military spending**. For example, Germany has been radically altering its policy with regard to military spending, pledging 100 billion euros into upgrading the armed forces and so on.

In addition to above, there have been the **weaponization of trade** through the imposition of “sanctions”. There has been wholesale confiscation of assets in Western banks and financial institutions.

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The war and sanctions have resulted in the global inflation. It is biting into the budgets of low-income households all over the world.

There will be impact on the environment. For example, substituting oil and gas with coal is a potentially dangerous trade-off which will lead to failure of the efforts to rein in global warming.

Who are the real beneficiaries?

It is the **military-industrial complex** of the US and its global subsidiaries which are cashing in on the vast sums of taxpayer money made available to them by western governments. Otherwise, there are no winners in this war.

Way Forward

India has been able to keep **Indian diplomacy** open to both Russia and the United States during the Ukraine War. Due to this, India was able to repatriate vast numbers of Indians from Ukraine due to such diplomacy.

The negotiations between Russia and the West should be placed at the first priority. There might be a **window of opportunity** for India to mediate between both sides.

In the **post-independence period**, India stepped in as a mediator in the Korean conflict, under the leadership of PM Nehru. India can repeat it now

24. [Supreme Court's refusal to club all FIRs against Nupur Sharma is bad in law](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Supreme Court's refusal to club all FIRs against Nupur Sharma is bad in law**" published in the **Indian Express** on **16th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: To understand the issue of multiple FIRs.

News: Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) refused to consolidate multiple FIRs filed in several states against the former spokesperson of a political party for remarks against the Prophet flies.

About multiple FIRs in the present case

At least nine FIRs have been filed in multiple states. All these FIRs were filed subsequent to the filing of the FIR by the Delhi Police's Special Cell. The date and time of the occurrence of the alleged offence are the same in all the FIRs.

All the FIRs refer to the same television debate in which the former spokesperson made the remarks against the Prophet. The sections of the Indian Penal Code are almost the same in all the FIRs.

Read more: [India's judiciary and the slackening cog of trust](#)

What are the previous cases on multiple FIRs?

TT Antony vs. State of Kerala case, 2001: In this, the SC held that only the earliest information in regard to the commission of an offence could be investigated and tried.

Babubhai vs. State of Gujarat case, 2010: The Court explained that the test to determine the sameness of the offence is to identify whether "the subject matter of the FIRs is the same incident, same occurrence or are in regard to incidents which are two or more parts of the same transaction".

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Read more: [The judiciary should have annual performance reports, too](#)

What are the challenges in present judgement on multiple FIRs?

The bench said that party spokespersons and journalists cannot be treated identically. The bench also said that the spokesperson has not unconditionally apologised for her remarks and her political clout is apparent from the fact that she has not been arrested despite an FIR being filed against her by the Delhi Police.

This has the following concerns,

Firstly, the **Constitution does not create any hierarchical difference** between journalists and ordinary citizens when it comes to the enforcement of fundamental rights. The right to approach the SC under Article 32 is in itself a fundamental right.

Secondly, seeking or tendering an apology may be a mitigating factor. But, the issue before the SC was whether to consolidate FIRs or not. Instead, the Court jumped into the merits of the case.

Thirdly, Consolidating FIRs will ensure that **state actors do not abuse the statutory power of investigation**. So, it is the SC which has to **exercise its writ powers under Article 32** because high courts cannot transfer cases from one state to another.

Fourthly, the multiplicity of proceedings would **result in a violation of the fundamental rights of the accused under Article 21** as parallel investigations might force him/her to join investigations in different police stations in different states.

Read more: [A wish list for reform in India's higher judiciary](#)

At best, the former spokesperson may file an application requesting the SC to relieve her of the concession to withdraw the petition and have it re-heard on merits. But, the SC should work within the confines of judicial propriety and augment the sanctity of the institution of the SC.

25. [The Ukraine war and the return to Euro-centrism](#)

Source: This post is based on the article **“The Ukraine war and the return to Euro-centrism”** published in **The Hindu** on **16th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations

Relevance: The Russia-Ukraine conflict and its consequences

Context: The political and military aftermath of the Ukraine conflict could set the stage for the return of a Euro-centric world order.

Is the current world order Euro-centric?

No.

a) Decolonisation, **b)** the emergence of the United States as the western world's sole superpower, and **c)** the rise of the rest. These factors have dramatically diminished the centuries old domination of the European states.

The contemporary international order is **hardly Euro-centric**, is **dominated by the U.S.**, and challenged by rising great powers or superpowers.

It is moving toward a **multipolar order**, wherein Europe's system shaping capabilities have been rather limited.

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War and insecurity in Europe

Going forward, Europe will emerge as a major locus of trans-Atlantic security imagination. The process has clearly begun.

– The political and military aftermath of Russia’s war in Ukraine could potentially **tilt the current global balance** towards a new Euro-centric world order, albeit far less powerful and dominating than its earlier forms.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has led to an unmissable feeling of insecurity in Europe, particularly in Germany.

– Berlin, has decided to spend an additional €100 billion for defence over and above its €50 billion annual expenditure on defence. It is set to announce a new national security strategy early next year.

– Currently, the U.S. continues to dominate the trans-Atlantic security landscape and this is likely to remain so. The **new security consciousness in Europe** will reduce Washington’s ability to continue as the fulcrum of the trans-Atlantic strategic imagination.

- The United States, fatigued from the Iraq and Afghan wars, does not appear to be keen on another round of wars and military engagements.

– If Donald Trump returns to the White House in 2024, the Europeans are likely to take their own security far more seriously.

Impact of Russia-Ukraine war

On multilateral institutions

Notably, there appears little faith in the United Nations or the UN Security Council anymore in Berlin, they have decided to put their faith in a revitalised EU and NATO.

European states are **deeply worried about globalisation-induced vulnerability** and this has set in a rethink about the inherent problems of indiscriminate globalisation. This turn away from multilateralism in favour of ‘Europeanism’ will further undercut global institutions.

Implications of the new Euro-centric world order

It can lead to an even stronger regulatory, norm/standard-setting superpower of the Europe, backed with military power.

The EU already has a worryingly **disproportionate ability to set standards for the rest of the world**. Instruments such as the Digital Services Act and the Digital Assets Act or its human rights standards will be unilaterally adopted, and will be unavoidable by other parts of the world.

A **euro-centric worldview of ‘friends and enemies’** will define its engagement with the rest of the world. India is a friend, but its take on the Ukraine war is not friendly enough for Europe!

Norm setting and system-shaping discussions are likely to be conducted by Europeans, among Europeans, for Europeans and non-Europeans. This will lead to **fewer consultations and even lesser consensus with the rest of the international community**. This will not be a truly global world order.

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Way forward

European states want to see their wars and conflicts as threatening international stability and the 'rules-based' global order.

There is little recognition in the West today that the global non-West's political priorities are altogether different — from addressing abject poverty and underdevelopment to managing social cohesion and local conflicts.

The genuine surprise in western capitals at the lack of interest in other parts of the world about the Russian aggression in Europe, is indicative of the inherent Euro-centric view of the European nations about the world.

26. I2U2 And The Middle Power Great Game

Source: This post is based on the articles

“**I2U2 And The Middle Power Great Game**” published in **The Times of India** on **16th Jul 22**.

“**I2U2 summit was made possible by India's nimble diplomatic moves, can provide a foothold for a greater role in West Asia**” published in **The Indian Express** on **16th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS2 – International Organisations and groupings

Relevance: The new QUAD

Context: In October 2021, Indian and Israeli foreign ministers sat together and created the 'West Asia Quad' with Anthony Blinken and Abdullah bin Zayed on a screen.

Nine months later, Joe Biden is sitting with Yair Lapid (former foreign minister), now prime minister of Israel, with the Indian PM and Mohammed bin Zayed in technological proximity, to start of the first summit of the same Quad, renamed as 'I2U2'.

What are some opportunity areas for I2U2?

Connectivity: The I2U2's emphasis on connectivity, transportation and a 'food corridor' should enable movement of critical supply chains seamlessly across South Asia, Gulf and Middle East all the way to the Mediterranean and southern Europe.

One simple example is the **Etihad Rail project** that promises to link all of the Gulf with its partners by 2030. That could open up more than one market for India.

Standards and benchmarks: The new Quad will not only work to “reduce trade barriers, but also harmonise standards and benchmarks” for production and trade. That's important for Indian agri exports, which suffer at the hands of phytosanitary issues.

The setting of rules and benchmarks is a big component of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) signed just a couple of months ago. From technology to food and finance, these new plurilateral arrangements are bringing middle powers together to the new rules-making table.

Regional integration: India is hoping to make the most of the opportunities created by the Abraham Accords.

Strategic quotient: The region brings together the world's biggest stakeholders, and, for the first time in decades, the Middle East is not the source of the latest global problem.

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What are some factors that lead to the formation of I2U2?

A grouping like the I2U2 has been made possible by several developments:

- In recent years, Delhi has responded to the **new diplomatic and strategic dynamic** in the region — by giving a political imprimatur to the relationship with Israel and engaging more deeply with the Gulf monarchies
- The foreign office also seems to have **shed its earlier wariness about the US's role in West Asia**. Washington, in turn, seems both comfortable with and keen for India playing a more proactive role.

The Abraham Accords of 2020, under which the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco now have formal ties with Israel too altered the diplomatic calculus in West Asia.

- That Delhi is already a player in this ongoing realignment is a prospect for cautious optimism about India's place at the diplomatic table in the region.

Way forward

It's time for India to throw off its own "hesitations of history" and step out of the closet for a larger role in the region. In the more medium term, India might want to consider bringing Iran into the QUAD. Perhaps even Russia.

It is important to take into account the immense capital accumulation in the West Asian region, and how it has been deployed in infrastructure projects and corridors as far as Africa.

Despite the presence of the Indian diaspora, and the country's energy needs, Delhi currently has a negligible presence in these projects.

It must gradually address this deficit, and the I2U2 could help in that regard.

The I2U2 is a validation of New Delhi's nimble foreign policy in West Asia as well as a pointer to the as yet untapped potential in the region.

27. [The 'permanent' problem: Why is there a 'caste system' in govt employment?](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "Why is there a caste system in government employment?" published in the Business Standard on 15th July 2022. **Syllabus:** GS2 – Govt policies and interventions

Relevance: Types of the government employments

News: Recently, protests were seen against the **Agnipath scheme** which was launched to cut costs in the armed forces as schemes like one rank-one pension were putting pressure on the public purse.

Therefore, this has raised debate over the nature of employment in government institutions.

Types of government employment?

There is a presence of a **caste system**: (1) **permanent**, (2) **contractual**, and (3) **casual employees**.

It is noted that the strength of contractual employees has doubled in four years to 2.43 million. And their share in **total government** employment has soared.

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What are the trends in government employment?

(1) The governments have been increasingly **hiring contractual, and casual employees** instead of permanent employees because the permanent category gets paid much better than the former two. Thus, these employees are cheaper than the permanent employees.

(2) The central and state governments **don't fill vacancies** in the departments and agencies.

(3) The government employees don't get **paid**, sometimes for months together. For example, a school teacher, a sanitation worker, or a social health (ASHA) worker.

Why governments and associate bodies are moving away from hiring permanent employees?

Cost. The permanent government employees receive guaranteed sum of money as salary, housing rent allowance, full inflation-indexation and job security, medical benefits for life and pension and so on. And at present, the governments are under tremendous fiscal pressures.

Productivity. In the absence of any **reward system** for work well done, there is no incentive to work. At the same time, statutory provisions make it hard to use the stick.

– For example, there have been cases in which the teachers with relatively **comfortable salaries** sit at home and send surrogates to teach on their behalf in return for part-payment out of the teacher's salary.

What are the issues in the coming future?

The unfairness of this caste system is bound to remain in the future because one of the new labour codes is poised to encourage hiring on contract.

Way Forward

Five years ago, the pay commission had recommended for a minimum wage of Rs 18,000 per month,

Some years ago, the Supreme Court ordered that there should be no difference between permanent and contractual categories, in pay or benefits.

28. [Learn These Lanka Lessons](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "Learn These Lanka Lessons" published in the Times of India on 16th July 2022. **Syllabus:** GS 2 Indian Economy; Issues and Challenges pertaining to growth and development

Relevance: Lesson's to be learn from the Sri Lanka's Crisis

News: In recent months, Sri Lanka has run out of fuel, millions are going hungry, the healthcare system is near collapse, inflation is soaring, the currency has crashed, and the debt-laden economy is bankrupt.

What are the causes of Sri Lanka's Crisis?

At the heart of Sri Lanka's crisis is the **twin deficit problem** which is related to unsustainable **fiscal** and **current account deficits**.

In fact, India's **own balance of payments crisis** of 1991 and near crisis in 2013 were the result of India's spiralling twin deficits.

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Sri Lanka's fiscal problems:

First, in the recent past, the government **reduced the value added tax by half** and abolished the capital gains tax. It eroded an already narrow tax base.

Second, there was a massive **expenditure outgo** on subsidies.

Other causes

The **Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL)** deferred monetary tightening even as inflation soared and the currency also plummeted. This happened ostensibly under pressure from the government.

Sri Lanka has avoided taking IMF assistance and tried to find an alternative. A stigma attached to IMF assistance still persists in Asia. However, taking alternative help proved to be costly and time-consuming for the Sri Lankan government.

- **Read more:** Click [here](#)

Why is it unlikely to have a similar crisis in India in the coming future?

There are **big differences** between the **external situation** of India then and now.

First, at that time, there was a pressure built up in the **exchange rate**. Today, the **exchange rate** is tracking **fundamentals** more closely.

Second, at that time, India's **macro situation** was fragile because of year-on-year high fiscal and current account deficits. Today there is more credibility on the fiscal front and the expected CAD of over 3% this year will hopefully be a one off.

Third, India's **war-chest of reserves** are at a very good position at \$600 billion. India lacked such a level of reserves at that time.

What are the lessons that can be learned from the Sri Lanka's Crisis?

The countries should diversify sources of **foreign exchange earnings** to avoid becoming hostage to problems in one sector or one geography.

Careful borrowing: Although, at present, the countries are forced to borrow **bilateral loans** due to dwindling **multilateral sources of debt**, the governments should borrow from countries that follow the **Paris Club norms of responsible lending**.

The governments shouldn't **float sovereign dollar bonds because** the commercial entities within an economy already borrow in foreign currency. It is dangerous because a government can inflate away its domestic debt by printing money. But it cannot print dollars.

Sri Lanka's crisis is also a reminder of the importance of **timing of public policies**. For example, it was a good step that the Sri Lankan government decided to encourage **organic farming**, but it should have been preceded by a campaign to educate farmers. Moreover, it should've been implemented after building buffer stocks to insure against possible production declines in the initial years.

Emerging and developing countries are at the mercy of a global order which has been shaped by advanced economic policies and priorities. Therefore, these countries should build their own **safety-nets** and do responsible **economic management** in order to protect themselves and prevent being hostage to **vote bank politics**.

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General Studies Paper –3

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General Studies - 1

1. [About Commute time in Cities: The road to productivity](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The road to productivity**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Relevance: Challenges associated with commute time in cities.

News: The pandemic-induced lockdowns in cities played an important role in realising national and macroeconomic growth targets. But India’s progress toward a \$5 trillion economy could be strangled due to pandemic-induced lockdowns.

Note: The **nominal labour market** of the city refers to all jobs created in the metropolitan area. The **effective labour market** refers to the jobs accessible within a certain commute.

What is the significance of Commute time in Cities?

The larger a city’s effective labour market, the greater its agglomeration economies and knowledge spillovers.

The longer the commute time in a city, the smaller is its effective labour market and vice-versa. The labour force in the workplace plays a very important role in determining productivity in cities.

Travel time in Indian cities: The travel time to work was one of the slowest in Indian cities in 2016: Bengaluru being the slowest at 22 km per hour, Delhi at 25 km per hour, and Chennai the highest at 33 km per hour.

Benefits of short commute: **a)** From the micro perspective, it will benefit the commuter who otherwise wastes time, health and productivity with the delays in traffic, **b)** From the macro, city-level perspective, it will enable a large effective labour market.

Read more: [A road safety quartet and the road ahead](#)

How ULBs can reduce commute time in Indian cities and improve themselves?

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) can directly impact the city’s economic output through their infrastructure. In recent research in Karnataka, researchers found that road length has a positive effect on the city’s tax base. The estimate also indicated that for every one km increase in the road length of a ULB, there is an increase in the ULB’s own revenues by roughly ₹430 per capita.

With an increased tax base, the ULB can create roads that lead to easy access to jobs and increased economic activity. Further, it also gives the public more confidence and motivation to pay taxes.

Investing in roads not only reduces travel time and enlarges effective labour markets of cities and their economic output, but also improves access to schooling for children as well as healthcare, thereby upgrading human development. This is indeed the road to the \$5 trillion economy along with improvement in human well-being.

Read more: [India State Support Program for Road Safety: World Bank approves \\$250 mn loan for road safety](#)

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2. [An uncertain transition: As GST compensation ends, state governments need to be provided certainty of revenues](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**An uncertain transition: As GST compensation ends, state governments need to be provided certainty of revenues**” published in **Indian Express** on **11th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources.

Relevance: About the impacts of GST Compensation.

News: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) has completed its 5th year since its inception on 1 July 2017. With this, the era of GST compensation that the state governments were entitled to has also ended. Many state governments have asked for the compensation period to be extended by a few years.

The discontinuation would alter the revenue composition of some states adversely. Especially to those states with a relatively larger share of revenue receipts in their overall revenue streams.

Must read: [Five Years of GST: Achievements, Challenges and Way Ahead – Explained, pointwise](#)

How dependent States are on GST Compensation?

The indicative calendar of market borrowings by 23 state governments and two Union territories for the second quarter has pegged their total state development loan issuance at Rs 2.1 trillion.

Note: state development loan issuance is the primary source of financing state government deficits.

Of these 23 states, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Gujarat have indicated large increases in borrowings. Most of these states have an above-average dependence on GST compensation.

Read more: [GST: Five years stronger](#)

About the restriction on off-budget borrowings of states

The Centre had informed state governments that their off-budget borrowings for the past two years (2020-21 and 2021-22) would be adjusted from their borrowing ceiling this year. This requires the detailed data calculation of the adjusted borrowing should be submitted to the Centre. This will be followed by a thorough assessment of the same by the Centre.

Despite changes in off-budget borrowings, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Punjab were able to raise bonds in the first few weeks of the first quarter.

What are the remedial measures?

The tax devolution to states for 2021-22 was released in the fourth quarter. This may have allowed them to temporarily withstand the changes related to their borrowing permission.

If the government decides to increase tax devolution to the states, then it might reduce the size of state borrowings further. But such an increase in tax devolution may encourage states to ringfence their capital spending and provide a positive impulse to the economy.

Read more: [Taking stock of five years of GST](#)

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3. [Links between infra & growth](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “Links between infra & growth” published in the Business Standard on 10th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Indian Economy; Infrastructure; Investment models

Relevance: Issues in Infrastructure Investment in India

News: In the 1990s, India removed barriers to **globalization** and opened the country to the outside world. This **unleashed** the growth episode of 1991-2011. However, in recent periods, the **high infrastructure investment** is not producing the same result.

In 1991, India left behind its policies around themes of autarky (Self-reliance) and hostility to the West. During 1991-2011, the performance of the Indian economy was good compared to the past. Many theories claim that infrastructure development was the sole factor behind this development and that India should continue to do so.

What are the past arguments for the link between infrastructure and economic growth?

Example: Most global production takes place in “**global value chains**”. Production takes place step by step at cost-efficient global locations, where Multi-National Companies (MNCs) set up their base.

In the case of India, low wages, are the attractive factor, thus, India has many companies in the hinterland. Now companies require ports/airports to deliver goods to India, and then roads to production sites with low wages.

Thus, the above example suggests that connectivity to remote locations with low-wage labor will create conditions for private investment and then sustained employment.

What are the issues in the above-mentioned theory?

Infrastructure investment is just a means to an end, that creates conditions in which private investment can create employment growth. Private investment is the key to domestic product growth, prosperity, and employment. **Thus, Infrastructure investment is impactful when it is followed by private investment.**

If we take an example of India, in the early years, many commendable steps were taken. The government **ended state control and established institutional apparatus** to improve infrastructure. It led to the constitution of the **NHAI** (National High Authority of India), **Delhi Metro Rail Corporations, Cochin airport, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, etc.** Thereafter, the government pushed significant capital into these mechanisms. It all resulted in the following developments:

1. The metro cities like Bombay and Delhi have decent airports and some metro lines.
2. Remarkable surge in highway commissioning in the last six years.
3. As a result of airway infrastructure, the plane ticket prices have come down and the middle class is flying.
4. The improvement in **telecom infrastructure** like decent bandwidth has led to the growth of IT and ITES industries.

In the 1990s, transportation was a constraint. The development of infra then created a new set of possibilities for private investment in global value chains. But, it is not the case today.

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However, since 2011, infrastructure growth has not resulted in growing private investment. Instead, Pvt. Investment is on the decline, since 2011. Reduced cost of transportation is definitely one of the factors, but not the only factor behind the development of the private investment.

What are the factors that suggest against state-led infrastructure development?

First, if a private company feels that it can make money by building an asset, it can take the risk and build an asset.

Second, state-led infrastructure development in India is facing the Chinese problem of declining incremental capital-output ratio. It means each investment is giving a lesser return to the government. Furthermore, every Rs 1 spent by the government imposes a cost of perhaps Rs 3 upon the economy.

Third, the factors that are leading to the low private investment are the following:

5. An **interventionist state** in India, which indulge in **sudden policy change**.
6. **Faults** in the **taxation system**.
7. Lack of **rule of law** followed by **coercive state agencies**, such as regulators.
8. The **wage remains** high in many pockets of the population, probably because the **labour supply** has been distorted due to the welfare programs.
9. Many non-economic factors like social issues hamper women's labour supply in the labour market.

Thus, instead of state-led infra development, government should focus on other aspects that are hindering growth.

4. [How Green Zone Dilution In Draft NCR Plan 2041 Defied Objections](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**How green zone dilution in draft NCR plan 2041 defied objections**” published in **The Times of India** on **11th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Environment and Ecology

Relevance: Draft Delhi Master Plan 2041

News: Recently, the **draft NCR Regional Plan 2041 plan**, which sets the contours of how the region will develop over the next two decades, was put in the public domain after approval from the NCRPB, for 30 days for feedback. It has attracted several objections.

Arguments in favour of the NCR Planning Board (NCRPB's) proposals in the plan?

It has been mentioned that **necessary provisions** related to **Natural Zone (NZ)** are already in line with the decisions held at the level of the Ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA).

What are the issues?

There are issues in **balancing ecology and development** because it proposes to alter 'natural conservation zones (NCZ)' to 'natural zones (NZ)'

NZ doesn't require **mandatory conservation**, like NCZs. The NCZs are **ecologically sensitive areas (ESZ)** and restrict construction to only 0. 5% of the total area.

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The Union environment and forest ministry have also flagged the shrinking of areas under NCZs. Therefore, it has suggested retaining the term 'NCZ' in the master plan 2041.

The Ministry also asked for the inclusion of a detailed land use plan, for NCZs and all of NCR, in the new plan.

Unlike, 2021 plan, where **NCZ** was clearly defined – “extension of Aravali ridge, forest areas, rivers, sanctuaries, major lakes and water bodies.”, the **definition of NZs** in the **draft plan** is generic, such as ‘mountains and hills’, and ‘rivers and water bodies created by nature’.

The draft plan does not mention a comparison of the change in land use, despite repeated insistence by the National Green Tribunal (NGT). However, the Land-use maps, existing and proposed, have been an integral part of all previous NCR Regional Plans.

The **scope of preservation** of the NZs has also been restricted. The **state governments** would have greater discretion to decide on NZs at times when the state already defies the very concept of uniform development of NCR.

The Way Forward

The directions of the NCRPB in December 2017 regarding the definition of Aravalis (all areas recorded as ‘gair mumkin pahar’, etc in NCR) and identification of forests as per dictionary meaning in line with **Supreme Court orders** should be included in the 2041 plan.

The NCR Planning Board should seriously take into account the responses received during the feedback exercise.

5. [Apart From the Foreign Hand](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “Apart from the foreign hand” published in the Times of India on 11th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Indian Economy

Relevance: Macroeconomic Conditions; Inflation

News: In recent months, India first offered to export wheat to a hungry world. However, later on, it suddenly reversed its position because the spectre of inflation has been haunting the world, including India.

What are the causes behind high inflation?

Even before Russia invaded Ukraine, OPEC had squeezed supplies of crude oil. This has fuelled the oil prices.

Geopolitical Reasons: It has caused an increase in the prices of oil, other energy products, and food worldwide.

The Russia-Ukraine war further hiked the price of crude spike and other energy prices. For example, the Western countries have **imposed sanctions** on Russian produce.

Natural gas is not easy to either source or sell. Its transport infrastructure – pipelines, plants, special terminals for LNG tankers, LNG tankers, regasification facilities at import terminals, etc. are limited. It takes time and money to expand.

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The West has cut back its **purchase of gas and oil** from Russia. Now, it is sourcing gas and coal from other sources, which has lifted all energy prices like ethanol.

This has hiked the prices of **other commodities**. For example, For **Ethanol**, the corn is diverted, pushing up the prices of chicken feed and chicken.

The West has put a ban on imports of **Russian grain, fertiliser, and oilseeds**. Russia is one of the largest exporters of wheat to the global wheat markets.

The war has also squeezed the **global wheat supplies** from **Ukraine**, which is the **fifth-largest wheat exporter**.

Implications of inflation

Inflation has a **differential impact** on different sections. The capitalists receive benefits out of it. **For example**, when wages and salaries shrink in real terms, the income distribution shifts in favor of gross profits, which means **capitalists** get more money.

The real cost of servicing debt falls – except when the debt is owed to foreigners. **For example**, Inflation induces currency depreciation, and a lower rupee increases the cost of servicing dollar debt.

Further, inflation also divides capitalists into two classes.

How is the RBI response correct?

RBI's approach has been prudent and appropriate. Its decision to not make sharp and pre-emptive interest rate increases is spot on.

The Higher rates squeeze the **second-round effects** of inflation. For example, when the demand for higher wages and resultant higher wages lead to the spread of the initial price rises to all sectors.

What are the issues in the RBI actions?

Inflation-squeezing rate rises hurt growth. Growth helps the poor, creating new incomes, even as inflation crimps their consumption.

In recent years, the RBI easy money policies have also failed to create excess demand. Inf act, free food has ensured the survival of people.

6. [A make-or-break ban](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “A make or break ban” published in the Business Standard on 10th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS 3 Ecology and Environment

Relevance: Plastic Ban

News: Recently, India's ban on certain single-use plastic has come into effect from July 1, to control the menace of plastic pollution.

The banned items include earbuds, cutlery, straws, and carry bags. And items of thickness less than 120 microns will be banned by December 2022.

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Other laws for single-use plastic like multi-layered packaging

The extended producer responsibility (EPR) notification applies to all the packaging material. The companies that manufacture or consume this material are required to take it back and send it for reprocessing.

What are the limitations of the legal regime for plastic ban?

The current ban

The current ban is **limited** in sense because the plastic items that are difficult to collect or recycle are required to be eliminated from use. But it is difficult. For example, according to the latest report of the CPCB, 25 states and UTs have already banned such plastic. But these states say that it is difficult to regulate these items based on plastic thickness.

It has been found that the **enforcement of the plastic rules** remains inadequate in India.

The current list of banned items is **not comprehensive**. In order to get rid of the items that are difficult to collect or are single-use, then the list should have included **multi-layered packaging**, used from chips to shampoos to gutka pouches.

Issues with EPR

The EPR has been **poorly designed** and is being **poorly implemented**. There is no information on the quantity of the plastic material generated. The companies are not required to self-declare. There is a lack of information in the public domain to assess the implementation of the EPR regime.

The companies are required to **recycle** or **reprocess** the material they collect only by **2024**.

There is no adequate information on whether the plastic waste that is being collected is being stored or dumped?

The **Producer Responsibility Organisations (PRO)** which fulfil the EPR targets on the behalf of the companies, sort the waste collected from municipal bodies. The PROs sort the items and simply store the items that could not be recycled, in the warehouse. These items are not processed but dumped into the yard.

What should be done?

We can adopt a **three-pronged strategy** to ensure plastic items are recycled or disposed of safely:

First, all the plastic produced and used should be collected for disposal.

Second, the waste plastic material must be recycled or incinerated. And, it should not reach landfills or choke the water bodies at any cost.

Third, further the reuse or disposal of the plastic materials has to be in a manner that is environmentally friendly and does not end up creating more pollution or health hazard for workers.

The solution for those items that are difficult to collect and process can be to send them to cement plants for incineration.

We should become responsible for our own waste and not use the banned items.

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7. [The scam faultline is damaging Indian banking](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The scam faultline is damaging Indian banking**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources.

Relevance: About the impacts of NPA on banking system.

News: The NPAs in banks incur mainly due to bad loans and scams. This affects the entire banking ecosystem. After the DHFL case, ABG Shipyard Limited of Surat had taken a loan of about ₹23,000 crores in a fake manner this year.

There are many examples of bank scams in India. For instance, the Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi scam involving the Punjab National Bank, the case of businessman Vijay Mallya involves nearly 13 banks, the IDBI Bank fraud, and the R.P. Info Systems Bank scam to name just a few.

How do bad loans and scams impact the banking system?

Data by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) show that around 34% of scams in the banking industry account for inside work and poor lending practices and the involvement of junior and mid-level management.

The RBI data also show that one of the fundamental problems in the development of banking is the rising bank scams and the costs consequently forced on the framework.

Frauds in the banking industry can be grouped under four classifications: ‘Management’, ‘Outsider’, ‘Insider’ and ‘Insider and Outsider’ (jointly). However, all scams are the result of operational failures.

According to the RBI data, corporate loans account for nearly 70% of these bad loans. On the other hand, retail loans, including car loans, home loans and personal loans, account for only 4%.

In a Global Banking Fraud survey, the KPMG highlighted that the issue is not just for India alone; it is a worldwide issue.

Read more: [Government sets up ‘bad bank’ to clear the NPA mess](#)

What are the NPA Projections?

According to the [Financial Stability Report](#) released by the RBI in December 2021, the gross NPAs of banks will be rising from 6.9% in September 2021 to 8.1% of total assets by September 2022 (under a baseline scenario) and to 9.5% under a severe stress scenario.

A study by the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore has shown that poor bank corporate governance is the cause behind rising bank scams and NPAs.

What is the impact of NPA on customers?

The banking system of any country is the backbone of its economy. Excessive losses to banks affect every person in the country because the amounts deposited in banks belong to the citizens of the country.

A high NPA also reduces the net interest margin of banks besides increasing their operating cost; these banks meet this cost by increasing the convenience fee from their small customers on a day-to-day basis.

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Read more: [PSBs to introduce common staff accountability guidelines for NPAs](#)

What should be done to improve India's banking system?

Ensure proper audit: The regulation and the control of chartered accountants is a very important step to reducing NPAs. There is also an urgent need to tighten the internal and external audit systems of banks.

Cautious approach: **a)** Banks should be cautious while lending to Indian companies that have taken huge loans abroad, **b)** Public sector banks should **set up an internal rating agency** for rigorous evaluation of large projects before sanctioning loans, **c)** There is a need to **implement an effective Management Information System (MIS)** to monitor early warning signals about business projects.

Use technology: Financial fraud can be reduced to a great extent by the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to monitor financial transactions.

Improve loan recovery process: India has to improve its loan recovery processes and establish an early warning system in the post-disbursement phase. Banks need to carry out fraud risk assessments every quarter.

Read more: [NARCL: Need and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

8. [Nano urea potential](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Nano urea potential**” published in **Business Standard** on **12th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Industrial policy and growth

Relevance: Fertilizer sector in India and related issues, Nano Urea

News: The Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers recently stated that India may not need to import urea after 2025, as domestic production of conventional urea and nano liquid urea supplies may be sufficient to meet the country's demand.

Why India needs to reduce import dependence of fertilizers?

Currently, the global prices of Urea have soared to new highs and its availability has dwindled due to the Russian-Ukraine conflict and export cuts by China and other countries.

The international urea prices are currently ruling at their highest level since the 2008 food and financial crisis. So are, in fact, the prices of phosphatic and potassic fertilisers, for which the country's reliance on imports is even higher than that for urea.

Due to India's import dependence wrt Urea and phosphatic and potassic fertilisers, India has to bear a huge subsidy burden. The **fertiliser subsidy in the current fiscal year is projected to exceed Rs 2.5 trillion**, surpassing last fiscal year's record of Rs 1.62 trillion by a big margin.

Efforts for Urea self-sufficiency

Self-sufficiency in urea has been on the cards ever since the introduction of the new urea policy in 2015. The policy focussed on **a)** maximising domestic output, **b)** promoting energy efficiency in urea manufacturing, and **c)** reviving the defunct fertiliser plants.

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What is nano urea?

Nano-Urea is a new-generation urea, which condenses one bag equivalent of urea into a tiny bottle of 500 ml liquid. It has further speeded up the march towards shedding reliance on imports of Urea.

The cooperative sector fertiliser giant, IFFCO, must be given due credit for pioneering and promoting nano-urea technology, which has already proved its worth as a game-changer.

How can Nano-Urea help India become an exporter of Urea?

The **production capacity of nano urea is likely to increase** from the present 50 million bottles (each containing 500 ml liquid) to over 440 million bottles with the commissioning of the under-construction nano urea plants.

Moreover, the resurrected fertiliser plants at Ramagundam, Talcher, Gorakhpur, Sindri and Barauni, and a few new ones at other sites are also expected to begin producing to their full capacity.

Hence, many analysts believe that India should now be looking forward to exporting urea rather than importing it, by capitalising on its huge nano urea production potential.

The breakthrough in nano-technology has also opened up opportunities for the production of nano di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), which is the second-largest in consumption and highly import-dependent farm input.

This product, currently in advanced stages of development, is expected to **bring down the cost of DAP by half**.

With such developments being on the horizon, India may well be on the cusp of transmuting from a bulk importer to a net exporter of plant nutrients.

What are the advantages offered by nano products?

The significance of these innovations goes far beyond alleviating import-dependence for fertilisers. They offer multiple advantages, like:

- Cost reduction and supply augmentation
- Improvement in fertiliser-use efficiency
- Rise in farmers' income.
- **Enhanced nutrient consumption by plants:** Studies have shown that while nutrient consumption by plants (*nutrient-use efficiency*) is only 25-30% in the case of conventional fertilisers, it rises to 90% for nano products. This helps in pushing up crop yields perceptibly.
- Additionally, the use of nano urea and DAP helps reduce the soil, air, and water pollution attributable to chemical fertilisers.

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9. [Safety in the sky – The DGCA should have no tolerance for laxity among airlines seeking to cut corners](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Safety in the sky – The DGCA should have no tolerance for laxity among airlines seeking to cut corners**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Relevance: To understand aviation safety in India.

News: Recent incidents in Indian aviation have raised concerns about air passenger safety. These incidents cover [bird hits](#), cracked windshields, component failures, engine compressor surges and blade failures, flight diversions, mid-air engine shutdowns, and a case of severe turbulence in the monsoon.

With most of them affecting one airline, SpiceJet. The [Directorate General of Civil Aviation\(DGCA\)](#) has pointed out a ‘degradation of safety margins’, ‘poor internal oversight’ and ‘inadequate maintenance actions’ in aircraft.

Must read: [Air pocket: Show cause to SpiceJet overdue. DGCA has to be more proactive on safety](#)

What is the performance of aviation safety in India?

According to Ministry of Civil Aviation data, there were 5,268 aircraft movements in the domestic sector. It has even cited an average of 30 such episodes a day.

According to DGCA’s Annual Safety Review in 2020, under ‘Deficient maintenance’ (the objective is to improve the maintenance of Indian registered aircraft), for a target of 2.16 for incidents involving component/system failure per 10,000 flight hours, the achieved performance is 2.39. Similarly, under the number of maintenance errors per 10,000 flight hours, for a target of 1.43, the performance is 1.46.

Read more: [Year End Review -2021- Ministry of Civil Aviation](#)

What should be done to improve aviation safety?

In an ideal ecosystem, issues with safety would be analysed in terms of the rate of occurrence using tiered categorisation, with the goal of reducing to the minimum level.

With passenger numbers climbing back to pre-COVID-19 levels, the entry of new airlines, and the existing players indicating aggressive fleet expansion plans, the DGCA should have no tolerance for airlines seeking to cut corners in passenger safety.

Read more: [Indian aviation needs a strong and steady tailwind](#)

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10. [ONDC is the disruption Indian commerce needs](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “ONDC is the disruption Indian commerce needs” published in the Live Mint on 12th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy

Relevance: Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

News: Currently, Indian cities are seeing a pilot run of the **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)** which is aimed to make headway towards **democratizing e-commerce**.

What are the advantages of the ONDC?

It offers an opportunity to medium and small retailers to adopt **digit tools** and expand beyond the limits of **brick-and-mortar sales**.

It removes the need of the small sellers to register on multiple platforms, removes fear of predatory pricing and the **risk of losing visibility** to brands which are owned or favoured by the platform itself.

Read more: [What is ONDC? – Explained](#)

It would provide a **level playing field** between small businesses and big brands at **the e-commerce platform** as it will be inclusive in nature. The smallest seller in the ONDC ecosystem will be offered as much opportunity to sell products as available to large players.

It aims to provide access to e-commerce platforms, to small manufacturers and suppliers so that they **can create their own brands**.

The framework may help create **several new vertical marketplaces**, with players catering to specific or niche segments of customers.

New opportunities will be provided to local players (say in the **Tier-II+ cities**). For example, imagine a **homegrown health and beauty brand** collaborating with a **small retailer** in Madhya Pradesh that deals in forest-based products like mahua, honey, amla, or ashwagandha.

How can the small businesses signing up for the ONDC, create their brands?

They should set standards, maintain the quality of products and services, test products and read markets.

Firms like **Mensa** and **Upscalio** could help small businesses create digital brands, optimize product distribution and integrate their operations with the **large supply chains**.

The small business can tie up with the **fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG)** companies like Marico and Tata Consumer Products. They procure raw materials or processed goods from smaller players, and help them with quality assurance, standardization and other aspects of branding along the way.

Way Forward

In order to become successful, the ONDC needs players of various stripes to build on it. For example, a greater number of sellers from smaller cities should embrace digital technology.

The ONDC should help in **integrating businesses** to create niche products, provide brand consultants or investors and facilitate hand-hold support of FMCG companies to smaller players.

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11. [The pandemic-flagged need for a new fiscal framework](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “The pandemic-flagged need for a new fiscal framework” published in the Live Mint on 12th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Union Budgeting

Relevance: Fiscal Framework

News: In recent years, there has been suspension of fiscal rules across the globe due to the global financial crisis (GFC).

What were the causes behind suspension of the fiscal rules?

The costs of dealing with the pandemic has raised global government and private debt to record-high levels.

The GFC crisis has been compounded by the **Russia-Ukraine conflict** in the year 2022.

What are the traditional government approaches in the fiscal management domain?

Fiscal architecture: It involves a fiscal strategy, supported by fiscal institutions such as an accountable and efficient public financial management system (PFM).

Fiscal rules: There has been advocacy for well-designed and implemented **numerical fiscal rules**. These rules help strengthen the credibility of an **administration’s commitment** to fiscal sustainability.

What were the issues in the numerical fiscal rules approach?

India adopted **numerical fiscal rules** in 2003. However, there was pre-covid evidence that demonstrated that **numerical fiscal rules** did not prevent a large debt build-up over time. Therefore, the **rigid numerical fiscal rules** did more harm than good.

Thus, it prompted **modification of existing rules** and **revamping** of escape clauses. Therefore, the Centre updated **the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act in 2018** and adopted **multiple fiscal indicators** as targets.

What are the issues with India’s new fiscal rule regime?

The fiscal rules have been effectively circumvented by **off-budget fiscal operations**, **inconsistent budget classification** and **accounting standards**. In addition, there have been **improper use of public accounts** for budgetary purposes in India.

Definitions of key targets, such as **‘fiscal deficit’** or **‘public debt’**, vary across state governments and the Centre.

Though the PFM system was strengthened. But it has been able to meet only a fraction of **best practice standards**. It cannot check **misclassification** of accounts for compliance.

Way forward

India needs to develop a system which mandates **fiscal sustainability** through **institutional framework**. The institutions should also be allowed to take judgement in the times of crisis.

For example, fiscal responsibility principles should not be time-bound, but must allow the government to manage shocks. This can be done through **three key steps**:

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(1) Instead of adopting **numerical fiscal rules**, the government should adopt the **principles of fiscal responsibility**. Such a model has been adopted by New Zealand, Australia and the UK.

(2) Various stands, criteria, procedures and methods should be established. This should be devised in a manner that ensures that standards are being met.

(3) There must be institutions to do surveillance and to determine **ex-post compliance** with the fiscal responsibility principle.

In a post-pandemic framework, overall, India needs to improve the quality and efficiency of **public spending** and **financial management** across all levels of government.

(A) The New Zealand Model –Principles-Based Fiscal Strategy

(1) NZ has enacted '**the fiscal strategy act**', which requires adherence to the standards and principles of responsible fiscal management. For example, a **medium-to-long-term fiscal sustainability report** etc.

(2) The government publishes **an annual fiscal strategy** explaining how its annual fiscal plan is consistent with the standards set out in the law etc.

(3) It ensures **transparent public reporting** at regular frequency. Further, a periodic public review of the government's fiscal plans is done by the Parliament and independent fiscal institutions.

(B) In doing this, India should move toward **a new principles-based fiscal strategy**, rather than returning to a **fiscal framework** based on **rigid numerical fiscal targets**.

12. [70,000 Startups & The Helping Hand of Sarkar](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**70,000 Startups & The Helping Hand of Sarkar**" published in the Times of India on 12th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology.

Relevance: Start-ups Ecosystem in India

News: In recent periods, the government has released a detailed '**Start-up India Action Plan**', to support and empower start-ups in the country.

About the Start-up India action plan

It includes 19 action points **focussing** on three different categories as given below

(a) handholding support to entrepreneurs/start-ups;

(b) creating funding support and incentivisation mechanisms for start-ups; and

(c) supporting **industry academia partnerships** and providing necessary incubation support for start-ups.

Status of Start-ups ecosystem in India

Today, India ranks at the third place in the **global start-up ecosystem**

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The sector is also growing at an annual rate of 12-15%. In 2014, the number of start-ups were not more than 400. However, the number of start-ups has jumped to a whopping number of 70,000 in 2022.

Around 102 start-ups have risen into the **\$1 billion-plus valuation club**.

Why start-ups are significant?

They contribute to generating wealth and employment in the country.

They propel innovation and technological development across key development sectors.

What were the factors that have led to high growth in the start-ups sector in India?

There has been an enabling environment that has led to a vibrant startup movement across the country.

The Union government launched '**Start-up India Stand-up India**' in 2015.

The government unlocked the space sector and opened it up to private players.

The start-ups have been receiving funding without any interruptions. For example, even the Covid pandemic, could not impact funding

The **Department of science and technology (DST)** reshaped the **start-up culture** in the country. It launched the **Technology Business Incubator (TBI)** having a network of more than 160 incubators.

The DST also set up the **Seed Support System** in the TBIs for providing much needed early-stage funding to start-ups.

Under the **National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI) TBI programme**, 105 incubators have been set up across the country, over the last five years.

What are the noteworthy contributions of DST's programme on innovation and entrepreneurship?

The TBI network identified and supported start-ups during the pandemic period.

The network of incubators has supported more than 12,000 start-ups which include 1,500-plus women-led start-ups. These start-ups have filed more than 900 patents and produced more than 1,15,000 new jobs.

Service Tax exemption to both incubators and incubatee.

Permission to hold equity by **DST-supported incubators** (not for profit legal entities) i.e., converting government grants to equity subscription.

CSR funding for incubators.

First government agency to

– offer programmes in PPP mode for scouting and supporting innovation and start-ups:

– partner and create Sebi-registered **PPP innovation fund**.

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– **bilaterally** and **multilaterally** partner with international government and multilateral agencies respectively, for innovation and entrepreneurship development.

It has pioneered in training and capacity building of incubation managers with exposure to global best practices.

The TBIs were first to get support from multilateral international developmental agencies like UNDP, infoDev etc.

Way Forward

India's vibrant and mutually supplementing start-ups ecosystem should be seen as a **role model for the rest of the world.**

13. [The AltNews funding case and Razorpay's data privacy worry](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“The AltNews funding case and Razorpay's data privacy worry”** published in **Livemint** on **13th July 2022.**

Syllabus: GS 3 – Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

Relevance: The Section 91 of CrPC .

News: Recently, Twitter has taken the Indian government to court over what it views as “arbitrary” and “disproportionate” directions to take down content and block accounts. Last year, Meta Platforms Inc's WhatsApp began legal proceedings against India's new internet rules demanding chat traceability. All these highlight the deteriorating operational environment for ordinary digital businesses in India.

What about the AltNews and Razorpay case?

One of AltNews' co-founders, was arrested for allegedly hurting religious sentiments. AltNews also received money “through Razorpay from Pakistan, Syria, Australia, Singapore, and the UAE, which all require further investigation. Recently, Razorpay had been compelled to supply customer data in a police investigation against AltNews under **Section 91 of India's criminal procedure code.** Thus leaving customers vulnerable to harassment for their political views.

Earlier, the Alibaba group's bank account has been frozen for not compiling Section 91 of CrPC notice.

What is Section 91 of CrPC?

Section 91(1) provides that whenever any Court or any officer in charge of a police station can issue summon or order to any person within whose possession the officer or court thinks is the document or a thing necessary for the purpose of investigation.

But if the person does not produce the document or thing, then the court can issue a warrant of search to the officer, under Section 93(1) (a).

How can India ensure the proper functioning of digital businesses?

Enacting the data protection law: This will build trust if service providers are required to provide colour codes indicating whether a particular piece of personal data obtained by them will be given to the police on demand; or if at least a court order will be required first.

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Provide adequate freedom: Digital startups must have the freedom to keep their operations running, their proprietary data secure and their reputation with customers intact. Further, the government should not arrest the intermediaries if the data asked from them is disproportional to the scope of the inquiry or irrelevant to its stated purpose.

14. [Read The Signs, Upgrade Science](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Read The Signs, Upgrade Science**” published in **The Times of India** on **12th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: Transforming the science and tech ecosystem in India

Context: India was the first country to explicitly adopt ‘scientific temper’ in its Constitution, with the 42nd amendment in 1976 declaring that it shall be the duty of every citizen to develop a scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

Despite such constitutional focus, India did not usher in transformative reforms in the science and technology (S&T) ecosystem.

China, on the other hand, revitalized its science ecosystem through systematic reforms in the 1990s. It is now even ahead of the US in a few areas, like artificial intelligence.

How can India become an innovation-led economy?

India has the economic scale, the large talent pool, the huge market size and the vibrant startup ecosystem to invest in research and then unlock its economic value.

Four major reformist interventions could potentially revolutionise Indian science:

National Research Foundation: The NRF announced by GoI with an outlay of Rs 50,000 crore over five years is an opportunity to transform the research ecosystem, especially from the governance and funding perspectives.

- Eventually, this would also improve linkages between R&D, academia and industry.
- Given the enormity of the tasks involved, India now needs to **fast-track the creation of an appropriately structured NRF** as an organisation which has the requisite capacity to execute.

Ease of doing research: In India, scientists spend more time on managing administrative overheads than on research. Most systems in government universities and scientific labs continue to be bureaucratic.

- Indian institutions need to create **centralised research and allied industry-interfacing and fundraising offices** as well as administrative support. This will allow scientists to focus on research without getting bogged down by cumbersome processes.
- Compensation structures need revision to attract scientific talent, along with progressive HR policies that have performance centricity.

Collaborative research clusters: Most S&T labs in India are not an integral part of universities, unlike in most developed nations. It is time to bring together R&D labs and institutions of higher

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education in a geographical area under a unified thematic cluster through functional mergers, both hard and soft.

- Clustering would enable these entities to be competitive in **securing international research projects**, and to **attract leading overseas faculty** and superior researchers.
- These would eventually lead to **improved global research ranking** of universities.
- This cluster-like structure would lead to an overall **increase in the efficiency and effectiveness** of research outputs, ultimately leading to better economic and social value-creation for the country.

Science in the public imagination: India does not celebrate science and there are very few scientists in public imagination today. Print and electronic media rarely cover S&T and there are very few popular science films, OTT content or books.

- Institutionalise a robust science communication function in each university and S&T unit.
- Create an imaginative line-up of initiatives and activities round the year. This will go a long way in popularising and celebrating science in India.

Way forward

India now needs to narrow the gulf between science and society. It must be understood that scientific knowledge is a common public good in the country.

Scientific and technological research forms the backbone for innovations. It's time to strengthen India's research backbone by revitalising India's S&T agenda.

Indeed, India should declare 2020-30 as a decade of radical transformation for its science.

15. Create more jobs, revamp employment policy

Source: The post is based on an article "Create more jobs, revamp employment policy" published in the "The Hindu" on 13th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy – Issues related to growth and development

Relevance: Employment Generation;

News: The Government of India has recently announced a plan to **create 10 lakh government jobs** and fill up the **vacant posts** in the next 18 months.

There are about **40 lakh sanctioned posts**. At present, around 22% of the total posts are vacant

What are the issues with the government announcement?

The **real number** of vacant posts in the government might touch around **30 lakh**. In addition to **8.72 lakh vacant positions** in various departments of the Central government, there are also vacant positions in public sector banks, the defence forces and police, the health sector etc.

Further, the above cited numbers do not include vacancies in State government jobs.

The concerns have been raised on the **quality of employment** that will be generated. For example:

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– The share of contract workers in total government employment has increased from 11.11 lakh in 2017 to 24.31 lakh in 2021.

– There are “**honorary workers**” such as Anganvadi and Accredited social health activist (ASHA) workers, etc, who receive very low consolidated wages and are not covered in a **social security net** as recommended by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

More jobs are needed: The magnitude of unemployment in India is very high.

– According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), there are about **30 million unemployed people**, at present in India and according to the World Bank (WB), around **50 lakh-70 lakh workers** will be added annually.

– Therefore, 10 lakh jobs in the next 18 months will not have much impact on the present **unemployment problem**.

Way Forward

The employment generated by the government under its proposed plan must be of a **standard quality**.

At present, the Government should take the lead over the private sector in creating as many jobs as possible. The **private sector** is struggling to **overcome the shocks** caused by the **coronavirus pandemic**. The private firms cannot be expected to create employment opportunities.

Focus on basic needs: The government can create **more employment** in areas where the government is required to provide **basic needs**. For example, health and nutrition, education, and other basic infrastructure, etc. The government should focus on serving the **bottom 40% of the population** without doing privatisation in these areas.

The government should reorient the **industrialisation policy** to focus on **labour-intensive sectors** of the economy, and to promote **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**. For example, to provide better technology, finances (including working capital) and working towards **cluster development** for all industries.

Urban employment: The urban employment guarantee programme should be launched to create ample urban employment avenues for urban youth. For example, day-care centres can be set up for childcare to enable women to reduce their unpaid services etc.

16. [Somit Dasgupta writes: Bonn meet shows slim chance of action on climate change](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “Bonn meets shows slim chance of action on climate change” published in the Indian Express on 13th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Ecology and Environment

Relevance: United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) COP27

News: Recently, representatives from more than 100 countries met at Bonn to hold preliminary discussions on the **final communiqué (climate finance)** of the COP27, which is scheduled to be held at **Sharm-el-Sheikh** later in the year 2022.

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Major issues discussed in the final communiqué of COP27

(1) **Loss and damage:** There are many smaller countries, especially with big coastlines, which are experiencing loss and damage, due to rising river levels, loss of agricultural productivity, loss of livelihoods, etc. Therefore, they are demanding **financial assistance** to cope with it because they can't wait till 2030 or 2050.

Unfortunately, the idea to provide assistance for “**loss and damage**” was opposed by the US and the EU.

(2) There was debate on funding issues between **adaptation** and **mitigation projects**. So far, funding has mostly been directed towards mitigation efforts because mitigation projects are easily subjected to the **cost-benefit analysis**, and it is difficult to do so on the **adaptation projects**.

(3) The **Green Climate Fund** is considered too cumbersome and the process too lengthy. Hence, there's a need for an alternate funding route.

Moreover, the developing countries believe that the **climate finance requirement** is much higher than \$100 billion a year. The actual funding requirement for climate change issues may run into trillions of dollars.

(4) The **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**, as of date, are not enough to limit the temperature rise to 1.5°C. It requires the emissions to be cut down by half by 2030.

During the conference, the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** expressed that the aim should be to **reduce emissions by 20% by 2025 itself**.

– The logic is that the next round of NDCs is due only in 2025 and by that time, it would be too late to formulate a plan that is achievable by 2030. Further, some countries have opined to revisit the NDCs by the end of 2022, to strengthen them.

In a response, Egypt and Australia have announced to enhance their emissions reduction target to 43% by 2030 compared to the 2005 level.

(5) There were discussions on the **remaining carbon space** available for use to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C.

As per broad indications, keeping into mind the **given emissions rate**, the temperature rise cannot be limited to 1.5, if major steps are not taken within 10 years.

However, the other discussions were on how to distribute this available space equitably amongst all the countries.

(6) The US resisted being labelled as a “**big emitter**” and was not willing to take responsibility for its **historical emissions**. It wanted **China** and **India** (other big emitters) to take on greater responsibilities for cutting down emissions.

However, it was opposed by the **like-minded group of developing countries** (LMDCs) like China, India, Saudi Arabia and the Arab countries.

Issues and concerns

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There was hardly any **convergence of ideas** between the **developed** and **developing countries** on the matter of climate finance.

The discussion on **climate issues** has been relegated to the background due to **the Ukraine crisis**. For example, the delegates walked out after a Russian official used the platform to criticise Ukraine.

17. [Rupee convertibility is due for a crypto rethink](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Rupee convertibility is due for a crypto rethink**” published in **Livemint** on **14th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy

Relevance: Monetary policy and related issues

News: As crypto can weaken state control of capital flows, India’s policy of global integration must remain adaptable. We should not let price instability cramp our options on the external front.

Why price stability is significant?

Overall, it helps keep an economy steady on almost every front.

It would also set a key part of the stage for **full [capital convertibility](#)**.

– It is a market- oriented idea that was left to gather dust after the Asian Crisis of 1997. Open economies bloated by foreign debt saw a reversal of global balances and were thrown into chaos as capital fled amid a currency crash.

– India has kept some limits in place on inflows and outflows ever since, exposing only parts of India’s financial sector to external risk, equity markets far more than debt.

Note: In India, the RBI is entrusted with the responsibility of conducting monetary policy with the primary objective of maintaining price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.

What are the price stability settings for India to switch to full capital account convertibility? These were set out back in June 1997 by the report of a panel on “capital account convertibility” headed by the late central banker **S.S. Tarapore**.

The report advocated a **gradual shift** enabled strictly by

- a fiscal deficit kept under 3.5% of GDP
- inflation capped at an average 3-5% by means of a central bank mandate
- the bad assets of lenders—with lending rates fully freed—no higher than 5% of their total.

Further easing of capital controls was to be calibrated by **a)** the rupee’s trade-weighted rate of exchange, **b)** India’s balance of payments and **c)** adequacy of hard reserves (for which it proposed net foreign assets at 40% of currency).

Other criteria

d) Receipts from abroad had to stay on an uptrend, **e)** external debt service burden suitably low and **f)** trade gap kept consistent with these.

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As of now, India is in no position to turn rupee fully convertible.

Way forward

Yet, India must work towards some abovementioned base conditions to widen its policy options in today's uncertain times.

To ward off the capital-flight risk, India needs to achieve macro stability. It should reduce every incentive for money to be swiped into a digital store-of-value (Crypto) that's globally accessible with such ease.

18. [Is protectionism compatible with liberalisation?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Is protectionism compatible with liberalisation?”** published in **The Hindu** on **15th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

Relevance: To understand India's economic policy.

News: The government is planning to liberalise India's economy. But with policies such as Atmanirbhar Bharat, the government seems to protect the domestic economy from foreign competition. This raises questions on whether the government's external protectionism is compatible with its promise of liberalising India's economy.

What are the challenges associated with India's policies to protect the domestic economy?

Not efficient: Industrial policies generally invest in industries that could be globally competitive. But in India, there is a long list of sectors in which the government has embarked on import substitution that encourages domestic production. The emphasis is on producing in India rather than on efficiency.

Not able to predict the future: In the 1970s, the government thought that electronics export was going to be a good thing. So, they created the **Santacruz Electronic Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ)** in Bombay and removed customs duties. By removing protectionism, they thought they were doing a favour to the electronics industry. And 30 years later, the software industry and the diamond processing industries came out on top.

Against ease of doing business: There is still high red-tapism in India. Further, in most productive sectors also India is lagging behind its counterparts. All this make fall in competitiveness of Indian industry.

Restrict the benefits of consumer: The government stands in the middle and interferes with the ability of an Indian consumer to buy something from abroad or the ability of an Indian firm to buy something from abroad or the ability of an engineering firm to raise capital from a cheaper source abroad, and so on. This raises fundamental question of consumer freedom.

Industrial licensing era policy: Policies such as Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme provide incentives to certain capacities. In this, the government determine the minimum economic scale and then direct the industry to produce along those lines.

Read more: [Understanding the all-time high in India's trade deficit](#)

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What should be done to improve the Indian economy?

Reduce custom duty and protectionism: Every time India cut customs duties, and removes elements of protectionism, firms in India which are users of those goods become more competitive. Hence, India can increase exports by making raw materials cheaper.

External and domestic reforms have to go hand in hand: China and other Southeast Asian countries have been attracting foreign investment just because they execute external and domestic reforms together. India should also focus on both instead of an isolated approach.

Government has to be a facilitator: Instead of picking select sector and promoting them, India can leave that to the market economy to discover the sectors. If the government want to intervene, the policy should be made by the government and industries having a dialogue.

Japan, [South] Korea, and many Southeast Asian countries follow this dialogue based approach. This might cause many firms to go bankrupt, and many industries will shut down. That's how India can find out what works and what doesn't.

Provide freedom to consumer: Ad hoc protectionism is not really the way forward because ultimately we are living in a market economy and there has to be the freedom to choose.

Role of industries: The industry needs to identify the pain points, and they should ask the government to address these issues. For instance, during the pandemic, big pharmaceutical giants had substantial government backing in producing vaccines and other medicines.

Read more: [Factors hindering India's global trade potential](#)

19. [The road to rolling out labour codes](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "[The road to rolling out labour codes](#)" published in **The Hindu** on **14th Jul 22**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy – Industrial policy and growth

Relevance: Labour codes and related issues

News: The Code on Wages (passed in Parliament in August, 2019), the Industrial Relations Code, the Code on Social Security, and the Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (all passed on September 22 and 23, 2020 in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha) have not yet been implemented.

What are the views of various stakeholders?

The **Centre** claims that the four codes are a major step in the process of labour reforms.

The **central trade unions** (CTUs) have held three general strikes against the codes so far, alleging that the codes will result in taking away whatever little social and economic security is left in the employment sector.

The **farmers' organisations** had also supported the trade unions in their protests.

The **employers' associations**, had mixed feeling towards the codes, but had generally welcomed them.

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Why the delay in implementation of the codes?

The government says the delay in implementation is due to the **delay in framing rules by the States**.

As labour is a **concurrent subject**, both the States and the Centre will have to prepare rules for the codes.

According to a recent report, 24 States have so far published draft rules to all four codes.

What the Centre wants to do?

The Centre intends to implement the four codes together. The Labour Minister has offered discussions with trade unions and representatives of employers to iron out differences, if any.

The **SP Mukherjee committee**, which is working towards the issue of minimum wages, is yet to complete its task. Setting a national minimum wage is important in the implementation of the Code on Wages.

Social security for unorganised workers is a promise in the Code on Social Security and expansion of ESIC network is an unavoidable step for this purpose.

What are some of the concerns?

The **central trade unions** in the Opposition camp are **opposed to all the four codes**.

– Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), is opposed to the Industrial Relations Code and certain provisions of the Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions.

According to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, one of the central trade unions, said the exercise is aimed at pushing out a large section of the workforce out of the coverage of all labour laws.

The BMS has been maintaining that the codes **should not be implemented at one go**. The differences must be resolved by mutual dialogue. The Govt should implement only those sections and codes where there is a larger unanimity among the workers, employers and the government.

The employers' associations like Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) had expressed reservation on the proposal for increasing the **minimum wages** and **expanding the social security network** by involving the employers too.

Way forward

The trade unions are warning about more protests if the codes are implemented. They say that the Centre will have to repeal it the way it repealed the three farm laws.

The Centre, too, is worried about the political fallout of its implementation and thus, this could also be a possible reason for the delay.

The employers are worried that a further increase in the salary bill will hamper their profits in a recession-hit economy and they expect the government to hold more discussions.

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20. [India's shrinking pot in an expanding universe](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "India's shrinking pot in an expanding universe" published in the Live Mint on 15th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology; Space Sector

Relevance: India's Space Sector

News: In recent days, **NASA's James Webb Space Telescope** has sent back its first stunning images of a small spot of the cosmos as it was **13.5 billion years ago**, a time period just 'a bit later' than our estimate of the Big Bang—about 3 million centuries prior.

About the James Webb Space Telescope

It was launched in Dec, 2021. It was a joint project of NASA, the European Space Agency and Canadian Space Agency. It is expected to cost around \$9.7 billion over its lifetime.

Furthermore, it comprises a **21-foot-wide mirror**, a sun-shield of the size of a tennis court and a quarter of a million tiny shutters, each smaller than a grain of sand.

How is India still behind the western countries?

The West has stormed ahead of India in recent centuries. It is because the science and tech innovations have been led by governments through state/public funding. However, India's state spending on science and technology languishes, despite 75 years of freedom or Independence.

The budget of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MST) was cut by more than 3% this fiscal year.

There is an environment promoting the study of '**Vedic science**' in India Further the young Indian women aiming to pursue a career in science, face an "**almost hostile environment**".

Way Forward

In order to take the Indian space sector a leap forward, the government has opened the sector for **private participation**.

For real progress, in addition to academia and national laboratories, India's ministries should also work with a scientific temper.

The Constitution of India has given us a "**free and democratic nation**", where all brothers and sisters get the same constitutional rights.

21. [In defence of the Aravallis](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "In defence of the Aravallis" published in the Live Mint on 15th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Ecology and Environment

Relevance: Draft National Capital Region Plan 2041

News: In recent days, the government has released the **draft NCR Regional Plan 2041**. It contains a recent proposal from the NCR Planning Board which includes an attempt to open up the Aravallis for construction.

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About the Aravalli ranges

They start from Delhi and traverse through Haryana and Rajasthan before ending in Gujarat, spanning 690 km in length.

They are among the oldest fold mountain systems in the world.

How are the Aravalli ranges crucial for the survival of the National Capital Region (NCR)?

First, they serve as a groundwater recharge zone for a perpetually water-starved NCR region.

Second, they are the last remaining green lungs of Delhi NCR.

Third, they also serve as a barrier against the desertification of the Indo-Gangetic plains.

Legal Regime for preservation of any forest in the NCR

The NCR Regional Plan 2021 has placed the “Aravallis” and “forest areas” in the Natural Conservation Zone (NCZ). This includes all Aravalli’s Forest areas, water bodies and groundwater recharge areas, and rivers as well as flood plains.

It limits construction to only **0.5%** of the total area. In short, the Regional Plan 2021 banned construction for commercial, residential, tourism and real estate purposes in the NCZ.

What are worrisome attempts that aim to eliminate barriers that prevent the destruction of the Aravallis?

There are attempts to circumvent existing **environmental protections** through the removal of the entire concept of a Natural Conservation Zone (NCZ) in the draft plan.

The draft Plan 2041 proposes to replace NCZ with a very loosely defined new term, “**Natural Zone**”. It has removed the terms ‘Aravalli’ and ‘forest areas’ from the NCZ.

It means the new category will provide protection only to those areas which are “notified for preservation” and also “recognized in the revenue records” of states over time.

However, most of the Aravalli hill area in Haryana is not notified and neither is the term ‘Aravalli’ mentioned in revenue records. Instead, it is recorded as “**gair mumkin pahaar**” (uncultivable wasteland), and “**bhood**” (sandy foothills). The forest cover of the Aravallis is neither notified nor mentioned as “forest” in revenue records.

Further, the **0.5% limit** on construction in the NCZ has been dropped in the proposed classification.

The plan can drastically reduce the forest cover and open the floodgates to indiscriminate real estate development in the Aravallis.

Way Forward

India is going through rapid urbanization. Almost half the people of India would be living in its cities by 2025.

– Therefore, there is a need to ensure that **India’s urbanization** occurs within the **carrying capacity** and **ecological limits** of the region. The cities should be able to ensure **enough water** and **green spaces** to the growing populations.

The Aravallis are a **common groundwater recharge zone** for Delhi and Haryana, and all stakeholders must do their bit to protect them.

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In this era of climate change, water security and clean air need priority over real estate projects.

22. [Ensuring nutrition security](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “Ensuring nutrition security” published in the Business Standard on 15th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues and Challengers pertaining to buffer stock and PDS System

Relevance: Food Security

News: In the recent periods, the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21) and the United Nations report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition 2022 were released.

Findings of the UN report

Globally, the count of **undernourished people** has swelled by nearly 46 million over the past 15 years. The figure has shrunk by nearly 23.5 million in India. However, the scale of malnutrition still remains worrisome in India.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to eliminate hunger by 2030 is not going to be met because 8% of the world population (about 670mn people, or) would remain underfed in 2030.

What are the proximate causes for such food insecurity?

The prices of cereals, fertilisers and energy has increased. It has turned food unaffordable for a sizable section of the poor.

The **Black Sea region** which accounts for **one-third** of the world’s wheat and **barley production** and close to half of fertiliser output, especially that of potassic fertilisers has not been able to export to meet the global demand.

What are the measures that have been taken by the Indian government for food security in India?

India has been running **liberal consumer subsidies** and a slew of **food-based social welfare programmes**, i.e., the targeted public distribution system (TPDS) aimed to alleviate hunger across the country.

What are the issues in India’s food security programmes?

The policies aimed to keep consumer prices in check hurt the interests of farmers.

Findings of the NFHS-5

Regardless of India’s food security, there is rampant malnutrition, including imbalanced nutritional intake in India. These can be illustrated based on the following>

- (1) more than half the Indian women in the 15-49 age group are anaemic.
- (2) About 45 million children below the age of five suffer from wasting, the deadliest form of malnutrition.
- (3) About 149 million children are stunted due to deficiency of essential minerals and vitamins.
- (4) Due to **unhealthy food consumption** practices, there are high incidence of obesity among both adults and children.

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What are the causes behind rampant malnutrition in India?

The **inter-ministerial committee** which was appointed to go into the findings of the survey has listed lack of **affordability, dietary ignorance, and socio-cultural food taboos** among the significant factors responsible for rampant malnutrition.

The panel is reported to have observed that the silent crisis of undernourishment has aggravated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Way Forward

The inter-ministerial committee recommended amending the National Food Security Act to make inclusion of **protein-rich** and **micro-nutrients-doped food items**. These should be legally mandated as part of the meals provided through food safety programmes in schools and Anganwadis, and under the Poshan Abhiyan.

The food and agricultural policies of the countries should focus **on boosting food production** as well as **enhancing its economic access** to the poor.

23. [Stamp out this hate speech manufacturing network](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Stamp out this hate speech manufacturing network**” published in **The Hindu** on **16th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

Relevance: To understand the political nexus between hate speech and Political Parties.

News: The recent attack on a judge of the Supreme Court of India by the IT cell of a prominent national political party has given the impression that there are a significant number of people opposed to judicial criticism.

Read more: [Hate speech is violent in itself and must be called out](#)

What are Internet Trolls, and what is the political nexus of these trolls and hate speech?

According to the book “I am a Troll”, Internet trolls are defined as persons who sow discord through inflammatory comments on the Internet. The book traces the growth of Internet trolls from the early 2000s and attributes its steep upward curve to the support it received from a senior political leader in Government.

The book also mentions that ‘office bearers of the party in power have publicly supported these trolls’. Thus, the hate speech tweets are manufactured by a factory of a political party that produces millions of hate speeches.

Targeting processes against persons/organisations were managed by ‘Tek Fog’ (a ‘sophisticated app used by online operatives to hijack major social media and encrypted messaging platforms’).

For instance,

-The Wire reported that a network of 757 Twitter accounts was used to mount attacks against the co-founder of fact-checking website Alt News and the recovery email id for the anonymous Twitter handle was that of a youth leader of a political party.

-The Wire commented that the handlers of ‘Tek Fog’ are politically aligned.

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-Over eight lakh hostile replies were sent out to tweets by women journalists, of which over five lakh were classified as 'offensive'.

– Newslaundry has reported that internet trolls are 'well-oiled propaganda machine that will churn out fake videos and mass tweet links to gear up for Twitter storms'.

Read more: [Preventing harm: On judicial intervention against hate speech](#)

How to reduce hate speech over the internet?

The government should frame a criminal investigation by an independent special investigation team of the police. This must be followed by Prosecution.

This hate speech manufacturing networks must be crushed. This is vital for democracy to survive and for the judiciary not to be intimidated.

Read more: [Hate speech, IPC Sec 295A, and how courts have read the law](#)

24. [Time for vigilance-Increased testing and building awareness, not stigmatisation, can stop spread of monkeypox](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Time for vigilance-Increased testing and building awareness, not stigmatisation, can stop spread of monkeypox”** published in **The Hindu** on **16th July 2022**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Awareness in the fields of biotechnology.

Relevance: To understand the spread of Monkeypox.

News: India reported its first laboratory-confirmed, imported case of monkeypox virus from Kerala. To cut the transmission chain, people who have come in contact with him in Kerala have been isolated.

What is monkeypox?

Must read: [Explained: What is monkeypox, a smallpox-like disease from Africa that has been reported in the UK?](#)

The first human case was reported in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the virus became endemic in 11 countries in Africa causing small outbreaks.

What is the significance of the recent monkeypox spread?

The first case of the virus outside Africa was first reported in the U.K. in May 2022. Since then, the virus has spread to over 63 countries.

With cases crossing the 10,000-mark in non-endemic countries, and numerous cases in Spain (2,034), the U.K. (1,735), Germany (1,556) and the U.S. (1,470), the risk of the virus becoming established in some of these countries are becoming increasingly real.

Further, for the first time, the virus has spread to more than a hundred people a year during any outbreak in endemic countries except Congo.

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How does the virus spreading so rapidly?

The rapid increase in cases and geographical spread have primarily been due to **human-to-human transmission** largely during sexual contact, especially among **men who have sex with men** (MSM).

Few dance parties in Spain and Belgium have turned out to be super-spreader events.

According to the WHO, “undetected transmission for some unknown duration followed by recent amplifier events” to be responsible for cases being detected simultaneously in several countries outside Africa.

Read more: [Health Ministry issues norms to tackle monkeypox](#)

What are the findings about Monkeypox so far?

No attempts were made to study Monkeypox all these years, as the virus is endemic in 11 countries in Africa and causes only small outbreaks.

But the recent studies have found that,

-The virus appears to mutate at a much higher rate than what was assumed.

-Based on genome sequences from the current outbreak, the virus has found the emergence of a novel clade of the virus in early March.

-Monkeypox virus DNA has been found in samples of semen, saliva, urine, rectal swabs and faeces at high viral loads.

So increased testing, contact tracing and building awareness, and not stigmatising the infected people alone can stop the spread.

25. [James Webb: It is just the beginning](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “James Webb: It is just the beginning” Published in the Business Standard on 15th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 Science and Technology; Space Technology

Relevance: The James Webb Space Telescope

News: NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) located some 1.6 million km from Earth has received “deep field” images of the photons of the early formed stars.

These photons have travelled relatively unhindered through the ever-expanding vast and presumably empty open space of the universe for over 13 billion years.

Findings about Planet WASP-96 b

The JWST’s also captured images indicating signs of water, clouds and haze in the atmosphere of **WASP-96 b**.

The planet is a hot and puffy gas giant planet orbiting a distant Sun-like star. It is located roughly 1,150 light-years away in the constellation Phoenix.

It has a mass less than half that of Jupiter and a diameter 1.2 times greater,

According to Nasa, WASP-96 b is much puffier than any planet orbiting our Sun.

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Importance of the discovery

The images give detailed glimpse of the **birth** of stars/ the beginnings of the universe as well as the **deepest looks** into the far reaches of outer space in the universe.

It gave a glimpse of what the **most distant galaxies** would have looked like more than 13.1 billion years ago, less than a billion years after the **Big Bang**.

Importance of the finding related to Scope of JWST

According to NASA, these observations have demonstrated that the JWST telescope has the unprecedented ability over the Hubble telescope, to do detailed observation of outer space.

About the JWST Programmes

It will

- target **exoplanets, comets** which are located outside our solar system.
- study the **first light in the universe**, and also study the **first galaxies** that formed in the universe
- probe the **atmospheres of planets** around other stars and so on. Thus will characterise potentially habitable planets beyond Earth.

The JWST's first deep field images have revealed that it has far more powerful ability than the Hubble's telescope. The JWST is planned for the **next-generation Deep Extragalactic Exploratory Public (DEEP) survey** and other programmes

Its programmes will target **distant galaxies**. This will include giant galaxies, as well as the **dwarf galaxies** which are far smaller than what Hubble Space Telescope could capture.

It shall identify **supermassive black holes** that sit at the centre of almost every large galaxy.

It shall observe **Mars** and the **gas giants**, dwarf planets like Pluto and Eris, and even smaller bodies in our solar system like asteroids, comets, and Kuiper Belt Objects.

It is also slated to study **brown dwarfs** and other matters of **cosmic evolution**.

26. [‘Community evolves slowly in rainforests like India’s Kudremukh and Silent Valley’](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Community evolves slowly in rainforests like India’s Kudremukh and Silent Valley**” published in the Times of India on 16th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 Ecology and Environment

Relevance: Rainforest Ecosystem in India

Context: The **Silent Valley national park** in Kerala and **Kudremukh national park** in Karnataka. The former had witnessed a rich conservation history involving a people’s movement to stop a dam and creating a national park. Whereas, the latter is one of the **first rainforests** that is present in the Western Ghats.

An ecological principle

In natural ecosystems like forests, the species get together to form a community. Further, there won’t be just one dominant species of trees in the ecosystem, there would be diverse kinds of trees living there. Thus, it means there will be **incredible diversity** in a **forest ecosystem**.

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For Example, tropical rainforests in South America or Southeast Asia could have 800 to 1,000 different species in one hectare alone.

This varies, depending on the history of how species evolved over time and climate.

There will be different levels of diversity between a forest in India, Borneo or Panama.

What are the processes that maintain such diversity in an ecosystem?

Each species has its own '**niche**' or requirement for the resources like light, water and some nutrients. For example, all the species don't use resources at the same level. Some thrive in **bright sunshine**, some in **dark** and some in dappled **sunshine**.

Therefore, these **differential requirements** of light, water and soil nutrients lead to **species differentiation** and prevent any one species from becoming dominant in **complex ecosystems** like **tropical rainforests**.

There are continuous interactions between **plants, insects** and **fungi**. It ensures no one species becomes dominant, and a community is upheld. For example,

(a) **Small organisms** enable diversity in the complex ecosystem through the process of eating plants and regulating the population of the plants and trees.

(2) The **disease-causing pathogens** act as enemies of trees. The population of the trees may be destroyed by these pathogens. In such a situation, other species come in and establish themselves in that space.

Role of Human Actions on these complex interactions:

(1) **Humans have modified forests**. The large forest places have been chopped up into smaller pieces for agriculture, roads or logging.

(2) Further, such human interventions like fragmentations of forests, increase the ability of the natural enemies like pathogens to impact the plants.

The rodents work with greater strength in **fragmented forest** or **near forest edges** as compared to interiors of forest. For example, rodents like porcupines and wild rats are able to eat more seeds in an **impacted fragment** versus a less disturbed forest.

Way Forward

These rainforest ecosystems in South India have **diverse systems**, like rainforests below, grasslands and sholas in the upper regions. Therefore, it is important to preserve them as these are sanctuaries of nature's evolutionary history.

27. ['Rainforest defaunation is huge — these species are key'](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "Rainforest defaunation is huge, these species are key" published in the Times of India on 16th July 2022.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment and Ecology

Relevance: Rainforest Defaunation

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News: There is rampant destruction of ecosystems worldwide. Over the years, the expansive **tropical forest ecosystems** in Mexico, etc. have become small, and isolated patches of vegetation, leading to their fragmentation.

Whether processes of evolution in biodiversity can survive such habitat fragmentation?

No. There are **mutually beneficial interactions** between plants and animals in tropical rainforests. For example, pollination and seed dispersal.

The interactions between plants and animals in tropical rainforests also jointly **regulate** the ecosystem. Further, all species can live in a balance.

Now, there would be disastrous consequences, if the understory of a rainforest where the **interactions** between plants and animals have evolved and takes place, like seed dispersal to plant regulation, is removed.

The deforestation or the destruction of the forest will damage the processes of interactions between **plants** and **animals**. Further, it will also lead to the process of **defaunation** or loss of animal life.

Scale of defaunation

Over the last four decades, the vertebrates' animals have shrunk by 30%.

Over the last 40 years, there has been an approximately 50% rate of decline or Tropical defaunation.

In the Brazilian Amazon, the most **diverse rainforest** on Earth, we are losing 40 million vertebrates' monkeys, birds, deer each year due to hunting and poaching. The same trend is consistent in all the world's rainforests.

Further, removal of animals also leads to **cascading consequences**. For example, when **parent monkeys** are removed from a rainforest, the baby monkeys cannot survive without their parents.

What are the solutions?

(1) To spread awareness of **defaunation**. The use of the term 'defaunation' may help citizens and policy makers to measure the magnitude of the loss of animal life.

(2) Scientists and ecologists must engage the **global public** to stop the destruction of habitats, which is the biggest driver of biodiversity loss.

(3) What's left must be protected and focus on **refaunation** via rewilding and translocation to the homes. It will help revive **vital ecosystem processes** and control rodents that carry **dangerous pathogens**.

(4) It is also very important to respect the knowledge of indigenous societies. These have conserved viable forestry and sustainable agriculture through diversified land use, mosaics of agriculture, agripastoral and forest management systems that save biodiversity.